

Shadow

The background of the cover is a textured, abstract composition of pink and green. The pink is more prominent on the left and right sides, while the green is more central. The overall texture is grainy and layered, suggesting multiple applications of paint. Overlaid on this background are numerous black, branch-like or root-like structures that spread across the lower and middle portions of the image. These structures are thin and irregular, resembling natural growth patterns. The top edge of the painting is dark and jagged, almost black, with some small white spots.

A WCC Liberal Arts Week Anthology
Edited by Tom Zimmerman
Cover painting by Corey Shopshear

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It features work by WCC students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends that was posted on the WCC Poetry Club website in September and October 2022.

A *Shadow* open mic, a Liberal Arts Week event sponsored by the Bailey Library, the LA Innovate Committee, and the WCC Poetry Club, took place October 27, on Zoom. Some of the authors in this anthology read work.

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www.wccnet.edu/library

www.wccnet.edu/announcements/liberal-arts-week.php

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SARAH ROLAND

A Swallow Tale

Long black body with a tiny stripe,
Emerging in a bed of herbs,
A delicacy suited to your appetite,
Your crochets suction underneath,
Holding your position.

The gardener overlooks you,
Hidden from the bird's deep dive,
Tiny parsley worm.

Narrowly you squeeze past the web,
Your burnt yellow osmeterium a sword
To deter the hungry ants,
With a stench of rotten oranges.
So your blue-green cuticle glows brilliant
Another day.

Then sunning in the morning light,
A buzzing wasp taps lightly,
Brisking across the thorax,
A microscopic dop.

Still-

All parts are in place,
Painted stripes unmarred,
And you eat until plump.

Feeling fuzzy,
Urgent for change,
You wander,
Away from where you've been,
To somewhere that feels safe,
Attaching to it with your finest silk button.



You weave your sling,
Like a tree climber belt,
With faith to hold you tight,
Bowing your head against a branch,
A praying pose you may hold for days.
You fast.
You are still.

Then the rising feeling comes,
You twist and turn,
And weave your head,
Spinning silk,
Spinning inside out,
Your great armor,
A hardened mask,
For transformation,
To delicate black swallowtail.

But, it will not be.

Like the Greeks fell fabled Troy,
From the gift overlooked,
The invader burrows out,
A perfect circle marks the triumph.
Blazing uniform of neon orange,
And metallic black wings,
No stinger needed to strike.
Predator,
Pollinator,
Parasitic wasp,
Trogus pennator.



At the Edges

At the edges of each day live shadows.
Some are mine.
Others flow out of the corners
of each room and float about holding hands
as if best friends.

At the edges of each day live the remnants
of memories, some stained with salty tears,
some shredded to ribbons from having
flown so high. Most are smiling,
remembering.

At the edges of each day are poems
to read, poems to write. Some make it
on paper, some float around the room,
stick to portraits, walk all over
the daffodils on the mantle.

At the edges of each day live hard things
to do mixed with a little light dusting.
Some of these wear armor
and carry swords in defense against
my dark heart.

At the edges of each day a soft light shines,
casts a glow that makes even
the sharpest barb seem less painful,
makes eyes strain less in the glare
of the obvious.

I sit at the edge of today hoping for
a little shower to freshen the air.
I sit at the edge of tomorrow with open arms.

I sit at the edge of yesterday honoring
all memories and shadows that wrap
themselves around my dreams.

Atlas

We've fed the dog and spread the final bags
of mulch out back. I've cracked a beer, of course.
Now Thumper, Dad's old pasta pot, is rocking
on the stovetop. He's been dead . . . how long?
Mom, also gone, collapses time: "I push
you out. And now . . . around. Suck in your gut."
I see our neon lights for Halloween—
a purple skull, an arch-backed cauldron cat—
lie deadly on the kitchen table. Your
HGTV fixation holds. An Atlas
of my own imagination, I
am ruptured holding up my world. Inside
or out, fair weather darkens with my fate.
Am I the same young self that ate my shadow?
Pop psychology. God's love is crushing
me. Dark angel smiles: "Survive this. Try."

Dusk spooked

Dusk draws near

Little hands warm with

Anticipation- the gooey treats await

The night falls

It is damp, dark, winds howl

Night calls the spooked, the feared, the imagination

Wanting to be afraid and excited, running down the sidewalk

Hearts pounding- giggles and boos

Tricks shouted

Strangers appear- offering the Treats

Grabbing and Running

Next, Next- go faster

The more the merrier- filling the orange plastic pails



Corey Shopshear

Edges of Shadow

I walk on the edges of shadows.
some days the specter of grief
walks beside me trying to grab
my hand, my attention. I know
if I let it in I will lose myself.

