

MASKED AND ANONYMOUS  
WRITTEN BY FRANKLIN

PART I

We see a lonely backpack leaning against the wall of the dining hall. The air around it is silent, unmoving, tense. Moments later, Adam walks into frame, stops to look at the backpack, looks around, puzzled and trying to locate its owner. Finding no luck, he walks away.

After walking down main street, Adam enters the academic building to enter the dean's den. Seeing the door to the counselor's office is closed, he sits down on the couch outside it, waiting. He sees a few books on the table: Tarantula by Bob Dylan, Accidentally Wes Anderson and The Stranger by Albert Camus. Narration begins.

ADAM

My name is Adam and I'm having a lousy day.  
At this moment, I am reading a book of a French philosopher that I know nothing about to kill time. (Pause) It's working so far.

However, Adam is impatient: he's bouncing his legs and looking around. Finally, the door to the office opens, and Evelyn walks out. Adam puts his book down and stands, as the two students brush past each other and Adam enters the office for his meeting with the counselor.

ADAM

My dad wrote me this letter last week.  
Got it in my mailbox on Saturday.  
It wasn't an actual letter, you know?  
There weren't any words in it.  
It was just an envelope of some pictures.

COUNSELOR

Pictures? Pictures of what?

ADAM

Just... My mom and dad, my grandparents...  
Family pictures.

COUNSELOR

And how did they make you feel?

ADAM

Uneasy. Defeated. It's like something  
Was struck down inside my body,  
And I couldn't do anything about it.  
But I've always looked forward to coming  
To school. It's such an escape for me.  
I mean, my dorm room feels more comfortable  
For me than the house that I grew up in  
With my family... I feel like I was born  
Far from where I'm supposed to be,  
So travelling here, it's like coming home,  
You know? But seeing my family enjoying  
Themselves, happy, laughing... I couldn't  
Even reciprocate that feeling. I think  
A part of me wants to share that moment with  
Them. But I know that's not possible.

COUNSELOR

Mmm... And due to the pandemic, you had an  
Extended stay at your house, right?  
Quarantine forced you to?

ADAM

Yeah... Yeah. It was already hard to not  
Trip over any wires or hurt someone's  
Feelings in the house, regardless of the  
Pandemic. And when we all had to coexist together  
for the summer, we couldn't stand each other and  
I wanted to leave so bad... I don't know... When you  
stay in one place for  
Too long of a time, things tend to get  
Cluttered up.

COUNSELOR

What do you mean?

ADAM

There's a sort of emotional metabolism  
That goes on in my mind all the time.  
It's almost an unseen and sentient force..  
It highlights the important memories, lets go  
Of all the unimportant things. I think it works  
Best when I'm up and moving, you know?  
But now, when I end up trapped in my house,  
I'm actually trapped in something  
Way uglier.

COUNSELOR

But... Going all the way back to the family  
Photos. You said they made you uneasy and  
Defeated, and that parts of you want to share  
those special moments with them. Do you wish that  
you were with them right now? Well, let me put it  
this way: Where would you rather be right now,  
school or with your family?

Adam thinks carefully. The camera slowly zooms into his  
face. Although he is silent, we hear his narration in his  
mind:

ADAM

Right now, I am trying my best to put  
Together a response in my head that is  
Reassuring enough for myself.  
The truth of the matter is that I would  
Rather be at home right now, but this honesty  
Requires a certain strength that I do yet  
Possess.

Cut to black.

## Part II

We trail behind Evelyn as she hurries into the dining hall with her backpack. Once inside, she drops it besides the wall and proceeds to get food. Narration begins:

EVELYN

My name is Evelyn and I'm having a lousy day.  
Despite the 9 am start and a desperately-needed  
Sleep-in, my feet are still tired and my head  
Drowsy and sluggish. I have two tests today  
And I'm currently juggling French vocabulary  
With AP Chemistry equations in my head. Oh, and  
I'm about to be late for my meeting with my  
counselor. I only have time to grab a drink. Hope  
they didn't run out of smoothies.

We see Evelyn grabbing a drink as her phone rings. She reaches for it and answers.

EVELYN

Hi, mom?

Evelyn proceeds to exit the frame and out of the dining hall. Narration continues:

EVELYN

My friend Sierra passed away recently from COVID.  
My mom calls me every morning to ask me How I  
feel. I tell her I'm fine. She asks me How school  
is, and my answer is the same. She  
Speaks tentatively, which irritates me  
Quite a bit. It's as if I'm a broken glass  
Statue held together by thin strands of tape  
That is her maternal love. I have things I can  
Say, but I stop myself at the last moment from  
Saying them. Instead, I spend time in my head  
Making it my home, and I proceed through days  
With memories of Sierra in my heart and blues  
Wrapped around my head.

We see Evelyn finish her phone call and look around the empty dining hall. She pauses one second to gather herself then walks briskly to the side door to exit. We then cut to her conversation with the counselor.

COUNSELOR

So, how are things, Evelyn? How are you Doing? Last time we talked about the passing Of your friend, and... There was a lot to Unpack there. How are you feeling about it Now?

