

How to Choose a Venetian Mask |

Anthony DiPietro

I knew as usual just what
I wanted: dark
purple with gold edging. waxed feathers.
colombina is a mask for one-third
of the face. for eyes only. now I see
it's a mask of vanity,
cheekbones exposed
for beauty dramatic and angular, pouty mouth
revealed. *congratulations,*
you're a slut, he said, more than once
with his voice and his turning
away. and his turning back
with worry to see if my eyes
were worried. this mask will not do.
what about the volto, ghost face: crown to chin,
the heaviest of masks.
one mustn't wear it if one's afraid of
the dark inside closets. wear with a cloak
and elaborate, patterned hat
tied with ribbon in back, neatly now, but tight. tight.
if I could return to that
corseted feeling, to breathlessness,
I'd need none of these extremes, the giant mirror,
glamor shot next to an oversized palm plant,
velvet sack of leather-scented underthings.

I'd not wonder whether to part
the curtains or, rough-handed, muffle the moans.
a man ruled by his
id wears the arlecchino, or harlequin mask,
comedic, with devil horns and painted beards,
which are less bristly than real beards.
I can tell the difference, for I'm much too wise,
if still too young. I know the way to ask
for trouble. to conjure a sensual
manservant, handmaid to evil. to wish myself
a partner for the ball.
let the engine of music
bleed in. with rushed kisses, let all taste
bleed out. one finds trouble
in an instant, very willing to assist.