

The Mask

By Neha Mishra

I anxiously stare at the mirror. I am ready.
But wait, my skin tingles.
Hush! It who shall not be named has arrived.
Ready to embark on its next reign.
Terrorize my every vein. I feel agonizing pain.
It creeps over my soul as the slender fingers wrap around my shoulder.
Like a snake entrapping my entire body
Slowly crushing me. I stand paralyzed, barely clinging on to life.

I cogitate why I am not putting up a fight!
In desperation, I look to my side.
I see failure grinning wide.
Self-doubt brushes my hair
Bad intentions whisper in my ear
Tied down with the ropes of despair
I shake, with pure fear
My feet are stuck, glued down by depressive thoughts.

Will I survive? I have before.
How much can I take?
I am sick of this to the core!
Whom do I ask? Do I silently suffocate?
I don't want to look desperate!
Everyone else looks great.

Though, I can imagine their eyes filled with judgment when I ask for a hand.
The ground turns into quicksand!
I am sinking fast, desperate, for help is what I am.
As a desert, I am barren.
Stripped of the raindrops of comfort and acceptance to hydrate my soul
My inner space is just an empty frame
With no happiness, contentment, and will
My roots are cracking. They cannot spread out anymore.
Why can't someone free me from this cage so I can escape?

The doorbell rings breaking me out of its tormenting phase.
Oh, it is time to go.
Sayonara, it, who shall not be named. Time to put on my mask and put on the show.
This show is fake as it always has been. Dripping with joy, satisfaction, and sake.
I smile at my friends.
But, masked behind my grin, I feel its sly hands resting on my shoulders.
A steady pressure whose weight is increasing.
A burden that I can never get rid of forever.