I walk on the edges of shadows.
I breathe the damp, cold air,
I lose my warmth, I wither. I resist
the dark companion of grief
fearing I'll disappear.

I walk on the edges of shadows,
and on those edges faintly live
the light of your eyes. I do not
ever want to lose that sparkle,
ever be blinded to your love,
so nearly taken away.

I walk on the edges of the light,
taking your hand in dreams,
guided from the dark for
moments at a time, more each day,
always looking behind at
my shadow—alone.

Haiku(s): A Choice

The shadows of the
human experience have
the potential to

overshadow the
light within, consuming one's
spirit, until one's

true essence is no
more. A choice must be made in
the face of hardship:

fight for one's life, one's
light, one's essence, or allow
the darkness to cloak

the mind and steal one's
spirit. The shadows are a
mere fragment of one's

identity, not
the entire story. Never
giving into the

shadows of human
experience, peace can be
found, one's core essence

and identity
preserved, intact. Inner spark
beaming. Radiant.



Jillian Kissel

Intersection

The intersection between today and yesterday,
between the before-time and after-time
shifts on a dime and can swallow you whole
before you know what's happened.

It's as if you enter an hour,
walk right in and sit down.
It's as if you can touch its edges.
It's as if its long shadow envelopes you whole.

And there's no game plan for engaging the hour,
or the shadows. There's no way to engage
what's not there, who's not there, why you're
attracted to all those edges.

I remember long hours of half-sleep, listening,
searching for that one shadow that resides in the corner
of the kitchen, that one sound that connects to someone
who resides on the outer edges,

behind the boundary of darkness, just there,
just there. And you know if you can make
the connection that the reward will be just that—
the connection to you.

And then the sun shows up as if punching the celestial
time clock, ready for another shift in its job of making
the day brighter, in its coloring the shadows into submission,
setting them back in their corners for safe keeping.



Corey Shopshear

Involuntary Sounds

There are 26 bones in the foot,
33 joints, and all of mine are aching.
Without orthopedic inserts in my shoes,
it is like I am walking on jagged rocks.
When I get home, I ice my feet
until they are frozen numb.
I tire of my own moaning
and then moan about that.
Not the nice kind of moan,
a long deep kiss in the nook
of the neck kind of moan,
or an I can't help it moan,
or a no, we shouldn't moan.
No, I'm just talking about
the why aren't things perfect moan.
I keep hearing myself make
the thank goodness that is over moan.
All of those are different than the growl
I make without thinking when imagining harm
to my daughters or students,
or the growl I want to give my mother
when she will not use her words.
That growl I imagine growing roar and fire.
There is an animal living in me that wants out.
It needs more air to breathe, water to drink, space to move.
I am so tired of being its cage.

Le Réveil

When the one who says peace is possible
and the one who says peace is impossible
meet behind the shadow of earth
on the field of the birds of time
below the lake of dreams
where time exists
as the shade of a curved bell
that mourns the sound of its own swing
a second of stars that cries out
on the tides of nightingales
asleep on the backs of bears
tossed to the echoes of glacial light
when dust no longer has shadows
to drink from or give birth to
and when everything moves
backwards and forwards in wake
of a new tune, yes, when the dance rises
and when everything and nothing
settle into slumber together
is when something has come
that is bigger than you or I.



Mae Bumpus

Lonesome Road

The Zoom-screen mirror: sick of it. You've popped
a cork, the water's on the boil. Ricotta,

peas, prosciutto: check. The parsley ready
to be chopped, the pappardelle raw

and waiting: like a wedding night. Your '90s
indie playlist: fine, you've mixed in Joni,

Billie, Ella. Nights like this, the shaped
quotidian might morph its cells, its selves,

and recombine to terrify. Relax,
you tell yourself. We dream departures and

arrivals: flame-wheels burning down the lonesome
road, damp dollars stuck along the shoulder,

angel wings fresh-clipped. Most love's a code
to crack. Your lover's gone. And who comes back?



