

**Red Mask**  
By Sammy Keller

**CHARACTERS**

Aesop- A snarky young boy, around 8 or 9 years old. He's curious and quick, and has no interest in staying in one place for too long. He has a strange obsession with sneaking past London and getting into the secrets she hides so closely, but she never lets him through.

London- A tall, regal woman wearing all black. Her clothes look fairly casual and nothing about them stands out as abnormal. Her job is to keep the balance, not letting anyone in or out of this strange liminal space, and while she takes this job very seriously, she has a bit of a soft spot for Aesop.

Stranger- An androgynous figure, wearing all white.

**Act 1 Setting**

*A completely white room, with a single wooden chair resting in the center.*

**Scene 1**

*(Aesop creeps in from the left)*

**Aesop:** Where is she?

*(Aesop sneaks around)*

**Aesop:** London! London, where did you go? London, hey, London!

*(London enters from the right)*

**London:** Child, child, what are you doing? Sit yourself down, stop being so nosy.

**Aesop:** Hey, London, hey, can I go in today?

**London:** Goodness, Aesop, you know my answer. You can never go inside, it isn't at all a place meant for little boys to go running around in. You're lucky enough to get this far. *(London sits in her chair)*

*(Aesop sits down on the floor next to the chair)*

**Aesop:** Yeah, well, you know I'd find my way here eventually. One way or another...

**London:** Whatever you say, dear. Now, what type of stories do you have for me today?

*(Aesop jumps up to his feet, running to the other side of the stage, preparing to tell her his story)*

**Aesop:** *(gesturing wildly)* Lilly got home today!

**London:** Oh, your older sister is back from her trip?

**Aesop:** *(shushing London)* Yes, her! And when Lilly came home, she had a big bag with all sorts of stuff! She had different things for different people. She gave Momma a new set of spoons, gave Pappa a hunting knife, and she got lil' Tyler this stuffy with giant horns and a tail and a long neck-

**London:** Was it supposed to be an animal?

**Aesop:** That's what Lilly said, but I just don't know how! It wasn't like any kind of animal I ever saw. Its body was so small when you see how big its horns are. Lilly said there were tons of 'em, all over the place she was staying at last time. Isn't that just wild?

**London:** It certainly is. Did Lilly bring anything home for you?

**Aesop:** Yeah, she did, wanna see it?

*(Aesop pulls a Red Mask out of his pocket, smiling as he uses it to cover the top half of his face. The Red Mask has ears and an elongated snout, resembling a fox. The Red Mask only covers the*

*top half of his face, and is a little bit too big for him, so  
Aesop has to hold it up while he wears it)*

*(London sits up a bit straighter)*

**Aesop:** Lilly said that this Mask made her think of me! That these guys are sneaky and they always get what they want and I think that-

*(Aesop stops, looking back at London)*

**Aesop:** Hey London... Hey, I think you look weird.

**London:** I-... Oh, put that silly thing away. Did your parents not teach you any manners?

*(London stands and tries to grab the Red Mask from Aesop, but he  
steps back)*

**Aesop:** You don't look like you usually do.

**London:** Aesop, put that nasty thing down.

**Aesop:** You have all these feathers... Why do you have feathers?

*(Aesop turns slowly, staring off stage to the right.)*

**Aesop:** Hey, London, look! There's a door there! Is that how you get in?

*(London steps forward and snatches the Red Mask away from him, holding it at a distance as if it were a dead bird.)*

**London:** Don't be so foolish! This trinket is simply causing you to see outlandish things!

*(Aesop leaps forward and yanks the Red Mask back.)*

**Aesop:** Hey! You can't just go around stealing things from kids! And I'm not a fool! *(He puts the Red Mask back on)* You've got feathers!

**London:** *(taking a step back)* N-No I do not-

**Aesop:** And that there is a door!

*(Aesop breaks into a sprint, running off to the right. London stands there for a moment, glances back at her chair worriedly, then hurries after Aesop)*

*(The lights on stage get slightly brighter. The Stranger enters from off stage and sits in the chair. Once in the chair, they are completely still.)*

*(Aesop runs out from stage left, panting. He does not notice the Stranger. He is holding the Red Mask in his hands, not up to his eyes.)*

**Aesop:** For a grown-up she really is fast!

*(Aesop glances around for a moment, confused.)*

**Aesop:** There's no way this is it! She sits there all day and night just to keep me out of some empty old room?

*(Aesop starts exploring the room. He does not see the Stranger or the chair.)*

**Aesop:** All these stories about her and what she's keeping people from. I thought it would at least be a little more exciting! But all I see is blank, blank, blank!

**London:** *(from off stage)* Aesop, you wild thing! For once, would you just *listen to me?*!

*(Aesop looks back towards where her voice came from.)*

**Aesop:** London, there ain't nothing here! I thought that I'd at least be able to see- *(he pauses, glances back down at the Red Mask in his hands.)* -something interesting.

