

“Iris Will Bloom”

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Thump. Thump. Thump.

I feel every single pound in my chest.

Wired on caffeine, my bloodshot eyes focused on the tiny, lit-up screen.

Three

Two

One.

I pressed the screen with my sore and sweaty hands.

Perspiration dripped down my cheeks.

SOLD OUT

The large words in dull gray jeered at me.

Only ten masks left.

I let out a deflated sigh,

An ineffective attempt to exhale my worries.

Adrenaline coursed through my veins.

I felt as if I was a sparrow covered in earthly brown feathers,

Dodging from a vulture in the middle of nowhere.

No trees for me to camouflage in,

His eyes gleaming,

Translucent talons sharp as diamond swords.

What a thrilling game of hide and seek.

Bare.

Exposed.

The weather outside was bitterly cold.

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Queuing up in a line of around a hundred on the street,

I noticed that

Spring did not feel like spring.

We became sparrows,

Flocking to breadcrumbs,

Determined to acquire a fair share

When stores released notices of the selling of masks.

The frigid gusts of wind stung my flushed skin,

Disheveled my unruly hair.

I fixed my gaze on the huge sign.

Bold, capitalized, bright crimson letters: "SOLD OUT."

Again.

Anger, fear, disappointment rushed towards me.

I had lined up for four hours for nothing.

I realized that

The hours I had wasted seemed futile.

It was the tenth time this week.

"Like a drug addict," Dad remarked.

Fear has turned me into a walking corpse,

Anticipating the arrival of the hooded figure with a scythe.

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I tried to control myself.

But I had succumbed to panic.

Things were spiraling out of control.

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Postponed.

Aunt's wedding and great-uncle's funeral.

The ticking of time stopped,

Joy and sadness halted in their path.

When would I rejoice with them,

When would I grieve with them?

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Although vestiges of winter were present in this spring,

It carried the promise of summery days.

brrring, brrring

"Do you have enough masks? I could give you a box if you don't."

Hope disguised herself as a phone call.

Streams of sunlight filled the room

with a sugary golden hue.

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A map of wrinkles,

Hunched back in a ragged, grayish blue shirt,

Drenched in sweat
Revealed the cleaner's fatigue.
The battered gray hand-sewn mask she had on
was not enough to battle the virus.
"You're not safe wearing this - I'm giving you another one."
Mother handed her a packet of sky-blue masks,
Shields for our frontline fighters.
Mother was as beautiful as an angel,
I was mesmerized.
The air was perfumed by the scent of irises.
Perhaps the flowers of hope
Were planted by angels with warm hair cascading down their backs.
Kind acts of individuals
Save the world from gloom.
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Tick...tock...tick...tock...The clock is ticking...
The apocalypse is coming. It is not fire and brimstone as expected.
It stems from fear.
Together,
We will try to stop the two long legs from walking.
Slowing down time
Slowing down doom,
We find hope

Slowing down death.