Me, Moi-même, and I

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Cast of Characters

Alex – Male. Early 20’s. He is currently taking prescription medication for anxiety, though he also suffers from paranoid delusions. His nervous or panicked behavior as a result of his condition is described in the directions given throughout the script. Alex both works and goes to school.

John – Male. Early 20’s. Alex’s roommate and schoolmate. Friendly, amicable character.

The Aggressor – One of the two additional voices in Alex’s head, apart from his own. The Aggressor is the most dominant voice that Alex hears. He is relentless, outwardly angry, demeaning, and often frightening. At times, he switches to a sweet, delicate voice, but it his angry mania that pervades his personality.

The Paranoia – Second of two voices in Alex’s head. He is often frightened, worried, and panicked. His speaking is rapid. He introduces thoughts of others trying to persecute or harm Alex.

Mother – Female. Alex’s mother. (Voice only).

Notes on character representation: Alex, John, and the voices should be actors with physical presentations (i.e., they are on stage with Alex when speaking.) Whereas the Mother is a vocal role only, heard at the end of the play. Alex does not see the voices, and so does not make eye contact with those actors. Further, he does not touch them.

Setting

The setting is Alex’s apartment, present time period. There should at least be some partition (physically or by lighting, etc.) to identify Alex’s room separate from John’s. Other furnishings, arrangements, and lighting are at the director’s discretion.

Synopsis

A young man copes with his mental illness and the voices that accompany it.
ACT I SCENE I

(Early morning. Alex is in his bed at his apartment, awoken from sleep by his alarm clock. As he awakes, he is visibly stretching out and rubbing his sore jaw. A constant side effect of his medication is bruxism. As soon as he hits the alarm clock, The Aggressor barges in. It is important, again, to note that Alex does not see any of the voices.)

AGGRESSOR: (kneeling down by Alex’s bed, inches from his face. He speaks with an almost motherly tone, but is mocking Alex.) Awwww, does your jaw hurt? Poor thing! You know, I can’t tell you I’m surprised this would happen.

(Alex is annoyed already. The Aggressor is the representation of his thoughts racing the second he awakes. Alex rises out of bed and begins to dress for work, business casual. It is apparent that he is distressed and exhausted. The Aggressor continues as Alex moves:)  

AGGRESSOR: Oh that’s right, ignore me. (Sighing) I’m not here. Pretend like I’m not here. (The Aggressor paces behind Alex as he gets ready for work.) Wait until you get to work and I’ll fade away. (Nervously.) To do, to do, what to do. Remember to e-mail that professor about that class next semester. I have to get gas for my car. You forgot to bind that book last weekend. Until each time you find yourself clenching your jaw you’ll remember me. (He breaks from thought. Again, almost motherly, he is next to Alex.) Ah, ta, ta, ta, you’re losing your hair still. (Alex is seen fixing his hair for work.) You know I heard if you keep touching it like that it falls out faster. (Alex’s annoyance with the voice should be apparent in his face and body language, i.e., a deep exhale of breath.) And look, more breakouts. (Alex is touching his face for pimples. He should be continuing to get ready to leave his apartment for work.) You know you really should get some sleep Alex, you’re looking awfully tired. I wonder if people look at you and think you’re a junkie or always hungover.

(Alex grabs his keys to leave.)

AGGRESSOR: Uh, uh, uh. Aren’t we forgetting something?

(Alex opens the pill bottle on his desk, takes a pill, and leaves.)

AGGRESSOR: I’ll see you when you get home from school.

(Lights dim.)

SCENE II

(Lights up. Alex returns from work and school, and is entering the apartment. Several lines in this section are said simultaneously between actors and are denoted as such. The Paranoia closely follows Alex as he enters his apartment, babbling nervously.)
PARANOIA (spoken rapidly as Alex enters the door to his apartment. John is at home.): Did you notice that woman in the car when you walked in? What was she doing outside of the apartment? I think she was waiting to tell someone you were coming in so they can come after you. Alex, I think someone is trying to break in to the apartment. Alex ---

JOHN (cheerfully): Hey, bro!

ALEX: What’s up dude? (Alex again stretching his jaw, a bit of discomfort on his face.)

JOHN: You’re home early, huh?

(The Paranoia is beside Alex, whispering in his ear. The following lines from the Paranoia should carry on despite John and Alex’s conversation.)

