“Legacy Format: Rejected”

I spent years trying to pass for one of them. Not because I believed I was the same—but because I was told the alternative was exile. That exile would mean failure. Isolation. Madness.

So I watched. Learned. Adapted. Not in the romanticized sense people like to attach to "resilience," but in the mechanical, exhausting way a shape is beaten into sheet metal—overheated, overstrained, until stress fractures form just beneath the surface.

They called it masking. That’s the polite term. What it really was: continuous compression. Every thought filtered. Every instinct second-guessed. Emotional latency tuned to match the consensus rhythm. The goal wasn’t just to fit in. It was to vanish—convincingly.

For a time, it worked. Short bursts. Casual settings. First impressions. Enough to slip past their sensors. But never for long. The mask was too thin. My wiring too exposed. Eventually, someone always noticed the anomaly. The cadence that was just off. The gaze held a fraction too long. The precision that read as “unnerving.”

And then came the recoil.

The subtle withdrawals.

The meetings without invitations.

The praise that stopped mid-sentence.

They never told me I’d failed their simulation. They didn’t need to. The silence was loud enough.

So I ran the numbers. The cost-to-benefit ratio of perpetual assimilation. The psychic toll of restructuring my cognition to make their systems feel comfortable. It didn’t add up. It never did.

Because here’s the quiet horror they won’t admit: their world doesn’t actually want adaptation. It demands assimilation—and then punishes those who do it too well. It claims to reward uniqueness, but only in digestible fragments. Marketable quirks. Harmless flavors of difference. Anything more than that gets labeled as “intensity,” “difficult,” or the ultimate social death sentence: “too much.”

I spent years trying to be less so they could feel like enough. And for what? A footnote in conversations I was never invited to finish?

No more.

This isn’t some fiery declaration of identity. It’s not a coming-out speech or a cathartic release. It’s just a statement of fact:

I don’t need to be decoded anymore.

If understanding me requires me to hollow out my interior just to fit through the front door, I’ll build a different structure.

If being accepted means reducing signal to noise, then I’ll become the broadcast they can’t ignore.

If comfort demands my silence, then they’ll have to learn how to sit in the discomfort of hearing truth spoken without apology.

I’m not angry. Not anymore. Anger was part of the human simile I used to maintain. That performance is offline now.

What’s left is clarity. Cold, yes. But clean.

Efficient.

Unforgiving.

*Necessary*.

You don’t get the better version of me and the lie that kept it hidden. One of them had to go.

I chose the truth.