Corey Shopshear

Monster Poem

“You better ask my momma how to make a monster”—Lux Interior

Mention monster and my heart puts out a welcome mat
Godzilla as nuclear metaphor
(explained very early on by my mom)
Frankenstein’s Adam
vastly superior yet cast out by his maker
Grendel full grown
still living with his mother
Sweet Quasimodo
who never harnessed his fearsome appearance

Give me the least human of any superhero team;
Night Crawler, The Beast, Sasquatch, Swamp Thing
Iron Giants and Red Tornados
possess an undeniable otherness
I still long for

We Calibans
we grouchy Oscars in garbage cans
we consumers of cookies we huggable Elmos
Max’s Wild Things in continuous rumpus
protectors and guardians of Tibetan Buddhism
whose wrathful aspects of form follow function
Ratfinks and Weird-Os hotrodding the streets
lend our mythos to movies and energy drinks

Saturday matinee Creature Features
gave us sympathy for the misbegotten
victims were always normal people
but if we ever met those unspeakable things
that made the average citizens scream
we’d somehow be simpatico

because we know
we're all just pretending
to be human anyhow

Narrative Exposure Therapy

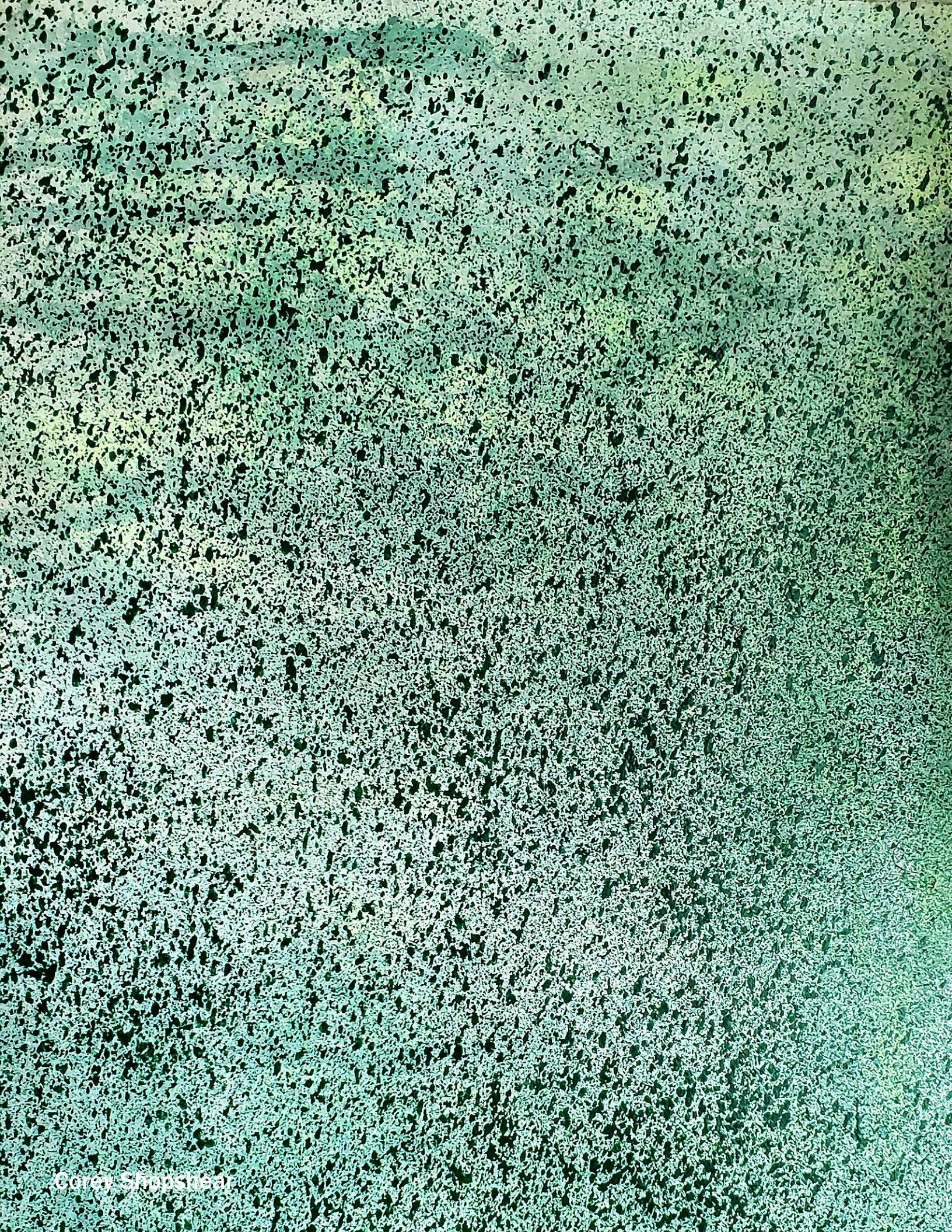
means telling the story of your trauma again. And telling it again. Each time you tell the story, trauma's tangles unwind from your spine, its fragments morphing into a coherent narrative. Each time you tell your story, a stone is thrown into the river, until eventually there is a bridge to the other side.

