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.