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Mr. Greco

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## The Power of the Mask

Tucson, Arizona. Although hot and dry, creatures still venture into the gritty, boiling sand; this is their home. It may not be a glistening paradise, but it is the place where life thrives for generations. Alone, out in the warm breeze of the desert, sand brushes my ankle and I spot a lone armadillo, curled up in its protective shell, small and scared. Suddenly a vulture, skulking above, circling, swarming. I kneel down for a better look, and to my surprise the armadillo pulls forth a mask. The vulture swoops down and no longer sees the armadillo as prey. The mask has worked! That is how I learned from him that key to confidence was faking it.

Within a quiet, crowded classroom I sit alone. Palms sweaty, cheeks flushed with pink like a third degree burn. "Alright, next up is Kayli!" My teacher said, but to me it was a scream, a summoning to a cliff where my classmate will laugh and push me to my demise. "BZZZT BZZZT" my phone silently vibrates in my pocket. There is no need to check and no time, but I know that it is from my mother wishing me good luck on my presentation.

Memories wash upon my vision of my mom's excitement. I can see her posed like wonder woman, she is wonder woman, and she is telling me to stand up like her and stand up for myself and others. What if I don't have the courage? What if I don't have what it takes? What if I'm too scared and anxious, I shed tears, and run from an imaginary monster? " Do not worry!" wonder woman says. " Not everybody starts off very confident. You have to practice." I think about what she had told me and think to myself there is no way I could practice confidence in time. I think about the confidence of Jennifer Lawrence and Rosa Parks and have a grand Idea. I imagine I have a gigantic syringe and I suck the confidence out of them and injected it to myself. I can feel the self esteem flowing through me, changing my brain, weakening my anxiety, and cutting down my fear and I open my eyes. I see the faces and eyes of my peers and they are terrifying, but I will take Jennifer's power and look at my paper and begin to read.

As I finish I am clapped back to my seat satisfied with the content of my false confidence. This is how I will practice, and this is how I will become confident.

As time progressed the face of the small creature began to look like the proud strong mask. Until one day when I looked down at him, he began to fade, and disappeared and all that remained was the mask. I thought to

myself,"maybe one day he will return, I shall keep it for him until that day comes",

Learning this important skill from my mother has helped me get through so many anxiety driven situations and just like the armadillo I feel as though I no longer need my mask to overcome anxiety.