At the Edges of the Adult World

I have lived most of my life at the edges of the adult world,

close enough to observe it,

far enough to stay untouched.

My days have been spent with children

— honest creatures who speak their hearts plainly —

or with adults in the narrow corridors of work,

where roles are clear and the purpose is known.

Only recently have I stepped into the wider realm of adulthood,

and what I've found there startles me.

So many grown people moving through their days

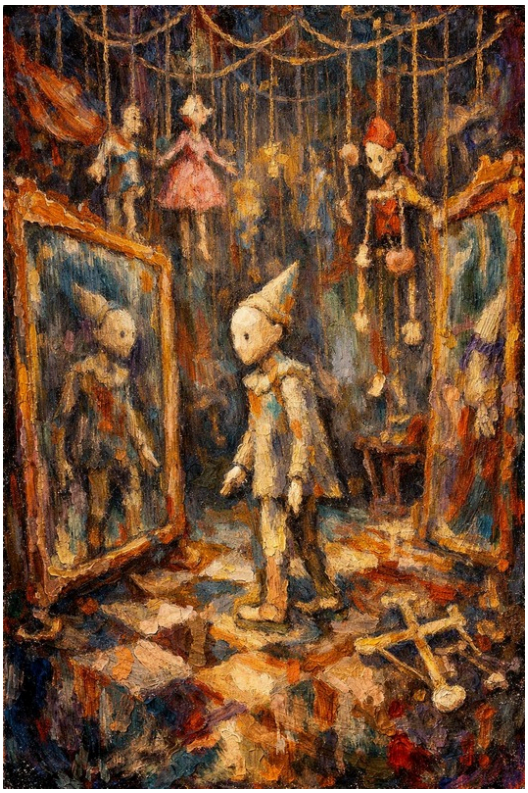
in elaborate disguises,

switching masks with the precision of stage actors,

keeping track of who they are supposed to be

in each room, each moment, each audience.

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It feels like watching a play

where everyone knows their lines but me.

And the effort of it —

the constant shape-shifting,

the practiced smiles,

the layers of pretense —

bewilders me.

It seems like such exhausting labor

to avoid being seen.

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I am only one person.

I have no masks,

only different hats for different tasks,

but the same face beneath them all.

I didn’t know how rare that was

until now.

And so I find myself stunned,

almost breathless,

at how much deceit hums beneath the surface

of the adult world.

How little insight people have

into the stories they’re performing.

How fragile and untrustworthy

so many of these constructed selves can be.

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Some days, I want to turn back.

Send me to the children again —

to their unvarnished truths,

their unfiltered wonder,

their simple, steady presence.

I understand them.

They make sense.

This other world —

this maze of masks and mirrors —

feels like madness to me.

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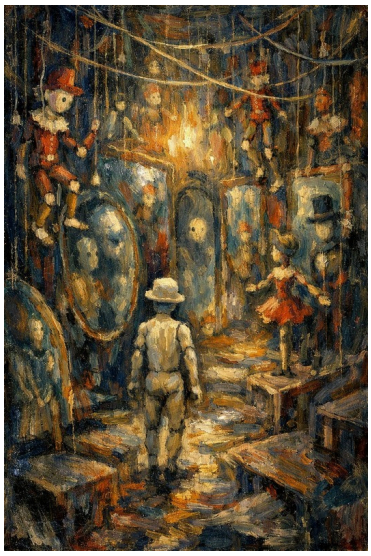
A Sonnet on Masks and the Adult World

I walked apart from grown-up realms for years,

Content with children’s truth and honest light.

Their open hearts, unclouded by the fears

That make adults perform from day to night.



But now I cross the threshold and I see

A world of shifting faces, layered deep—

Each mask a borrowed self, worn anxiously,

A vigil none can rest from, none can keep.

I stand unchanged, one face for every task,

No practiced smile, no costume to defend.

Yet everywhere I turn, another mask—

Another role that strangers must pretend.

So let me dwell with children’s clarity;

Their simple truth feels more like sanity.

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