

Masks by Clare Lauren Kelly

Whether or not we know it, we all have masks we wear. I don't mean a literal, physical mask, not that there's anything wrong with wearing a physical mask. They can be quite cool as well as very helpful when it comes to expressing yourself or blending in somewhere, and would be fitting to wear for something like a renaissance faire, a halloween costume or if you are going to a comic con. Seeing someone walking around downtown or in the grocery store with an actual theatre, stage or costume mask though isn't going to be something that is very normal most of the time, so that isn't the kind of mask that I am talking about here. But the kind of mask I am talking about is the face and persona that you put on when around different people.

While there is only one Clare, there are different parts of Clare and when needed, some of them can be hidden away under the mask of another. There are parts of me that fade to the back when I'm around my family, friends, work people, or around strangers. Parts of me that I bring to the front to cover other parts I don't want to share with just anyone and everyone I come across. A mask that is intended to make them comfortable, but also meant to make me comfortable as well.

Not everyone has the ability to be accepting, and some are much more accepting than others are or could ever be. Not always completely on them, not everyone is trying to be an asshole, because you need to remember that who we interact with and how we are interacted with as children plays a big part in who we are as we grow up. So in order to not be hurt all the time by what people say or how they treat us, we create different versions of ourselves to show, and I know that there is a chance that not everyone does this, but I do this and know that so do some other people I am friends with do wear masks or sorts as well. And it is always still us, there are just parts that are hidden away behind the mask. Parts we think won't be accepted within the situation or by the people.

Often though I have to admit, it can simply be in our heads that those parts of who we are will not be accepted. After all, if those parts are not accepted then we ourselves as a whole cannot really be accepted. Only the bits that were not hidden are what was seen as okay, the bits that are shown to others, but not all of the bits are shown.

So we wear these masks in order to protect ourselves, but if we all have them, why do we really need them in the first place? We have them to protect ourselves from judgement and ridicule from others, but others have masks and hidden parts as well for the same reasons as us. They are also just trying to protect themselves from the ridicule and judgement of the others in their life. We all have masks, in the hope that they can keep us from being hurt. So if we could all realize that and accept it and each other and ourselves, we could all be free from the masks. From the constant fear of not being welcomed, appreciated and respected for who we are as a person.

Because whether or not someone wants to admit it, it is something that is true for all of us to a degree. There are people that are more comfortable with who they are and will show more of it than some others might. But that only makes sense. Some people are just more comfortable in their own skin, and because of that they don't need as many masks as the rest of us do. There are people like me that, to a degree, know who they are but lack the confidence to remove the many masks they have put in place. Masks that are there to help me feel more comfortable to a degree so I can try and interact with people in my daily life.

So there is nothing wrong with having masks, but it is important to know which to wear when. Also, make an effort to find the people who you trust that you can be mask free around, the people you are comfortable being who you know you are with. At the end of the day, what matters is that you are happy with your life and with yourself. Not that other people and their opinion have made you into something and someone you are not.