

A Fragile Facade

Category: Behind Closed Doors

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | April 1, 2021

“Façade,” a song in “Jekyll and Hyde,” one of my favorite musicals, describes how so many of us, myself included, live our lives. “There’s a face that we wear/In the cold light of day–/It’s society’s mask,/It’s society’s way,/And the truth is/That it’s all a façade!” Behind my façade—the one that shows a smiling person answering “fine” to the socially-accepted question, “How are you?”, lives a person who believes that every online photo-shopped image is real and that only I endure a life of darkness and despair behind closed doors.

No one, except for a paid therapist, wants to hear about my fears of having lost a year in my life due to COVID and my anxiety about my now very real mortality as I inch towards my 74th birthday. No one is interested in listening to my stress about my adult children—angst that they will get this horrific disease, that their financial situations will continue to be shaky ones, that they will lose an anchor when I die. And no one has any desire to virtually share my COVID life with me—one of repetition and isolation.

While I do not perceive myself as a profoundly insightful person, I have come to recognize that most people do not care about the inner workings of my existence. They instead prefer to engage in superficial conversations about the weather, the restaurants that now have limited indoor dining, and the latest popular book on Kindle. To know that I am living in mental and emotional darkness may cause cracks in their fragile facades. They do not want to join me in sipping glasses half-full of lukewarm Ovaltine.

Life behind closed doors is a lonely one. Sharing my thoughts with a journal somewhat helps; losing myself in a work of fiction helps even more. Netflix allows me to enter the world of “The Crown” or “Bridgerton”—shows that offer an escape from my less fascinating life. The daily call with a close friend and the multiple calls from my children remind me that I am not alone, but when the conversations end, I am back to my own depressing reality.

As the song emphasizes, I lock my true fears behind a façade—but more than a year of isolation has weakened that façade and made my hidden self the person who now defines me.

Behind closed doors, I fall apart.

Ronna L. Edelstein

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania