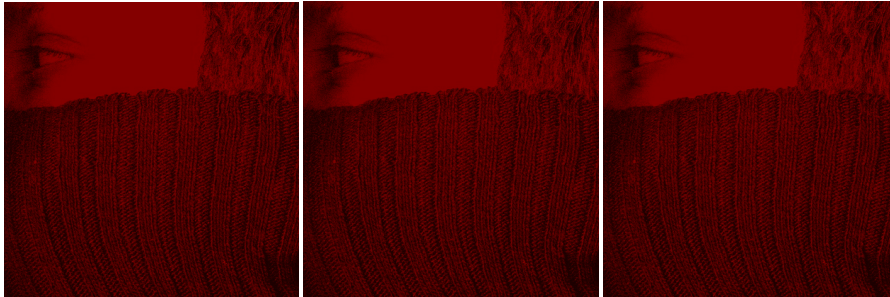


# I HAD TO LEARN TO LIVE WITH MY FACE

**Diane Wakoski**

[O trecho inicial deste poema é citado na música *plethora*]



I Have Had To Learn To Live With My Face

You see me alone tonight.  
My face has betrayed me again,  
the garage mechanic who promises to fix my car  
and never does.

My face  
that my friends tell me is so full of character;  
my face  
I have hated for so many years;  
my face  
I have made an angry contract to live with  
though no one could love it;  
my face that I wish you could bruise and batter  
and destroy, napalm it, throw acid in it,  
so that I might have another  
or be rid of it at last.

I drag peacock feathers behind me  
to erase the trail of the moon. those tears  
I shed for myself,  
sometimes in anger.  
There is no pretense in my life. The man who lives with me  
must see something beautiful,

like a dark snark coming out of my mouth,  
or love the tapestry of my actions, my life/this body, this  
but angry insistence, their presence.  
I hate them,  
want my life to be more.  
Hate their shadow on even my words.

I sell my soul for good plumbing  
and hot water,  
I tell everyone;  
and my face is soft,  
opal,  
a feathering of snow  
against the  
cold black leath coat  
which is night.  
You  
night,  
my face against the chilly  
expanse  
of your back.  
Learning to live with that you're born with  
is the process,  
the involvement,  
the making of a life.  
And I have not learn happily  
to live with my face,  
that Diane which always looks better on film  
than in life.  
I sternly accept this plain face,  
and hate every moment of that sternness.

I want to laugh at this ridiculous face  
of lemon rings  
and vinegar cruets  
of unpaved raods  
and dusty file cabinets  
of the loneliness of wall Street at night  
and the desert of school on a holiday

but I would have to laugh alone in a cold room  
 Prefer the anger  
 that at least for a moment gives me a proud profile  
 Always, I've envied  
 the rich  
 the beautiful  
 the talented  
 the go-getters  
 of the world. I've watched  
 myself  
 remain  
 alone  
 isolated  
 a fish that swam through the net  
 because I was too small  
 but remained alone  
 in deep water because the others were caught  
 taken away.  
 It is so painful for me to think now,  
 to talk about this; I want to go to sleep and never wake up.  
 The only warmth I ever feel is wool covers on a bed.  
 But self-pity could trail us all, drag us around on the bottom  
 of  
 shoes like squashed snails so that  
 we might never fight/ and it's anger I want now, fury,  
 to direct at my face and its author,  
 to tell it how much I hate what it's done to me,  
 to contemptuously, sternly, brutally even, make it live with  
 itself,  
 look at itself every day,  
 and remind itself  
 that realist is  
 learning to live with what you're born with,  
 noble to have been anything but defeated,  
 that pride and anger and silence will hold us above beauty,  
 though we bend down often with so much anguish for  
 a little beauty,  
 a word, like the blue night,  
 the night of rings covering the floor and glinting  
 into the fire, the water, the wet earth, the age of songs,  
  
 guitars, angry busloads of etched tile faces, old gnarled  
 tree trunks, anything with the beauty of wood, teak, lemon,  
 cherry  
 I lost my children because I had no money, no husband,  
 I lost my husband because I was no beautiful,

I lost everything a women needs, wants,  
almost  
before I became a woman,  
my face shimmering and flas at the moon  
with no features.

I look at pictures of myself as a child.  
I looked lumpy, unformed, like a piece of dough,  
and it has been my task as a human being  
to carve out out a mind, carve out a face,  
carve out a shape with arms & legs, to put a voice inside,  
and to make a person from a presence.  
And I don't think I'm unique.  
I think a thousand of you, at least, can look at those old  
photos,  
reflect on your life  
and see your own sculpture at work.

I have made my face as articulate as I can,  
and it turns out to be a peculiar face with too much  
bone in the bridge of the nose, small eyes, pale lashes,  
thin lips, wide cheeks, a rocky chin,  
But it's almost beautiful compared to the sodden mass of dough  
I  
started out with.

I wonder how we learn to live  
with our faces?  
They must hide so much pain,  
so many deep trenches of blood,  
so much that would terrorize and drive others away, if they  
could see it. The struggle to control it  
articulates the face.  
And what about those people  
With elegant noses and rich lips?

What do they spend their lives struggling for?

Am I wrong I constantly ask myself  
to value the struggle  
more than the results?  
Or only to accept a beautiful face  
if it has been toiled for?

Tonight I move alone in my face;  
want to forgive all the men whom I've loved

who've betrayed me.  
After all, the great betrayer is that one I carry about reach  
day,  
which I sleep with at night. My own face,  
angry building I've fought to restore  
imbued with arrogance and pride, anger and corn.  
To love this face  
would be to love a desert mountain,  
a killer, rocky, water hard to find, no trees anywhere/  
perhaps I do not expect anyone  
to be strange enough to love it;  
but you.