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FACING ANGELA

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FACING ANGELA

Characters

ANGELA X, Angela in her unaltered state; face: splotches, discoloration

TORN ANGELA, Angela post-injury, reconstructed; face: wrappings, wound

HEALED ANGELA, Angela post-reconstruction, pre-transplant; face: scars, divot

REPAIRED ANGELA, Angela post-transplant; face: bruising, stitching

REMADE ANGELA, Angela in her altered state; face: 'without flaw'

WES, Angela's husband

Notes:

All 5 Angelas should bear similar markings around the neck, chest, arms, and hands: a pronounced bruise-like, rash-like discoloration. She should have the appearance of being painted.

Angela wears many crafted masks, constructed pieces that cover the lower half of her face, leaving her eyes and forehead exposed. In some cases they may be fashionable or whimsical, in other cases grotesque and industrial, but they should fall somewhere between disguise and sculpture, between covering and contraption. Masks can be used as set dressing as well.

All six actors should wear wedding bands.

FACING ANGELA

Lights up on ANGELA X. Her back is turned. Slowly, she turns to face us. She wears a mask that covers the lower half of her face. She removes the mask, revealing her face. Her face is discolored. Long silence as we see her.

ANGELA X

Remember this face.

Wes sits at a table, looking like shit. He's tired, his sleeves are rolled up. He's wired or drunk or both. He hasn't slept. He props his elbows on the table and holds his hands against his face, covering the lower half, eyes staring out.

WES

I had an uncle who was into cars. He would rebuild them, remake them. He had this one old wreck that he reconstructed, I mean he replaced almost everything. The engine, the guts, the wheels, the headlights. New paint job, new interior. I remember, when he was finished, asking him, "That's the same old car?" Without hesitation, he answered, "yes." As in... "of course." It filled me with this sense of...panic. Where was that old car? It wasn't there at all. I didn't know what he was talking about, what he was seeing. He ran his hands proudly over the hood of this alien thing. "This is it, same old girl." Could it be, really, that identity is nothing more than location? Fusion points? Virtually everything about this car had been replaced. The only thing that remained was the room in which the work began. The space my uncle walked into. The transformation. One car went in, and it never left. She was gone.

TORN ANGELA emerges, heavily bandaged about the lower face. The bandages have some blood spots showing through. Angela X sits by Wes. She puts a hand on his arm, but he doesn't look at her.

ANGELA X

Unwind. Unwind. Cut. Peel. Strip.

WES

There you are.

TORN ANGELA

Here.

WES

Does it hurt?

Torn Angela nods.

WES

Is there anything I can do?

Torn Angela shakes her head.

WES

Want to sit? Rest.

She does. At first they don't look at each other.

WES

It's a disease. A degenerative...condition, it affects her skin and bones.

ANGELA X

I'm allergic to my skeleton. And my skin.

WES

Very rare, she was born with it. Maybe a handful of cases in the world.

ANGELA X

My body attacks itself, it tries to reject my skin.

WES

She takes medication to regulate it. But it doesn't always work. Not perfectly.

ANGELA X

Tries to break down my bones.

WES

This time, the condition came on aggressively, seriously attacked her lower face and jaw. At first it looked like a rash, then bruising.

ANGELA X

Red, purple.

WES

Then frostbite.

ANGELA X

Black.

WES

Boils, peeling, flaking. The whole thing it just...it happened so quickly. Looked so painful.

ANGELA X

I need to get these off.

TORN ANGELA

I need to get these off.

WES

Almost like her skin was just, falling off.

TORN ANGELA

Molting.

WES

She hates how it looks, wondered always how I stayed with her, but I didn't marry Angela for her looks.

ANGELA X

Ha.

WES

That didn't sound right. I mean...she's beautiful, I find her just...achingly beautiful... it's not that, it's...how she made me feel. Her smile her eyes, not the beauty of them, the honesty of them. Lots of women are pretty.