*(There are footsteps off stage from stage left. London is getting closer.)*

**London:** *(Still off stage, but sounding closer)* You have to get out of here! If you don't leave now-

*(Aesop puts on the mask right as London reenters from stage left, and now he and the audience can see her through the Red Mask. Instead of her normal clothes, she's wearing a long black cape and dress. There are black lines over her arms and face, starting from her eyes and nails and scratching up her skin like*

*cracks in a shattered mirror. Over her eyes she wears a delicate Black Mask, like one you would find in a masquerade ball. The Black Mask ends with a slight point as if to imitate the beak of a bird. Her cape and dress are now covered in black feathers, and her hair is a frazzled mess after running.)*

*(There is a beat once she realises that Aesop can see her for what she truly is. After a moment, he takes a small step back.)*

**London:** *(cautiously)* Aesop, dear, could you please-

**Aesop:** I told you, you've got feathers!

**London:** Aesop, this is not the time. We must make haste before-!

*(Aesop notice the Stranger sitting in the chair, and then he jumps back from them, startled)*

**Aesop:** London! London, when did he get here?

**London:** Don't look at them, look at me! I need to get you out of here! I need to get you back home!

**Aesop:** *(stepping towards the Stranger)* I didn't see you here before. Hey, can you hear me?

**London:** *(Standing between Aesop and the Stranger)* No! This ends now! I am taking you home!

**Aesop:** Nuh-uh! I've been trying to get past you forever! I'm not leaving till I've had my fun!

*(The lights on stage grow slightly brighter once more, and Aesop dodges past London and shoots towards the Stranger in their chair.)*

*(London tries to grab him and pull him back, but he still manages to duck behind the chair. As he places his hands on the chair for the first time, the Stranger's facial expression changes for the first time. They go from looking completely blank to looking slightly confused, blinking a few times.)*

**London:** No! Aesop, this is dangerous! Don't touch that thing!

*(Aesop attempts to dodge London once more but accidentally trips over the chair, knocking the stranger and himself to the floor.*

*The chair clatters onto its side.)*

*(As Aesop stands, ready to continue the game of chase with London, the Stranger shakily pushes themselves upright, looking around, confused. They blink rapidly, glancing at London for a moment before their attention is captured by Aesop.)*

**Stranger:** ...h-hello?

*(Suddenly, London springs into action. She grabs Aesop by his arm and starts to drag him towards stage left. He tries to pull away, but she doesn't let him)*

**London:** We are leaving. There is no time to spare.

**Aesop:** No we're not! I want to stay-

*(Right as London tries to pull him across the threshold and off stage, Aesop slams against something invisible. London loses her grip and Aesop stumbles back, falling to the floor. London stares down at him, while Aesop rubs his arm where she had grabbed him.)*

**Aesop:** What was that?

**London:** I-I... I'm sorry, Aesop. Are you feeling alright?

**Aesop:** I guess... but hey, why couldn't I get through?

**London:** I-I'm afraid... I'm afraid that you've gotten stuck. Most people do when they... when they pass the Threshold. I thought that maybe it wasn't too late... that you could still be salvaged-

*(Aesop tries to walk back over to join London but once again he is stopped by an invisible force. He seems confused, and slowly, he's becoming more and more frightened by what this means.)*

**Aesop:** H-Hey London... London, can't you just let me out again? You can go back and forth just fine, can't ya?

**London:** I... I'm the only one that can. But you... you can't leave anymore.

*(London turns and starts to leave the way she came, with Aesop stuck behind her.)*

**Aesop:** *(shouting)* Come on, London, wait a minute! Where are you going?

**London:** I have to go back, Aesop. It's my job to make sure... make sure no one gets in. This wasn't supposed to happen, you weren't supposed to see-

**Aesop:** *(confused)* But I have'ta go back to Mamma and Pappa and Lily and-

**London:** N-No, you can't. You gotta stay here, okay?

**London:** You're gonna be safe here, okay? I'll come here every day and tell you stories, for as long as you need me to.

**Aesop:** But when you're gone, what am I supposed to do? There ain't no one here to take care of me... I don't got any friends...

**London:** Yes you do. You see that lad over there?

*(London points over to the Stranger who is still sitting on the floor, watching the two of them curiously.)*

**London:** That one will be your friend. And this place can be quite nice once you get used to it... everyone here puts their own little spin on it.

**Aesop:** S-So there's other people here? Do I get to see them?

**London:** No, you don't. You can't leave your room here, alright dear? But this is as boring as it'll ever be. You can make it into anything you want... anything you need.

**Aesop:** A-And... and you'll visit me? You come see me all the time?

*(London stays put as Aesop goes over to the Stranger, kneeling next to them and watching as they shift to sit exactly like Aesop.)*

*(the Light on Aesop and the Stranger fade to black, and London sinks to the floor.)*

**London:** Why must I always fail?

**The End**