

ONE

Panel 1: Close-up of Jack, an 18-year-old high school senior with short, straight, neat hair and an athletic build, standing in his bedroom, staring at himself in the mirror. His expression is blank but with a hint of tension around his eyes. Behind him, his room is organized and clean, filled with sports and academic medals and framed awards.

CAPTION: “Jack has always been the perfect son.”

Panel 2: Jack’s mom, a cheerful woman in her 40s, stands next to a bulletin board in his room, pinning a new academic award, among many others. She’s smiling proudly while Jack stands beside her. His shoulders are slightly slumped, adding a subtle sign of exhaustion.

Mom: “Another one for the board! You make us so proud Jack.”

CAPTION: “Perfect grades...”

Panel 3: Jack is at a basketball game in a packed gym. He’s dribbling the ball down the court, sweat on his forehead, but his expression is distant. The other players and coach cheer him on, oblivious to his internal conflict.

CAPTION: “He’s an athlete...”

Panel 4: Jack walks through the school hallway with his girlfriend, Sarah. She’s bright and fashionable, holding his hand tightly. Jack is smiling, but it’s forced; his eyes dart away as if he’s looking for an escape.

CAPTION: “And he has the perfect girlfriend...”

Jack (thought): “I should be happy...I have everything anyone could ever ask for. But why do I feel trapped?”

TWO

Panel 5: Jack sits at his desk at home, books and notebooks open in front of him. Staring at a blank page. The light from his desk lamp casts harsh shadows on his face, creating a tense feeling.

Jack (thought): “Everyone thinks I have it all... but it feels like I’m pretending to be someone I’m not.”

Panel 6: Jack and Sarah are seated beside each other in a booth at a diner. Sarah is talking with her hands and describes their “perfect” future together. Jack listens with a polite smile, but his eyes shift towards a boy sitting in front of them. He has this curious gaze.

Sarah: “...then we’ll go to McMaster together, get a place together, and eventually have a mini us!”

Jack (thought): “Why does this feel so wrong?”

Panel 7: Jack is in class and gets a text. A close-up of Jack’s phone screen. A new text from Sarah pops up: “I love you so much”. Slightly hesitant to type back.

Jack (thought): “I’m a lucky guy. I’m lucky to have her... right?”

Panel 8: Jack is walking alone in a park in the evening, surrounded by trees. He’s looking down, hands in his pockets, visibly deep in thought. Leaves are all over the ground and the park lights shine down on him, creating a sense of quiet loneliness.

CAPTION: “He’s starting to wonder if there’s something wrong with him.”

THREE

Panel 9: Jack is lying in bed in the middle of the night, unable to sleep, scrolling through social media on his phone. He watches a edit of Heartstopper with Nick Nelson and Charlie Spring; they’re holding hands, smiling.

Jack (thought): “They look... happy and cute together. Is that what it’s like?”

Panel 10: Close-up of Jack gazing at the edit with a faint, vulnerable expression, almost like he’s seeing himself in a mirror.

Jack (thought): “Why do I feel like this... why can’t I stop watching?”

Panel 11: At basketball practice, Jack glances over at his teammate, Eli, a charming, relaxed guy who’s laughing with friends. Jack’s gaze lasts longer than usual; his cheeks turn pink as he realizes he finds him attractive.

Jack (thought): “He’s a chill friend, that’s all. Right?”

Panel 12: Jack quickly looks away, gripping the basketball tightly, as if trying to hold onto his “perfect” image.

Jack (thought): “No, no. I can’t feel this way.”

FOUR

Panel 13: Jack sits at a family dinner, his parents excitedly talking about his future. His mom is talking about him and Sarah, and his dad smiles approvingly. Jack forces his smile, holding onto his fork tightly.

Mom: "I'm happy for you and Sarah, the two of you fit. My boy is growing up so fast!"

Jack (thought): "What if I don't fit... with her?"

Panel 14: Jack is lying in bed at night, staring at the ceiling in the dark. The only light comes from a streetlamp outside his window. Looking isolated and lost in thousands of thoughts.

Jack (thought): "Why do I feel like... I'm living someone else's life?"

Panel 15: Flashback to Jack as a child, looking at a magazine photo of a male model with curious eyes. He's confused but intrigued, though he doesn't fully understand his feelings yet.

Jack (thought): "Maybe I've always known..."

Panel 16: Back to the present. Jack is now holding his phone, he types "How do I know if I am gay?" into the search bar. He looks scared and relieved as this question has been hiding in his mind for a long time.

Jack (thought): "I have to know who I really am."

FIVE

Panel 17: Jack scrolling through articles on sexuality. His face shows a mixture of fear, curiosity, and relief as he begins to understand. He seems tense.

CAPTION: "Jack starts to confront the questions he's ignored for so long."

Panel 18: Jack watching a video of someone talking about their sexual journey and coming out journey. He's captivated, and he sees echoes of his struggle.

Jack (thought): "Maybe... I'm not alone."

Panel 19: Jack sees another text from Sarah, this one filled with red heart emojis. He hesitates, his finger hovering over the message but not opening it, then turns off his phone and goes to bed.

Jack (thought): "This is about me... not who I'm 'supposed' to be."

Panel 20: Jack sitting at a park bench, glancing over at Eli laughing with friends. This time, he doesn't look away, allowing himself a small smile.

Jack (thought): "This feels normal. Like I'm finally breathing."

SIX

Panel 21: Jack in his bedroom, standing in front of the mirror once more, but this time with a hint of a genuine, peaceful smile. He's looking at himself with clarity, finally seeing himself for who he is.

Jack (thought): "I'm more than their idea of 'perfect.' I'm... me."

Panel 22: Jack is sitting across from Sarah in a quiet coffee shop. His expression is serious but gentle, while Sarah listens, starting to understand.

Jack: "Sarah... I need to be honest with you. About who I am."

Panel 23: Jack walks alone through the park, the sun setting behind him. He looks relieved, almost lighter as if a weight has finally lifted from his shoulders.

CAPTION: "For the first time, he feels like himself."

Panel 24: Close-up of Jack's face as he looks up at the sky with a peaceful smile, the colours of the sunset painting a serene background.

CAPTION: "He may not be perfect to them, but he's finally himself."