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Thank You, Mask Man (Inspired by Lenny Bruce)

By Mike Tully

June 25, 2020 marks the 54th anniversary of [Lenny Bruce's](#) final concert. I have been thinking of Lenny Bruce recently, specifically, his "[Thank You, Mask Man](#)" routine and [animated short feature film](#), as Americans, instead of thanking people for wearing protective masks, denounce them. What would Lenny Bruce and his protégé, George Carlin, make of Americans fighting over medical hygiene? Here is an updated version of "Thank You, Mask Man" for 2020.

Narrator: Here's a bit. It's about a good man, a man who was better than Christ and Moses: The Mask Man. The Mask Man was so good that he never waited for a "Thank You." He cleaned up the whole town for you and split --

Mask Man (in the background): Hi Ho, Covid!

Donny: What's with that putz? The schmuck didn't wait! Melania made coffee and cake and everything. What the hell is with that guy? I wash my hands for 20 seconds and he's on his horse already!

Person 2: Yeah, yeah: "The Mask Man" -- so what the hell does that make him?

Donny: A role model? Is he kidding, that guy? Schmuck! I'm standing there like this with the Mayor and a plaque and everything... I'm going to punch the virus out of him if I ever see him again!

Person 1: Take it easy, Donny...

Donny: Take it easy, my wall! Is that guy kidding me?

Person 2: Look, he's the Mask Man. He's a good-natured schmuck, he ain't got a quarter. [Pause.] You don't know about him? He's got a problem and goes to analysis. He can't accept love.

Donny: Eh?

Person 2: We don't even need him anymore. He comes around here -- we recognize the mask with Lysol all over it. It's disgusting! But he likes to go through it so we play it out for him, ya know. Here's his favorite bit.

Person 3: Hey you! What'd ya have a mask on for? Are you Antifa?

Person 2: This makes him really crazy.

Mask Man: I'm a spreader! *I'm a spreader!* You should be a spreader the way I am a spreader!

Person 3: So why do you wear a mask?

Mask Man: Never mind! I'm a spreader. Get away from me kids, I hurt people.

Person 2: Is that believable? "I'm a spreader"?!

Mask Man (to himself): Get a kick in the ass for being nice to people?! I'm out for Number One from now on, brother. No one is going to cough on me. I'm out for Number One, boy; Number One is the one and then they get, later.

Person 4: Nice guy?! How come he leaves disinfectant then?

Person 1: I don't know. That is kinda weird.

Person 4: Sure, he's nice: the spreader leaves disinfectant for kids to fool around with!

Person 2: I told you what the innuendo is: Dr. Fauci the Magic Healer.

Person 4: What's that?

Person 2: Covid-19.

Person 4: Eh?

Person 2: He's telling you in his own special way that the whole world has Covid-19.

Person 1: Dr. Fauci the Magic Healer! Of course.

Person 2: Why do you think he rides off with his mouth closed?

Mask Man (in background): Hmmm hmhhhmm hmmm-hmmmm!

Person 4: Are you kidding with that?

Person 2: Of course, when he's outta audible range he's goes on and on about how he thinks he might've caught Covid-19.

Donny: Oh, yeah? Well, I'm going to beat the virus outta him. Get the horses ready: I'm gonna punch them first.

(Sound of horses.)

CDC Director: Hold the testing on the North ridge! Hold it!

Donny: OK, Mask Man: I'm gonna whup the virus outta you, buddy, right now.

CDC Director: Whew! God-damn, it took us about 15 minutes -- boy, you think you're pretty god-damn smart. You're a spreader, aintcha, buddy?

Donny: Look at these kids here, they made cookies and wrote a song called "Thank You, Mask Man." There's your hero! The man too good to accept a "Thank You" from little children, little children in the MAGA beanies. Right now, buddy, you're going to explain or I'm going to whup the virus outta you, you hear?

Little kid: Thank you, Mask Man.

Mask Man: What's that?

Little kid: Thank you, Mask Man.

Mask Man: "Thank you, Mask Man"? Who the heck said that?

Little kid: I said it. Thank you, Mask Man.

Voices (in background): Help! Help! Mask man! Mask man!

Mask Man: Just a moment, getting a few thank-yous here.

Voices (in background): Mask man! Mask man! Help! Help!

Mask Man: Don't break my concentration, now! I've done you people a whole lotta good and now I wanna get a few thank-yous in return.

Little kid: Thank you, mask Man.

Mask Man: "Thank you, Mask Man." It's beautiful! Let me hear it again!