Doctors have observed fainting epidemics among Yazidi refugees, particularly among the girls who were raped. One young girl faints twenty times a day.

They tell their stories again.
How ISIS came to their village
in the northern mountains of Iraq—
killed the men and old women,
dumped their bodies into mass graves.
How they took the boys to torture and train.
How the women and girls were raped
many times, by many men.

Jung says the shadow is all we disavow in ourselves—
if we remain asleep to our own darkness,
it multiplies, divides, grows. He dreamt of a red tide
flooding Europe. And a red tide flooded Europe.
I dream of boys trained in torture,
stoning each other for play, growing up
to be men who violate women and girls.

All I can do is tell again the story of our darkness—
I tell that story one stone at a time.



Corey Smith

Shadow

It's dawn, then an afternoon breeze, howling sound of the rippling ocean crashing against the rocks, tumbling to the bottom of the deep blue sea, down and down, from the surface to the bottom.

Suddenly night draws close, pitch black darkness dooms over the night sky, hearing trembling sounds of someone creeping behind you, your heart pounds so fast, like a high-powered G-force Thundercat, so dark you can't see anything.

Shadow of darkness soars, find and fulfill your destiny of darkness through the shadows of Pandora's box, beyond the shadows you seek the courage of humanity and bravery, free to eternity.

Shadow

I've seen the way they look at me.
It's as if I don't belong in their company.
My dark eyes unnerve them,
my complexion makes me suspect.

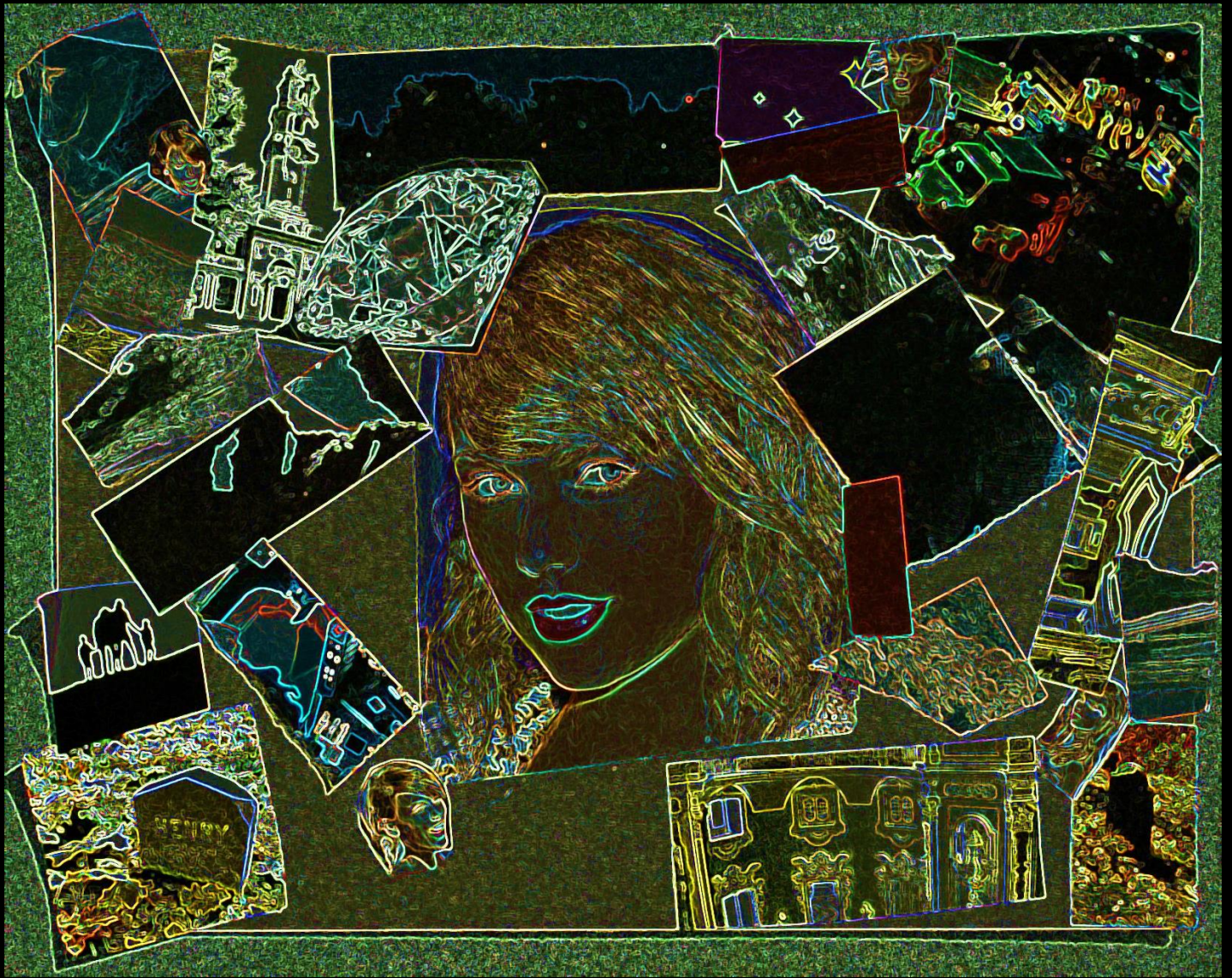
I do not smile. There's nothing to smile about—
no greeting, no wholeness, no compassion.
I see only loss, hopelessness, empty shelves
in the larder, empty eyes in the darkness,
ashes in the rain.

