

Topic: Potpourri

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## The Lord of the Mask

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It was a warm day one early spring morning in the year 2040 when the Czar of the Republic of WhyNot spoke to the citizenry of this great nation. It read in part, "Oy Yeah, Oy Yeah. It is hereby proclaimed that all citizens are now required to wear identical facemasks." The Czar went on for quite a bit explaining that individuality must be resisted if we are to survive as a society. The days of individualized expressions are over for the good of the nation.

Ever since the well documented world-wide pandemic of 2020 nations have taken grave steps to protect the health of its citizens. Facemasks were made mandatory for all outdoor activities. Though there were some who resisted, in time all complied. The facemask industry became the largest and most revered industry in short time. Individuality was promoted and was duly reflected in highly individualized and creative masks. Some were brightly colored and others held intricate designs.

As time went it became increasingly difficult to assess what masks were appropriate and what were merely reflections of fashion and design. This might lead to more cases of viral infections and deaths so after minimal discussion among the power brokers it was decided that it was time for a revision of the Standards of Public Safety and Decorum which was developed in 2021. These revisions were set to insure that standards were up to date and met the requirements to stave off potential infections.

Small community groups gathered to debate the newly sanctioned laws which led to increased conflict regarding the rights of individuals and the rights of society at large. Some derided the new laws as a way of reducing individuality and creating a society of clones. Some moved that the regulations were correct and just and that if we were to survive as a society all would need to sacrifice.

Renegade groups promoted the idea that on certain days, people should wear their own masks. If enough people did this how would the police be able to arrest the protesters? Splinter groups formed to just bitch and moan. Conflict increased dramatically for a time. Eventually everyone became used to the idea and protesters and scofflaws became far and few between. The Republic of WhyNot became peaceful. The wearing of identical facemasks became normalized. Nobody thought about it anymore.

In a boardroom high atop the largest building in the Republic gathered men and women from across the countryside. These power brokers applauded themselves. The standardization of facemasks had made them rich.