PARANOIA: Why was he asking if you’re home early? He was plotting something. He was trying to hide something in your room. Make sure you check your closets. Both of them. I bet he put a camera in your room and watches you. I think he hired spies to come in and keep an eye on you.

ALEX: John it’s 1:30 in the morning.

JOHN: I mean…this is early for you.

ALEX (smirking): Ha, yeah.

(They are done speaking. Alex pauses while the Paranoia resumes):

PARANOIA: You think he cares about you? He laughs about you to all of your friends. (In Alex’s face.) Says how he hates living with a psycho. That’s what he calls you. Don’t you get it he’s trying to hurt us.

JOHN: You all right, bro?

ALEX: Yeah dude, I’m fine. Just, tough day (pacing to his room.)

JOHN: You goin’ to bed right now?

(The next line by the Paranoia continues with their conversation.)

PARANOIA: Why does he care when you’re going to sleep? He’s trying to kill you in your sleep and make it look like an accident so everyone thinks you’re suicidal. He tells people you steal from him, you know. Everyone thinks you’re a criminal Alex.

ALEX (Alex begins nervously scratching his eyebrow. This is the beginning of an anxiety attack.): In a bit, I have some thesis stuff to finish up before I pass out.

JOHN: All right bro, you’re crazy. I’ll see you tomorrow.
ALEX: Peace dude.

Alex retreats into his dark room. He pauses for a moment after entering, shutting his eyes trying to relax. As the lights flip on to his room, the Aggressor is standing there.

With the lights on, Alex remains in place, his eyes darting around the room. His breathing is becoming more rapid. He checks all corners of the room to make sure no one and nothing are there.

PARANOIA: (As Alex, growing more frantic, continues to check his room) What about the ceilings? Did you check the ceilings? (Putting his ear to a wall.) I think I can hear them in the wall. (In the meantime, The Paranoia continues to look around the room.)

(Alex’s panic attack is beginning to take hold of him. After his room checks, his breathing should be fully audible, his body starting to be consumed by nervousness, his eyes darting about the room.)

AGGRESSOR: What are you doing? Why are we doing this? We aren’t crazy. Oh yes, (rolls eyes), check the walls. (Angrily, toward himself.) This isn’t me. This isn’t me. This isn’t me. (Getting angrily sad.) Alex I don’t know why you always do this to us. (Meanwhile, Alex kneels to sit on the floor, shaking. The panic is overwhelming. He has difficulty breathing and moving.)

(The following three lines are to be said simultaneously between The Aggressor, The Paranoia, and Alex.)

ALEX (through clenched teeth): Just stop. Stop. Please stop. Just stop. Make it stop. (He continues to repeat until the other two are finished.)

PARANOIA (yelling, worried): Alex get up! What are you doing! They’re coming for us! They’re going to kill us! Alex! Alex!

AGGRESSOR (almost crying, growing manic himself.): Why can’t you just leave me alone Alex. Let me be me. I just want to be me, alone by myself. Alex, stop this stop this. AGGRESSOR should begin thrashing his head around with his hands, making inaudible noises. The Paranoia is frightened by his own self.)

ALEX (shouting, he is yelling to his voices): Listen. This is enough. No more of this bullshit. This has gone on for months now. I can’t deal with it anymore. The paranoia, the anger, the headaches, the anxiety. (Pointing to his own chest.) This is me. Okay?! I am in control. It’s me. You’ve had your fun, but it’s time we pull our shit together, okay? There’s no need for this. You’re only making things – (He is cut off by a knock on the door from his roommate.)

JOHN: Alex? You okay, bro?
(The next lines by the Paranoia are spoken simultaneously with the conversation between Alex and John.)

PARANOIA (panicked, as usual): He can hear you. He’s been listening in to you. He can hear us, he put a chip in your brain. He doesn’t care, he’s planning when he can finish you.

ALEX: Ya, dude, I just need a second…. I’m fine.

(Alex loses the final grips on his self-control. He begins very loudly whispering, in an attempt to keep John from listening. He should be visibly shaken and angry.)

ALEX (still shouting, as a whisper): This is over. This stops. Right now. (His hands are waving, he pounds his head.) No more fighting, no more back and forth. No more babble and this and that and that. I AM DONE – I DON’T--- (cut off by the aggressor).

