

## The Hidden Face

The face I share,  
    the face you see...  
The face I've worked to nurture...  
    Teacher,  
    editor,  
    writer,  
    mother,  
    leader,  
    follower,  
    friend...  
hands covered in...play doh  
    ...digital chalk  
    ...years of dirt...  
    ...marked by bowing back,  
        collapsing knees,  
            whitened hair,  
                skin mottled and sagging,  
contrast a face masked  
    strong,  
    confident,  
    successful.

The hidden face, unseen...  
denied to all but myself...  
a child,  
    afraid,  
        battered,  
            worn,  
a child with scars,  
    with shattered hopes,  
a child in search of love,  
    of tomorrows,  
of dreams long dead but not forgotten.  
of heart heavy,  
    soul mourning,  
        cheeks damp,  
breath caught  
    as sobs rob moments...hours...days,  
as their passage  
    forms cracks in the mask I reform  
    to show the world  
        intact  
    each sunrise...  
        made to shield the child's  
            dashed future,  
    to cheat the gossips and mongers  
        clamoring for fodder  
        on which to create  
        their own pedestals,

their own dynasties,  
their own legacies.

Why must people's façades  
draw others' life's blood to be maintained?  
Why must the weak  
seek to draw last breath from others  
to increase their own worth,  
their own strength...  
to hide their own weaknesses,  
their own pretenses,  
their own failings,  
their own shattered hopes?

The face I share pales in the sunlight,  
stronger in early years,  
now growing hollow,  
cracked  
like the egg from which I began.

The beginning, the end...  
both loom large  
in the blazing midday sun.

Soul bleached like the old hat  
I wear to cover my thinning skin,  
I see my past clearly,  
unable to peak around a corner,  
through the crack formed  
at the bottom of a closed door,  
to break the mirror that  
returns to me  
remnants of an inner glow  
now dimming.

Oh, that my eye's  
distorted vision back then  
remained with me now!  
Oh, that who I now glimpse  
through the lens of  
years' wear and grime  
is who I once imagined myself to be!

Trapped feet wrenched from sucking quicksand,  
I try to rest a moment.  
Where has my bravado gone?  
When were my bones stripped  
so only my  
innermost  
skeleton  
remains?

Tears in my eyes,  
I realize  
the face I hide...

the one I feel  
anchoring me to my past,  
pulls me down...

...drowning...

...gasping for air,

flashes failures...

...hides successes

...from my memory,

strangling my soul...my hopes for the future...

My inner face,

the one I hide,

is one...

I

DO

*NOT*

WISH

TO

SEE.