ANGELA X

I have this condition.

WES

But a woman like Angela is rare.

ANGELA X

It's not a big deal.

WES

An auto-immune disorder on steroids.

ANGELA X

Pardon the expression.

WES

I don't follow.

ANGELA X

Auto-immunes are treated with steroids, so you know. That's a little disease humor.

WES

(laughs)

Yeah, yeah, I get it.

ANGELA X

You don't have to laugh.

WES

Does it hurt?

ANGELA X

Sometimes. The medication is better at protecting my bones than it is my skin, though, so the external symptoms are more frequent than I'd prefer. Usually just uncomfortable but sometimes it hurts. And it's ugly, obviously.

WES

But better than damage to your skeleton.

ANGELA X

Exactly.

WES

Ever go off the meds?

ANGELA X

Yeah. When I was a teenager. Had a rebellious streak, stopped for a couple weeks.

WES

And?

ANGELA X

My wrists and ankles started to erode. Fingers, toes. Almost lost my hands. Still feel it in my joints sometimes.

WES

Yikes.

ANGELA X

I know, right? It's disgusting.

WES

It's not, I told her. It's not. It was part of her.

ANGELA X

You'll be out the door when you see it get bad.

WES

I won't.

ANGELA X

You might.

WES

I didn't. Saw it bad, a couple times, what seemed bad to me. She'd agonize over it, understandably, sometimes it would look like she'd been in a fight she was so mottled, or like she had the worst sunburn imaginable.

TORN ANGELA

People look at me like a freak, like a victim, I hate it.

WES

Even with the meds, she could have these profound flareups, big patches of discoloration, usually beneath the skin, sometimes textures, rashes and flaking on top especially along her neck, her chin, her jawline.

ANGELA X / TORN

I hate it.

WES

She'd stay inside. Even on our wedding day, she almost left me standing at the altar because she had an attack. She tried to cover it up...

ANGELA X
No good.

WES
But it was no use.

ANGELA X
This is me.

WES
She finally came out.

ANGELA X
This is what I am.

WES
This magnificent, breathtaking crystalline design across her chest, neck, shoulders. It looked like a tattoo. A birthmark. A gem. It was beautiful. Black, purple, red. She looked like a queen.

ANGELA X
Everyone in the place looked at me like I was likely to die at any moment, and they were here to witness it. Everyone except Wes. Who was smiling. And crying.

WES
God...look at you.

ANGELA X
Sorry.

WES
Don't ever apologize.

ANGELA X
What does it say about you that you find a disease attractive?

WES
Not your disease. You.

Me. ANGELA X

I need to get these off. TORN ANGELA

I need to get these off. ANGELA X

WES
(*pause*)
The worst attack. The one that started it...

I can't take this. ANGELA X

Black boils on her jaw. WES

My face. ANGELA X

WES
I woke up in the middle of the night. She woke me up. She had been distraught about this latest flare, how it looked, how it felt. But this...I'd never seen her like this. She was scratching...

Off off off. TORN ANGELA

Scraping... WES

I can't take this. TORN ANGELA

Tearing her skin...off. WES

ANGELA X / TORN

This isn't my face.

WES

It was like she lost her mind. Did serious damage to herself, her face. They asked me if she was on something, it was so extreme.

ANGELA X / TORN

This isn't my face!

WES

She went into surgery, came out...changed.

ANGELA X

Disfigured.

WES

An awful bit of irony...

ANGELA X

Mangled.

WES

...injuring her face that night, it actually saved her life. The condition of her jaw had worsened...the surgeons said she was lucky...

TORN ANGELA

Lucky...that sounds like me.

WES

Part of her jaw was dead and becoming necrotic, but her skin condition had masked it. She was at serious risk of septic shock and didn't even know it.

ANGELA X

They removed a large part of my jaw.

Angela X removes a "bone." Holds it in front of herself.

