

SEPARATE STATES

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FADE IN:

A SLIT SCAN DISTORTED IMAGE.

ENTIRE FILM IN BLACK AND WHITE.

THE MAN, 30-40, walks into frame from the right, wearing a plastic translucent MEDICAL MASK behind which his skin has been scarred with BURNS. He faces partially away from the camera.

AROUND HIM IS ALL BLACK.

He has a shaved head, with scarring also over his head.

The combination of the mask and the scars render him without a distinct face.

TITLES: SEPARATE STATES.

This opening title sequence is detached from reality and conveys the characters mental State.

CUT TO:

INT. DRS SURGERY - DAY

THE DRS SURGERY is a well-lit consultation room separated into two sides with both a desk and bed area.

There is a computer, artificial plants, anatomy / molecular models, medical supplies and synthetic curtains.

Hanging from the ceiling above the patient's bed is an abstract-shaped chandelier, designed to look like a model of a molecular structure.

THE MAN, fragile and dressed in a suit, is having a consultation with his surgeon, THE DR, 50 and jaded, wearing a lab coat.

The Dr is sitting behind his desk, whilst The Man stands in front.

The DR looks up at him with quiet disdain as he speaks.

The Dr gets up and walks around his desk.

They both now stand, at equal distance between each other and the frame, in a theatrical blocking.

They are clearly having a consultation regarding these burns.

It's unclear how they have been caused; fire, acid, explosion, accident, an act of terrorism or war?

V.O.:

THE MAN

I've changed my face so often.
This mask is just another frontier.

The Dr moves behind the man.

As The Man stares silently into the camera The Dr stands behind him, out of focus, speaking to him.

The sound track renders what The Dr says indecipherable, but with each word an abstract sound is created, like a code. The Man is lost in his thoughts.

HOLD.

The Dr gently puts a hand on his shoulder, as if consoling him, and we see them from a different angle.

The Man takes his shirt off, revealing less prominent scarring on his upper chest and shoulders.

He wants to be fixed.

The Dr walks around him slowly inspecting this scarring.

As The Man lifts his arms, THE CAMERA in a 360 degree shot moves around both of them.

The Man puts his shirt back on.

He buttons it up.

He then goes over to the bed area, pushes himself up onto it, and lies down, flat and straight.

The curtains separating this section of the room are on either side of the frame, as if he's a character in a play.

The Man's face, part-mask, part-flesh. He slowly blinks as if drugged or in a trance.

He purses his lips.

V.O.:

THE MAN (CONT'D)
Behind every face:

Point of view of the ceiling lighting. The molecular structure is now clear and seeing this perspective is jarring for the audience.

THE MAN (CONT'D)
There is a mask.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

THE SUN. SLOW ZOOM OUT TO, reveal THE MAN II, who is sitting on an armchair, looking at something on a TABLET.

We recognise him as The Man from the previous scene, although now he is without the scarring, suggesting we have now potentially gone backwards in time.

He sits comfortably, looking slick and oozing privilege.

The flat and furniture are contemporary and expensive, like a showroom.

The flat has glass windows all around it and a concrete ceiling and concrete floor.

He is reading a news articles on his TABLET, and as he scrolls down we see that the article is just scattered images, with blank spaces suggesting an absence of text.

There is a BUZZ at the Intercom.

He gets up and we follow him as he walks through this space towards the front door.

The Man II, OPENS his FRONT DOOR for the DELIVERY DRIVER.

He signs the electronic signature device, marking an 'X', instead of his name, and is handed a small CARDBOARD BOX.

This transaction focuses on their hands and as they participate in this exchange we do not see either face, removing their identity.

The door is closed.

The Man II comes back into the kitchen, places the box on the table and grabs a KNIFE from THE KNIFE RACK to open it.

He purses his lip as he cuts into the tape of the box.

Revealing it's contents to be Styrofoam peanuts.

He takes out from this a small GLASS BOTTLE and inspects it. As he turns to read the back label we can see the front label says 'SULPHURIC ACID - WARNING HIGHLY CORROSIVE SUBSTANCE.'

He places it on the table, and walks away to get something.

From directly above we see THE MAN II slowly decant the SULPHURIC ACID carefully into another BOTTLE using a FUNNEL, this process takes some time.

Clearly he is going to use this acid in a clandestine manner.

As he finishes, he leaves the frame and the two bottles are left placed separate from each other. From above it looks like character positions blocked in a storyboard.

He returns and takes away the now empty acid bottle.

Then, directly in the middle of the table he pours some acid.

As we see it fizz and burn, we slowly zoom in on this burning mass with the sound growing louder and louder.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

An empty park on a cold, misty evening.

From behind we follow what we think is The Man II, as he walks through the park towards a town square in the distance.

He wears his expensive suit with authority.

We hear his footsteps crunch on the grass.

Without looking he walks through a series of bronze sculptures of numbers, that lie scattered on the ground in various positions.

They are memorials to a specific date, but from this perspective the date is not clear.

He crosses the road and continues to an empty town square.

He passes parked cars, with number plates that are blank.

We now follow him from the front as he comes into the square where there are a new series of unique, but similarly designed metal structures that protrude from the ground. They are scattered around the square and illuminated.

It's unclear at this point whether these are sculptures, also memorials or serve a particular function.

As he slowly walks through the middle of this square the dramatic tension builds and we feel the weight of time.

He reaches one of the statues and stops.

There is a polished plaque, on the floor in front of the statue. The text it should have is absent, but where it would be is underlined.

He kneels down and places a hand on the plaque next to the structure.

He is paying his respects, but it's unclear to what.

He pauses, closing his eyes.

He stands up.

HE turns around and starts to walk away.

The Man II, his doppelgänger, dressed exactly the same, comes into the frame.

BEAT.

He aggressively strides towards him, with a deadpan expression.

The Man registers him approaching with quiet shock.

The Man II throws the SULPHURIC ACID he previously prepared in his face, attacking the separate version of himself.

Steam instantly comes off his face, as his skin burns.

CUT TO:

SLIT SCAN SEQUENCE: the reverse of the opening image.

The Man walks into frame, from the left, and stands just like he did at the beginning. The credits roll over this.

This is a reality trapped in a loop; an Ouroboros feeding itself for eternity.

FADE TO BLACK.