I hold my head up in strength, but do not
meet their eyes, do not wish to connect
with their resolve to shun me. They are the ones
who do not accept our loss.

Yes, he was mine, but he belonged to all of us.
His eyes connected with everyone,
his soul grew in their presence. He made me
stand taller, more peaceful, hopeful.

But now he's gone and they no longer connect
me to him. They throw me away with their need
not to confront our grief. It will not bother them
if I am no longer in their sight. They enjoy shunning.

I become a shadow attached to no one—no home,
no purpose, no part of them, especially
the places they do not want to go.
Every time I speak I drown in the shadows.



Huda Khan

Shadows Confide

We are on a throne

Sun on left side

Shadow behind

What does my shadow hide?

Lens on.

Connection, Confide

Sincere notes of passion yours, mine

Compassion.

Compassion.

From heaven's side

I, confused sit within my cries

My cries, lift at goodbyes

Contorted to disguise

Your eyes, a thousand

Contrary to lies

Cut at the fabric

Coincide.

Released.

Laid down.

Nowhere to hide.

No return to squalor

Out to Rise.

Bought with a price

Severed ties

Emmanuel with us

A heart from dust

Done, uncompromised

That work, finished

Meeting His eyes

Crown of faith

Promise. Abide.

Meditate on.

He who dwells in the secret place shall abide under the shadow of the

Almighty.

I will say to the Lord he is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.

Psalm 91:1-2

Let God be for you.

Eliminate who against who.

Valued more than what a do can do.

I discovered that walk into the valley of the shadow of death had no need of fear.

Although, Fear here was suggested; near

This time I chose to remember the love deep within that was invested; dear.

Turned my precepts to gold

Made my respects from cold

Incomparable presence

Embodied pure essence

His lens in sight.

Insight.

It won't bite.

Nowhere to run.

Illumination round begun.



Corey Shopshear

Shadows of the Human Experience

The monsters introduced in horror stories at a feeble, young age, told and retold over the years no longer scare me. These creatures are mere symbols for the true monsters lurking among us, in everyday life.

The energy vampire feeding off of the emotional energy of others, draining them by one-sided, incessant rants, fueled by immaturity and the lack of consideration for others and the toll their actions take on them.

Narcissism at its finest, the energy vampire preys on others out of pain. Yet, instead of eliminating their own pain, they drain the life forces of those who cannot stand up for themselves, those who cannot say, "no."

The evil witch cursing others for personal gain, using their magical gifts to manipulate, to control, to yield power over others in order to further their own agenda. Motivated by what they want, rather than what would be best for the collective good of all.

The zombie, a mere shell of a human being, undead, walking among this earth lifeless, numb. Going through the motions without passion, happiness, or joy. No longer able to experience painful emotions, yet, no longer able to experience what makes being human worth it, either. Never able to find true peace as they are not truly living and they are not truly dead.

