

# “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.