

## Masks of PTSD

—Judy Bell

I looked at my reflection  
staring back at me—  
friendly, kind and sweet  
Makeup done just right  
Hair sweeping gently  
back

Eliminate space  
My reflection a vision of confidence and success—  
a stranger to me.

Behind the perfected mask,  
anxiety, rage, depression, and shame—  
Invisible to the world, my torments rage.

Behind the perfected veil  
no one sees  
this controlled reaction  
to a sudden sound, sight, touch or smell.  
Responses quick and well-rehearsed—  
years of hypervigilance—

Behind the beautiful façade,  
Concealed rage, rage ignited  
from missed opportunities  
when depression or anxiety robs me  
of my chance.

Shame lurks behind that veil too.  
Falsely saying, it was my fault.

The day- and nightmares continue—  
Deep inside where no one sees.

Instead all view  
The familiar reflection.