



# **Masquerade**

**Story by: Abigail Rowe, Student  
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*We all wear masks. However, that was not literal when that turn of phrase was used. When it comes down to it. The masks that we wore prior to the pandemic were often to protect our emotional and mental feelings. However, now we wear masks to protect ourselves and others from a physical standpoint.*

*When the pandemic first started, I didn't want to believe it, I thought it all a hoax and that it would never touch us, but I soon was proven wrong and began to see things differently. The wearing of masks became mandated, and I began to feel that the saying "We all wear masks" now was reaching a new level. I found my life completely turned around and didn't know what to think. However, even though I found it at times constricting and often bothersome to wear a mask out of my own home, I found that it could quickly turn into something fun.*

*When first beginning to wear the masks, they were the typical paper masks, with no color and often no telling people apart. However, soon after the pandemic was sure to become a "regular" thing, people started to create their own masks to help turn something eerie and gloomy into a ray of sunshine for those who needed something more than just a standard blue surgical mask.*

*I remember when my stepmom, Diane, began making masks, using scraps of fabric that she had stashed away from years ago. She was even able to develop a new way to wear the masks so that they could fit according to size of face for people. I can never recall just how many she made, but she was able to bring a little fun to an unfortunate situation. Before long, I found myself wearing a mask that was no longer dull and white, but now was colorful. I can't tell you the endless compliments that I would often get on them.*

*After a time, when the pandemic was still raging, I found myself beginning to loath the mask mandates and often would complain how it was hard to breathe, and I couldn't speak properly to people, which was hard to do when you worked in the retail business. However, after starting a job at my local Boot Barn, I had the chance to try out a different mask, created by one of my favorite brands, Ariat. This mask became my favorite go-to, and I quickly learned how to deal with wearing a mask while also being able to talk to people properly again. I could now smile with my eyes again and laugh as I once did and give people something to smile about as I served them.*

*I suppose the moral is that we all do wear masks, and now I can find some semblance of joy in that, because in the end, it not only protects, but it also can brighten someone's day.*

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**Artist: Ruth Cronje, Professor Emerita of English  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

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