

## Please Hear What I'm Not Saying

Don't be fooled by me.  
Don't be fooled by the face I wear  
For I wear a mask, a thousand masks,  
Masks that I'm afraid to take off  
And none of them is me.



Pretending is an art that's second nature with me,  
but don't be fooled,  
for God's sake don't be fooled.  
I give you the impression that I'm secure,  
that all is sunny and unruffled with me,  
within as well as without,  
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.

My surface may be smooth but  
my surface is my mask,  
ever-varying and ever-concealing.  
Beneath lies no complacency.  
Beneath lies confusion, and fear, and aloneness.  
But I hide this. I don't want anybody to know it.  
I panic at the thought of my weakness exposed.  
That's why I frantically create a mask to hide behind,  
a nonchalant sophisticated facade,  
to help me pretend,  
to shield me from the glance that knows.

But such a glance is precisely my salvation,  
my only hope, and I know it.  
That is, if it is followed by acceptance,  
If it is 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 to. I'm afraid to.

I'm afraid you'll think less of me,  
that you'll laugh, and your laugh would kill me.  
I'm afraid that deep-down I'm nothing  
and that you will see this and reject me.



So I play my game, my desperate, pretending game  
With a facade of assurance without  
And a trembling child within.  
So begins the glittering but empty parade of Masks,

And my life becomes a front.  
I tell you everything that's really nothing,  
and nothing of what's everything,  
of what's crying within me.  
So 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 what I can't say.

I don't like hiding.  
I don't like playing superficial phony games.  
I want to stop playing them.  
I want to be genuine and spontaneous and me  
but you've got to help me.  
You've got to hold out your hand  
even when that's the last thing I seem to want.  
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,  
but wings!

With your power to touch me into feeling  
you can breathe life into me.  
I want you to know that.  
I want you to know how important you are to me,  
how you can be a creator--an honest-to-God creator --  
of the person that is me  
if you choose to.  
You alone can break down the wall behind which I tremble,  
you alone can remove my mask,  
you alone can release me from the shadow-world of panic,  
from my lonely prison,  
if you choose to.  
Please choose to.

Do not pass me by.  
It will not be easy for you.  
A long conviction of worthlessness builds strong walls.  
The nearer you approach me  
the blinder I may strike back.  
It's irrational, but despite what the books may say about man  
often I am irrational.  
I fight against the very thing I cry out for.  
But I am told that love is stronger than strong walls  
and in this lies my hope.  
Please try to beat down those walls



with firm hands but with gentle hands  
for a child is very sensitive.

Who am I, you may wonder?  
I am someone you know very well.  
For I am every man you meet  
and I am every woman you meet.

*By Charles C. Finn .... or is it? See Footnote*

**FOOTNOTE** Though many people believe this to be the work of **Charles C. Finn** it appears that for a long time the poem was allowed to circulate credited simply as "Anonymous". This has allowed a plethora of unscrupulous people to falsely lay claim to the work. Many are content to simply display the poem on their social media web page showing their own name as the author, but others have gone further and The Library of Congress at the United States Copyright Office has received several Applications of Copyright from people seeking to take the credit for this wonderful work.

In January 2015 I was approached by a David Summers claiming he was the true author of this work. David sent me a scanned image of the poem typed by him some 45 years ago and stating that it was his working copy and drawing attention to his handwritten draft notes in the margins.

Is David the true author, is it Charles Finn, or is it one of the registered copyright applicants? It is not for me to say. It **IS** for me to do my best, as a responsible web site owner, to be as accurate as I can be with regards to any information carried on this site, and that is what I'm trying to do by displaying this important Footnote with the poem.