WES

...she...her face was gone, just a hole in one side. She was all patched together, sewn up. Didn't even look like herself.

ANGELA X / TORN

Too much damage. Can't give it back.

WES

It would be some time before she could get a new face. It would require reconstruction. Grafts. Countless surgeries. It would take time.

ANGELA X

Unwind. Unwind. Cut. Peel. Strip.

WES

There you are.

TORN ANGELA

Wes.

WES

I'm here.

TORN ANGELA

Wes.

WES

Yes, Angie, it's me. I'm here. Just...it's ok...

TORN ANGELA

I need to get these off. I need to get these off.

WES

I need to get these off, again and again.

TORN ANGELA

It's like waking up from a long sleep.

WES

I need to get these off.

TORN ANGELA

Everything aches. It's all bright and loud.

WES

We may have been happier if she kept them on. The bandages...

TORN ANGELA

Nothing looks right.

WES

I mean she might've...I'm sorry, I didn't mean it like...I mean it's...

TORN ANGELA

Unnatural.

She starts pulling at some bandages.

WES

Be careful.

TORN ANGELA

How much longer do I have to keep these on?

WES

Not long. Tomorrow we can change them.

TORN ANGELA

...Am I different under here? I feel different.

WES

I'm sure you look like yourself.

TORN ANGELA

I'm going to have to wear my masks for the rest of my life.

WES

No you won't.

TORN ANGELA

I want to get rid of the mirrors.

ANGELA X

Looking in the mirror is something humans should never do...we can learn a lot from animals...cats, for example, they're smart, they won't look in the mirror.

WES

We're not getting rid of the mirrors, we can cover them up for a time, if you want.

TORN ANGELA

I have so many masks, why not wear them?

WES

I don't want you to hide away.

ANGELA X

Humans aren't vain...we're frightened.

TORN ANGELA

I'm not hiding.

ANGELA X

Self-conscious. Find a self-conscious lion.

TORN ANGELA

I love my masks, some of them are gorgeous.

ANGELA X

No, find a self-conscious snake.

WES

She refused to rest, started digging through her masks. She must have been in pain, but it didn't seem to bother her...or it did but she ignored it.

ANGELA X

Snakes are stunning and they know it, they're smooth, simplistic. And some of them have those hoods, those...you know. Those are nice.

TORN ANGELA

I mean, why not wear them?

WES

Those things are not you.

TORN ANGELA

You like them, you've said so.

WES

Your face is not you. Your disease is not you.

ANGELA X

They don't need hair or jewelry or accessories, they got the ultimate one right there. It's beautiful, intimidating.

TORN ANGELA

So what am I?

ANGELA X

...elegant, graceful, strong...

WES

And the scars...those would never go away. Even after getting a transplant and having a jaw again, she'd be covered in scars.

TORN ANGELA

Tell me.

WES

I just wanted to help her. I just wanted to take her pain away. But I didn't know how. She seemed... untouchable.

ANGELA X

Untouchable...they're flawless. That's how I want to feel.

WES

The doctor even said so. Well, you can imagine...when I saw her in the hospital, lying there, I reached out to...well, see if this was really her I guess. But the doctor said I couldn't...

ANGELA X / TORN

You're nervous?

WES

No, I get it, she was all banged up, recuperating and so...

ANGELA X / TORN

Don't tell me you're nervous.

WES

I want so bad to make her happy, when the woman you love hates herself so much...it takes a toll. Makes you feel helpless.

ANGELA X / TORN

You're not allowed to be nervous.

WES

Why shouldn't I be?

TORN ANGELA

No matter how it looks I need you to act like it's not that bad.

WES

You want me to lie?

TORN ANGELA

Do you expect to?

WES

I don't know. No. I didn't mean, I mean I'm not...I have no expectations.

TORN ANGELA

No?

WES

No.

TORN ANGELA

You haven't thought non-stop about what it's gonna look like under here? It hasn't kept you up at night?