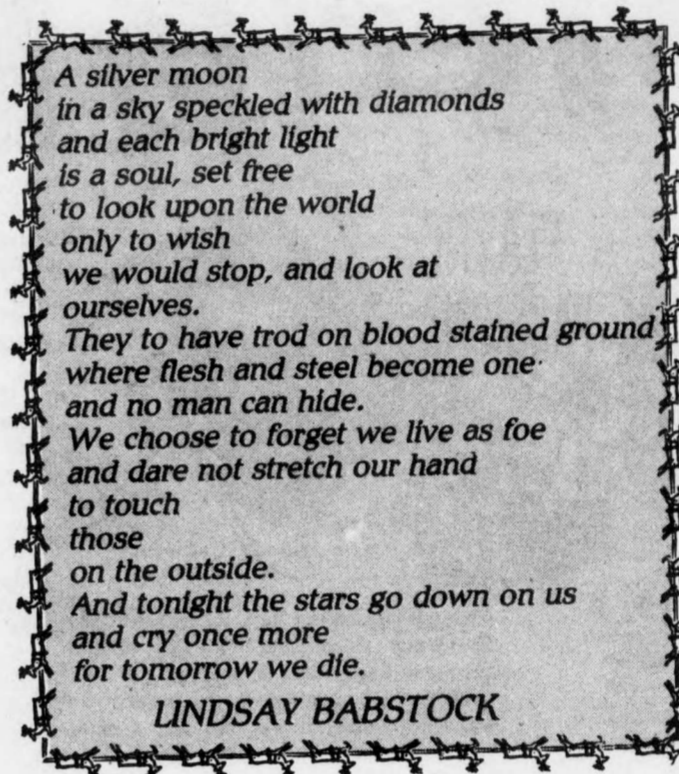

 LITERARY PAGE

## PLEASE HEAR WHAT I'M NOT SAYING

Don't be fooled by me.  
 Don't be fooled by the mask I wear.  
 For I wear a mask, I wear a 1,000 masks,  
 Masks that I'm afraid to take off,  
 and none of them are me.  
 Pretending is an art that's second nature with me,  
 but don't be fooled, please don't be fooled.  
 I give you the impression that I am 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 is calm and I am in command,  
 and that I need no one.  
 But don't believe me.  
 Please.  
 My surface may seem smooth, but my surface is my  
 mask,  
 my ever-varying and ever concealing mask.  
 Beneath lies no smugness, no complacency.  
 And my life becomes a front.  
 I idly chatter to you in the suave tones of surface talk,  
 I tell you everything that is really nothing,  
 and nothing of what's everything, of what's crying  
 within me.  
 So when I'm going through me 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 dislike hiding.  
 Honestly.  
 I dislike the superficial game I'm playing, the superficial  
 phony game,  
 I'd like 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 least thing I seem to  
 want, or need.  
 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, gentle, encouraging,  
 each time you try to understand because you really care,  
 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 your glance will not be followed by acceptance  
 and love.  
 I'm afraid you  
 'll think less of me, that you will  
 laugh, and your laugh would kill me.  
 I'm afraid that deep-down I'm nothing, that I'm no good,  
 and that you'll 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.  
 And so begins the parade of masks,  
 the glittering but empty parade of masks.



A silver moon  
 in a sky speckled with diamonds  
 and each bright light  
 is a soul, set free  
 to look upon the world  
 only to wish  
 we would stop, and look at  
 ourselves.  
 They to have trod on blood stained ground  
 where flesh and steel become one  
 and no man can hide.  
 We choose to forget we live as foe  
 and dare not stretch our hand  
 to touch  
 those  
 on the outside.  
 And tonight the stars go down on us  
 and cry once more  
 for tomorrow we die.

LINDSAY BABSTOCK

Beneath dwells the real me, in confusion, in fear, in  
 aloneness.  
 But I hide this.  
 I don't want anyone to know it.  
 I panic at the thought of my weakness and fear  
 of being 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  
 salvation.  
 And I know it.  
 That is if it's followed by acceptance, if it's followed  
 by love.  
 my heart begins to grow wings, very small wings,  
 very feeble wings, but wings.  
 With your sensitivity and your 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,  
 how 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, you alone can release  
 me from the shadow world of panic and uncertainty,  
 from my lonely prison.  
 So do not pass me by. Please do not pass me by.  
 It will not be easy for you. A long conviction of  
 worthlessness build strong walls.  
 The nearer you approach to me, the blinder I may strike  
 back.  
 It's irrational, but despite what the books say about man,  
 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. My only hope.

Please try to beat down those walls with firm hands,  
 but with gentle hands,  
 for a child is sensitive.  
 Whom am I, you may wonder? I am someone you know  
 very well.  
 For I am every man you meet and I am every woman  
 meet.

ANONYMOUS


 MERRY


 CHRISTMAS