

## Please Hear What I Am Not Saying

Don't be fooled by me.  
Don't be fooled by this mask that I wear.  
For I wear a thousand masks and none of them are really me.  
Masks that I'm too afraid to take off, fearing that you'll get to know me.

Pretending is an art that is second nature to me.  
I'm pretending that I am in command and that I need no one.  
That I'm cool and that my surface is so smooth and I cannot be shaken by anything.  
I act as if I am in control, but please don't for one moment be fooled by my surface, that's only my mask.

Beneath this mask lies no smugness, no complacency.  
Beneath this mask dwells the real me in confusion, loneliness, and fear.

But I don't dare tell you that.  
I don't dare tell you that this is my mask.

I'm frightened by all the possibilities of my weaknesses being exposed.

I think about it all the time. Will I look like a fool?  
That's why I work frantically to create this mask to hide behind in my relationship with people.  
This nonchalant, sophisticated facade helps me pretend and shields me from the glance that knows me.  
But such a glance is precisely my only salvation.  
It's my only salvation if, however, the glance is followed by acceptance and love.  
It's the only thing that can liberate me from myself, from my own self-built prison...from the barriers that I have so painstakingly created.  
It is only that glance that will assure me of what I cannot assure in myself and, that is, that I am really worth something.

But I don't tell you this. I don't dare to. I'm afraid to. I'm afraid that your glance will not be followed by acceptance and love.  
I'm afraid that you'll think less of me...that you'll laugh and that your laugh would kill me.  
I'm afraid that deep-down I am nothing. That I'm just no good and soon you're going to find out and you'll no longer love me...that you'll reject me.  
So I play my game. My desperate, pretending game with the facades of assurance from without and that of a trembling little child from within.  
And my life becomes a front.  
And I idly chatter to you in suave tones about anything that really means nothing.  
And yet I can never tell about the crying inside of me...of my greatest hurts...of my deepest fears...my concerns.  
I can't tell you that because I am afraid.  
So please listen carefully not to what I am saying, but to what I am not saying.

To what I'd like to be able to say. And for what my very own survival I need to say.

I dislike this hiding...honestly.

I dislike this phony, superficial game I'm playing.

I really would like to be genuine and spontaneous and me.

But you've got to help me.

You've got to hold out your hand.

You've got to hold out your hand even when it appears to you that it's the last thing I want from you, because I am going to share a secret with you about myself;  
the moment I act like I need you the least is the moment I need you the most.

The moment I act like I need you the least is the moment I need you the most.

Don't be fooled by this mask. When you see anger in this mask, don't be fooled for one second...that's not anger, that's hurt.

The mask of anger is easier to show than the mask of hurt.

And if we make the error of looking at people's masks only to see anger on their face, we may end up in a confrontation only because we missed the point.

You have the power to wipe away this blank stare of the "breathing dead" beneath this mask.  
It will not be easy for you.

Long felt hurts make my masks endure. The nearer you approach me the harder I may strike back.

Irrationally, I fight against the very thing that I cry out for - my identity.

You may wonder who I am. You shouldn't.

Don't be fooled by the face I wear.

I am someone you know very well.

I am every man and woman and child.

I am you.