

“PLEASE HEAR WHAT I’M NOT SAYING”

by Cardinal Deardon

Don’t be fooled by me.
Don’t be fooled by the face I wear.
For I wear a mask; I wear a thousand masks,
 And none of them are me.
Pretending is an art that is second nature with me, but
 Don’t be fooled, please don’t be fooled.

I give the impression that I’m secure,
 That confidence is my name and coolness my game, that
 The water’s calm and I’m in command, and that I need
 No one.
But don’t believe me. Please don’t.

My surface may seem smooth, but my surface is my mask,
 My ever-varying and ever-concealing mask.
Beneath lies no smugness, no complacency.
Beneath dwells the real me, in confusion, in fear, in
 Aloneness.

I panic at the thought of my weakness and I fear being
 Exposed.
That’s why I frantically create a mask to hide behind,
 A nonchalant, sophisticated façade, to help me pretend,
 To shield me from the glance that knows.

But such a glance is precisely my salvation, my only salvation.
 And I know it.
That is, if that glance is followed by acceptance, if
 It’s followed by love.
It’s the only thing that can liberate me from myself.
 From my own self-built prison walls, from the
 Barriers that I so painstakingly erect.
It’s the only thing that will assure me of what I can’t
 Assure myself, that I’m really worth something.

But I don’t tell you this.
I don’t dare. I’m afraid to

I'm afraid that deep down I'm nothing, that I'm just no
Good, and that you'll see this and reject me.

So I play my game, my desperate, pretending game, with a
Façade of assurance on the outside, and a trembling
Child within.

And so begins the parade of masks, the glittering but
Empty parade of masks
And my life becomes a front.

I idly chatter to you in the suave tones of surface talk.
I tell you everything that's really nothing, and nothing
Of that which is everything, of what's crying within me.

Do when I'm going through my routine, do not be fooled
By what I'm saying.
Please listen, carefully and try to hear what I'm NOT
Saying, what I'd like to be able to say, what, for
Survival, I need to say, but I can't say.

I dislike hiding. Honestly, I do.
I dislike the superficial, phony game.
I'd really like to be genuine and spontaneous, and me;
But you've got to help me

Only you can wipe away from my eyes the blank stare of
The breathing dead.
Only you can call me into aliveness.

Each time you're kind and gentle and encouraging, each
Time you try to understand because you really care,
My heart begins to grow wings, very small wings, very
Feeble wings, but wings with your sensitivity and
Sympathy and your power of understanding.

You can breathe life into me. I want you to know that,
I want you to know how important you are to me, that you
Can be a creator of the person that is me if you choose to.

Please choose to. You alone can break down the wall behind
Which I tremble; you alone can remove my mask.
So do not pass me by. Please do not pass me by.

It will not be easy for you. A long conviction of worthlessness
Builds strong walls.
But I'm told that love is stronger than strong walls,
And in this lies my hope. My only hope.

Please try to beat down those walls with firm hands
But with gentle hands – for a child is very sensitive
And I AM a child.

Who am I? You may wonder.

I am someone you know very well,

For I am every man you meet and every woman you meet.