

The mask with the black hair / a poem by Sushmita Mukherjee



Take the first step,
Become your own bestie,
Your online friend, begins and ends with You in the main role,
not a cameo,
in the online film forwards of others.
I spied a homely grey haired hag,
You guessed right..in the mirror,
She smiled Mona Lisa ish,
And gestured to the dressing table.
Ah! I don't have one here in the village, just some stuff
haphazardly pitched together in my hurried exit from Mumbai,
fleeing the Virus, like a Partition victim of yore.
The deodorant smiled at me, luring me to let her cozy under my
armpits.
Sorry girl, I said,
you know, here in nature, I don't smell at all.
The toothpaste squeezed soft and sparingly,
Wants to be pushed and handled hard.
But I decline... You have more to stay in today's day..
So with wipes and tissues,
No 'khachak khachak' like our film helpers do, liberally

plucking out 5, when 1 would suffice.
Trees, wood, plants heave a tentative collective sigh...
My shampoo stares seductively at me...
I hadn't noticed the sexy gaze all these years...
No no, not today..I tease her back,
I can wait
I will use you bit by bit,
till you foam at the mouth.
And then the hair colour dibba,
Painfully reserved for the last day of the lockdown,
The colour which will provide the mask to meet the masks that
I will meet,
When lockdown opens,
I will meet another woman,
The mask with the black hair!

Susmita Mukherjee

3-4-2020

Lockdowned in paradise.