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Masks

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Masks

Kelsey Miller-Alfero

On the wall hangs an African tribal mask
Beautiful yet terrifying at the same time.
I wonder how anyone watching a performance
Including such a prop
Would take it seriously
Believe it to be real
Get sucked into the life of the tiger
That this disguise represents.

But then I look to the scene
On the floor behind the mask
My father yelling
Calling out hideous names
As gruesome as the carcass of that tiger's last meal.
But my mother simply smiles
And walks away.

I ask her how she feels
But she lies so I won't worry
Yet she smiles in such a comforting manner
That I can't help believing she really isn't upset
I am sucked into this masquerade.

One night
I creep silently on all fours
To the door of her bedroom
And listen.

I don't hear the gentle snoring of a woman at peace
Rather, I hear whimpers
And an occasional sob

I realize that I have been duped
As foolish as the audience of the tiger performance
But I have performed the inexcusable
Act of sneaking backstage
I have seen the actress
Without her mask.