



TEJAS YADAV

Masquerade

I waltz into a
Room full of
Masked intentions.
Do they spot me
Unmask me?

No, because I carry
My own cover
Like a brown visor.
Their masks are all
White : high cheekbones
Aquiline noses
Green blue eyes
Lurk like wordless judgements
Behind plastered smiles.

Their masks whisper
Intimately speaking of an
Intruder in the midst.
A knot tightens in my throat.
Yellow, black, caramel?
Colors drain from my brownness:
Am I an impostor?

Music strikes up, sinister.
Swirling and whirling
Throws me off kilter
For I have no partner.
Beaked masks hum and
Chant in twos
Like mystics in trance.

What are they saying?
Boil and trouble?
I escape to the periphery
As they occupy centrestage:
Confident, assured, daunting.
Dirges rise menacing under
A crystal dome.



Glittering, glaring
Fearing my expulsion
I crouch back as magical
Spinning tops with white masks
Swivel all around.

An orchestra awakens
Syncopates with the haunting
Masked chorus
All now chanting words known
But twisted into sounds unheard
Emanating from pallid beaks.

I grovel, recede, head for the doorway:
Mirrors encrusted in the walls
Reflect my alienation, despair,
displacement with a backdrop
Of nonchalant wafting bodies :
White masks in a golden cage.

Yet I do not escape: rooted
Like a tree: brown like my own mask,
One I cannot swap for a pearly one.
I watch and watch the swirling
Spinning
Turning
Pirouettes
Unconcerned
That I'm screaming
Now
To be seen.



BIOGRAPHY

Tejas Yadav is a writer & scientist. Themes of identity, race, alienation, social justice and mental health deeply inspire him. When not traveling to new lands or learning foreign languages, he enjoys good coffee & photography. After Mumbai, Oxford and New York, Tejas now lives in Paris. His published essays, reviews, and multilingual poetry can be found at <https://writejas.wordpress.com>.