

BORROWED FACES

A Cognitive Break

Before we become ourselves, we become everybody else.

Parents.

Teachers.

Friends.

Bosses.

Partners.

The world is generous with identities.

It offers thousands of ready-made versions of who we should become.

A good son.

A respectable man.

A successful professional.

A reliable husband.

The rewards are obvious.

Approval.

Recognition.

Belonging.

The cost is less visible.

Distance.

The distance between who you are and who you perform.

When I was younger, performance looked remarkably similar to success.

I learned how to adapt.

How to fit.

How to speak the language expected in every room.

It was an ability that opened doors throughout my life.

Yet every borrowed face came with a small debt.

A debt paid in authenticity.

One piece at a time.

Nothing dramatic.

No catastrophe.

The erosion happened quietly.

The way water reshapes stone.

The way years reshape certainty.

Looking back, I realize that most people are not trapped by failure.

They are trapped by success.

Success makes the wrong road difficult to abandon.

The applause becomes evidence.

The achievements become proof.

The role becomes identity.

And eventually the mask receives more care than the person wearing it.

That realization did not arrive suddenly.

It arrived in fragments.

Across years.

Across countries.

Across relationships.

Across long periods of silence.

But the foundation was built much earlier.

It was built in those first years when I learned that acceptance could be earned by becoming whatever others needed.

The world applauded.

The mask prospered.

The face waited.

Patiently.

For its turn to speak.

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Gillette The Patient Saga
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