EVELYN

Uhh... Not much has changed. I have pictures Of me and her on the wall in my room. I thought About taking them down but... It doesn't feel Like the right moment yet. I don't know... I guess some things just don't get better With time.

COUNSELOR

Does your mom still call you everyday?

EVELYN

Yeah...I'm not sure if that does me any good Though, you know? Family is weird. Family is Complicated. It's like they expect so much Honesty from you and take offense to your Quietness, but you don't expect anything from Them at all.

COUNSELOR

You don't think that they'll understand you If you told them how you feel?

EVELYN

I don't know. I don't know if they'll understand What it feels like to lose a close friend to a Pandemic. But all I'm saying is I never asked Them to, and I never will. My family gives me Comfort and love, and at the end of the day,

I'll always be grateful for  
That unconditional love that I have yet to find  
In anywhere else.

COUNSELOR

I'm glad family is a source of love for you.

EVELYN

And I miss them too, you know? Maybe it's just  
Me being too scared to admit it, but I've never  
Said "I miss you" to my mom over the phone.  
Losing a friend like this makes this whole  
Pandemic so much more personal for me, and it  
Annoys me-pains me, rather-that I can't be  
With my family.

COUNSELOR

Would you rather be at home right now than here?

The camera slowly zooms in on Evelyn as she is silent,  
thinking. Narration begins:

EVELYN

Right now I'm wading through a sea of emotions  
And things left better unsaid to find a response  
To that question. The simple answer was yes,  
But there's only so many meanings to that word.

Cut to Evelyn leaving the office. She brushes past Adam on  
her way out. Cut to black.

Part III

We see the counselor driving as she remains  
expressionless. Narration begins:

COUNSELOR

My name is \_\_, and I'm off to a bad start  
Today. It's early in the morning and I'm  
Making my way to work now. In my

Rearview mirror, other cars and pedestrians  
Flash by. The ones living in luxury going to  
The places they want to go, and the rest of  
Us to the places we have to go. My right knee  
Is in pain as I put my foot on the gas pedal.  
I need to get that checked.

We see her making her way into the classroom building and  
into her office. She settles down and opens her computer,  
starting to work. Narration continues:

(cont'd)

Today is a busy day. I have two appointments  
With students back to back in the morning and  
Faculty meetings in the afternoon.

Notification sound beeps.

(cont'd)

Vincent is texting me about tonight.  
We're supposed to meet up to sign the divorce  
Papers. I marked this date on my  
Calendar and kept reminding myself to prepare  
For it, but the urgency of the matter still  
Managed to elude me.

The counselor looks at her watch, then stands up to open  
the door. She stands by it, waiting.

(cont'd)

Evelyn should be here any second.

Moments later, Evelyn arrives, the two greet, and enter  
the office, closing the door. We cut to the counselor as  
she listens to Evelyn's story.

EVELYN

Yeah...I'm not sure if that does me any good  
Though, you know? (Trails out)

We hear the narration in the counselor's mind:

COUNSELOR

Right now, I'm trying to concentrate on  
What Evelyn is telling me rather than the  
Incessant flashes of worry in my mind. (Pause)  
Who's going to sign first tonight? Me or  
Him? What's his attitude going to be?  
How am I going to feel?

Cut to the office door opening as the two finish their  
conversation and exit. The counselor stands by the door to  
let Adam in. We cut to Adam opening up to the counselor.

ADAM

It's like something was struck down  
Inside my body, and I couldn't do anything  
About it... (Trails out)

The counselor's narration starts again:

COUNSELOR

How are we going to greet each other  
After this whole ordeal? How can we get  
Back on our feet again in the middle of all  
Of this global hysteria? I read an article a  
While back about the spike in divorce rates over  
The last year of the pandemic. Are we that  
Intolerant to the constant company of others?  
We complain about the piles of work on our  
Desks, all the places we have to be, and  
All the hands we have to shake, but when  
It's the other extreme, when our areas of  
Activity is limited to their minimum, we  
Grow impatient with the ones we share our  
Spaces with. It's all jumbled in my head now.  
One day I will untie the knot of wants and Needs,  
and it will be a single woven line.



Cut to Adam leaving the counselor's office. The counselor closes her door, exhausted. She walks to her chair and sits back down.

Hey Jude-the orchestra version plays. Cut to some scenery shots, narration begins:

NARRATION

The kids go about their day with a rejuvenated bounce in their steps, the tickling winds caresses the trees and the people, Our eyes begin to show the familiar glint Of light that has been vacant for so long... Spring is here. I could feel it.

We cut to the parking lot where we see the counselor getting in her car. Closing the door, she sits back and closes her eyes.

(cont'd)

These students come to me in confidence With their stories, and I do my best to Listen. It is my sincerest wish that I could Be of help to them as well. A shoulder to Cry on is not a helping hand, after all.

The counselor opens her eyes, and begins her drive away from campus.

(cont'd)

There's something inherently metaphorical About masks. How we wear them to protect, But also to conceal, to ensure our anonymity. The currents of the future rushes onto the Sands of time. One day I will untie the knot Of wants and needs, and it will be a single Woven line.

Cut to black. Print title. Credits roll.