Voices (in background): Help! Mask Man! Mask man! Help!

Mask Man: Not you, you miserable ingrates! I mean you, wit da babyface.

Little kid: Thank you, mask Man.

Mask Man: "Thank you, Mask Man." Isn't that something? I'm going to get a "Thank you, Mask man" every god-damn day! I'll put 'em all down in a book: It'll say "Thank you, Mask Man." Do you think that I've always worked at this crummy hardware store? Hey, you see that? You see what it says right there?

Everybody: Thank you, Mask Man!

Mask Man: -- It's signed "People of Syosset, Long Island." When I'm old, I can lean back on my book of "Thank You, Mask Man"s. Yes, it's true I can't ride anymore, but would you like to see a little something that I did? Look at that.

Woman formerly in distress: Thank you, mask Man.

Mask Man: Then one day, there's a cure. Where is the "Thank You Mask Man" greeter? Has the "Thank You Mask man" greeter been here today? You do have a "Thank You, Mask man" for me, don't you? I thought it would last forever. I've led a very hygienic existence: I've tossed all my "Thank You's" away. You don't have any, do you? Just gimme one, so I can make it to the next town. One "Thank You, Mask man"?

Dr. Fauci (booming): There are no more "Thank You, Mask Man"s. The vaccine came during the night. All is pure. [Pause.] You're irrelevant.

Mask man: The vaccine? But what has this to do with me?

Dr. Fauci: Well, you see -- you are like men such as Jonas Salk, Lenny Bruce and Donald Trump. These men thrive upon the continuance of disease, segregation, and violence. The purity they do profess a need for, they just feed upon.

Mask Man: You mean?

Dr. Fauci: Yes! Without Covid-19, Pence is a putz.

Mask Man: Well, then, I'll make trouble. Because I'm geared for it. And I must have a "Thank you, Mask Man," at all costs... You see, this way what I don't have, I don't miss -- that's why I always ride off without waiting for a thank you.

Mayor DeBlasio: Darn it, Mask Man! Whoo-wee! You can sure talk! What the heck you talkin' about? All this self-pity: "Thank you, Mask Man." The kids fell asleep. Trump's got bad numbers; he's got to get back to his base! He's got no time for all that "Thank you, Mask Man." Look, buddy, I'm here -- I'm running the City, you know what I'm saying? I'm just here to take a photo with you for the *New York Post*, and then get the hell outta here. C'mon now, shape up and accept a present, and then we can shelter in place again.

Mask Man: A present? For the children? Alright I'll do it -- no handshakes, though... Gimme the pharmacist over there!

Mayor DeBlasio: Who, Shkreli?

Mask Man: Yes, I want Shekly, or whatever the felon's name is. I'll take him.

Mayor DeBlasio: Felon?! God-damn, you can't have Shkreli.

Mask man: Bullshit! You made the deal, and that's what I want: I want Shekly the felon!

Mayor DeBlasio: Look, buddy, his name ain't *Shekly*, its *Shkreli* and you can't have *Shkreli*.

Mask man: Bullshit! I want Shekly, I want Shekly the felon!

Mayor DeBlasio: God-damn you, you masked freak, I wanna tell you -- What the hell do you want Shkreli for, anyway?

Mask Man: To model a mask.

City official: What?

Mask Man: You heard me: to model a mask.

Mayor DeBlasio: The Mask Man is a spreader! God-damn! The Mask Man is a spreader! The spreading Mask Man! Oh, Lord! I'm getting dizzy. Don't breathe around him kids! The spreading Mask Man. Oh! {Spluttering.} The spreading Mask Man. You contagious bastard, you! God-damn it, kids! Mask Man, I never knew you were that way!

Mask Man: I'm not a spreader, but I've heard so much about it, I've read a lot of exposés on how bad it is, and I want to try it, just once... You know? I like what they do with spreaders in this country: the punishment is quite correct and consistent with the rest of the law: lock 'em up with a bunch of other spreaders -- hmmm, very clever... Uh, wash him up and get him ready! And, uh, I tell you what, uh -- give me that carriage horse, too.

Mayor DeBlasio: [Pause.] What do you want that carriage horse for?

Mask man: To put Shekly on it.

Mayor DeBlasio: You twisted spreader! The horse gets a Shkreli!

The horse: Nay-ay-ay-ay!

Mayor DeBlasio: Get off him, Shkreli, that's terrible!

Mask Man (riding off): Hi ho, Covid!

(sound of horses and then a recording of "The William Tell Overture" by Rossini, to end)