AGGRESSOR: (Angrily, no more crying, he is standing behind Alex, bent over to speak in his ear.) Don’t you get it? (Almost smiling, triumphant.) You can’t win. Give up. These? (motioning to the pill bottle). These aren’t going to get rid of me. Instead what do they do? (He is standing now, circling around Alex.) All the jaw clenching, the fits of quiet anger. How many people have you told that you take your hands off the steering wheel when you drive because you think you’re gonna cut the wheel the other way? You keep taking these to try to put me into nothingness but guess what Alex? (At this point Alex puts his face into his hands, beating his head with his hands. He is shaken and getting angry. His anxiety attack is still strong. The Aggressor halts in front of Alex, staring at him, an inch from his face. His voice is at a loud volume, and he speaks through clenched teeth.) I am you. Okay? (Louder now) Give up. You’re losing it. You’re losing control. This isn’t you anymore.

(Alex remains shaking. The Aggressor continues, but calmly now, walking around Alex. Alex speaks at the same time as the Aggressor):

Alex: This is me. I’m here. This is just me. It’s okay. (Repeating.)

And this is when the panic sets in Alex. Yelling and yelling at me like you’re the one in control. Ha! You look pathetic right now. You. Can’t. Win. (Alex, out of desperation, puts out his hand and spits in his palm, then sliding his hand down his pants, rubbing his genitals vigorously, hoping some sexual arousal will white out The Aggressor. Lights may dim on The Paranoia, temporarily. The Aggressor continues):

Ha! What are you doing? (In a mocking tone) Let’s sit here and pretend like you can get hard, and you can forget about me for ten minutes, and you can come, and everything will be all right. Go ahead. I’ll wait. The Aggressor pauses for a few moments, staring at Alex, condescendingly, tapping his foot. After the pause the Aggressor continues, moaning, rubbing himself, and speaking as if he were having sex)
Oh yeah. Come on. Yeah, fuck me. Ah, yea. I like that. Come on fuck me. I want it. (He stops. Returns to his normal self.) Let’s see. What were the side effects of that medication? Saying good bye to a sex life. (Bending down to meet Alex’s face.) You couldn’t come right now even if I weren’t here. How’s that jaw by the way? (Louder, throught clenched teeth.) How’s that jaw, Alex? (Louder.) Give it up Alex.

Alex stops, though his breathing is audible. From the floor, he looks up, across his room. The Aggressor follows his gaze.

AGGRESSOR: Oh those pills? Now we’re thinking about those pills.

Alex, after some difficulty, manages to get up, crawling over to a drawer in his room, and pulls out a second pill bottle, this one originally hidden. He pauses and stares at the label, shaking, then darts his vision around the room.

PARANOIA: Alex don’t take those. Alex you know what will happen. You know it’s poison she gave you Alex. (The Paranoia continues to mutter his usual talk, in the background, the Aggressor cutting him off.)

AGGRESSOR: You know what’s funny, Alex? Take one of those and what happens? I go away, you calm down. But then right before you fall asleep, the guilt washes over you. You know what happens if you keep taking them Alex. One today, one tomorrow. One after that. And then what happens when they’re all gone? (sternly.) Withdrawal. And I come right back again.

Alex opens up the pill bottle, and tilts it to spill a pill into his cupped palm. A few extra pills fall out. The Aggressor is next to Alex, whispering in his ear.

AGGRESSOR: Oh oops. A few too many there. Why not just take them all, Alex?

(Alex dumps the rest back into the bottle, taking two. He closes his eyes and exhales deeply. Alex returns to the floor, on his back, he is weak. The Aggressor continues, fading out.)

AGGRESSOR: I’m gonna be right here again when you wake up Alex. I’m not your anxiety. You made me, Alex. It’s just you and me. (The Aggressor joins him on the floor, laying down, and whispers inaudibly in Alex’s ear.)

Alex’s breathing, still fast, is returning to normal. The pill bottle in his hand. He is staring blankly at the ceiling. After a few moments pause, he reaches into his pocket for his cell phone, and calls his mother. His breathing and speech is slower, the more potent medication is kicking in.

ALEX: Mom.

MOTHER: (almost concerned.) Hi honey.
ALEX: (pausing for a moment.) I need to see my doctor again.

MOTHER: (understanding.) Okay.

ALEX: Okay. (His arm, with his muscles now relaxed, flops onto the floor, he exhales, and curls himself into sleep.)

(lights dim)

THE END