

Carnival

By Rebecca Lindenberg

The mask that burns like a violin, the mask
that sings only dead languages, that loves
the destruction of being put on. The mask
that sighs like a woman even though
a woman wears it. The mask beaded with
freshwater pearls, with seeds. The plumed mask,
the mask with a sutured mouth, a moonface,
with a healed gash that means *harvest*. A glower
that hides *wanting*. A grotesque pucker. Here's
a beaked mask, a braided mask, here's a mask
without eyes, a mask that looks like a mask
but isn't—please don't try to unribbon it.
The mask that snows coins, the mask full of wasps.
Lace mask to net escaping thoughts. Pass me
the rouged mask, the one made of sheet music.
Or the jackal mask, the hide-bound mask
that renders lovers identical with night.

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