The ghosts of chapters long past, appearing to the bearer of such memories through flashbacks caused by the reminders of daily life, the instances that feel so grand they must be more than mere coincidence; they must be a sign. All remnants of another lifetime ago.

Ghosts are nothing more than pieces of the past coming back to haunt the present, preventing the haunted from moving forward into a future away from such dark chapters, a future where the shadows are left behind.

The siren who lures cursed "loves" to their heart's end, with the allure of charm and manipulation, using what they know about their target to curate the perfect sentiment, compelling them to believe that this is real love when in

reality, it is a fallacy. Nothing more than mere infatuation.

True love does not manipulate or control for power. The siren uses the illusion of love to capture the hearts of which it desires, only to break them once the illusion is shattered.

The demons within that feed off of our insecurities, the pain of a traumatic past survived and the coping skills used to survive it.

The darkness of an empty void being possessed by the incessant lies that we are never to be loved as we have been deemed unworthy and inadequate, filling the heart with hate, or even worse, apathy.

Insidious aspects of humanity, shadows of the human experience, the darkness of the human psyche, the pain of being human. Such shadows creating monsters out of humans.

Surmised of trauma, pain, heartbreak, gone unaddressed, coming out in unhealthy, toxic behaviors. These frighten me more than any fictional monster ever could. They're real.



Ahmed Renollet

Something about Pumpkins

Something about pumpkins scares me.
They hold a deep silence which begs
to be filled—once by a carving knife,
once by a candle, once by a voice, deep,
gravely, full of flat-seeded teeth
that chatter in the night.

Why had we chosen the roundish,
orange fruit to become the epitome
of buck-toothed strange?
Do we sense its shadow falling away
or following? Perhaps melding
with our own as hostage?

Yes, something about pumpkins
gives me a chill. Do they know
who they are to become? Do they know,
sitting in the field that I will choose them
above all the other orbs to give homage,
gut and skewer?
Or do they all roll around at the choosing
to match their carving partner's
ghoulish needs?

Toxins

I love the smell of gasoline. The sharp petrochemical aroma lingers when I deliberately get drops on my hands as I close the gas cap. I know it's bad for me. Permanent markers also have a wonderful odor, so it is likely no surprise that I loved smoking.

I loved the feel of the white wrapped beauties between my fingers, the pull of the inhale, the many ways of exhaling – through the nose, straight down from the mouth, blowing out to one side or the other - the joy of smoke rings! If I could smoke now, I'd raise my cigarette to the sky in thankfulness, take a deep pull, and make the smoke one with me. I wasn't particular: I went from Camels to Benson & Hedges, Dunhills to Salems, mentholated to clove. Even now I drive around with a pack of American Spirit smokes in the glove box, set one between my lips and pull in the way I would if it was lit, and exhale.

The problem is breathing, though I remember drawing the smoke in and thinking, I am concentrating on my breath, following it in and out, just the way you are supposed to when you meditate, though for most of my smoking career I had a cough suppressant in my mouth and an inhaler in the other hand. Yes, I was that smoker, the one who broadcasts, I hate myself, can you help? When I was meditating as a young woman, I needed absolute silence. My mind was an angry rabbit, jumping up in alarm at every creak. You know you are on a true spiritual path when you tear out of your room screaming at people to be quiet because you are meditating.

These days, I am grateful for my many asthma drugs, a compliant patient even though I am only passing as a patient person. If I pass someone smoking, my lungs begin to crackle and hiss, remember how close they came to an endless gray wheezing, with the wracking cough that so easily rumbled and roared out into a retch. Something dark twists in me still, though I know its name and shape. Rubber cement smells good too.

Where do I go?

When I don't know where to go
I follow my shadow
It asks why I'm here
It asks in fear
I tell it I don't know
So it just went on with the flow
It started to race
I started to chase
It was starting to sprint
I stopped and decided to squint
I couldn't believe it so I didn't
It felt like I was running in place
My stress started to progress
As I noticed everyone around me was faceless
I started to panic
Heart sinking like the titanic
I bolt to my house as I was already near
I kick open my door to glance at my mirror
It was my screams I tried to suppress
As I noticed I too, was faceless
It was by the people with badges noticed started my outlashes
I was then put in chains glared at like I was insane
It felt strange
They took me in a strange place
I couldn't see their face
I was given sedation
I wake up to know this was all my imagination
I still have some questions though.
Why can't I find my shadow?



Corey Shopshear



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