

**Two Stories**  
**From**  
***Broken Shadows***

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## Introduction to Broken Shadows

*Broken Shadows* is my second collection of Shadow Stories. The first collection was *Our Particular Shadows*, published initially in 2013. The Shadow Stories are a form of ephemeral storytelling that seemed to arise of its own volition, and which bypass light and dark to explore the shadowy regions of the deepest self.

Each story, which ranges between 500 to 1000 words, features an unnamed protagonist, to whom you can assign the gender of your choosing. Told in the voice of the central characters, the stories in *Broken Shadows* trace the trajectory of intensely personal, significant moments.

It is the self speaking to and for itself – no mediation, no subterfuge. Just a questing mind seeking to understand itself and the world. Sometimes, even hidden from itself; balanced on the cusp of a glimmer of truth.

These stories, though short, are by no means an easy-breezy read. There are layers of experience packed into single phrases, which are redolent with connotation and scope for interpretation. You may find that more than one reading is required to ‘get’ the form and format of this genre of stories. When you do, there are rewards galore!

**Suggestion:** Take a breather between reading one story and the next. You’ll pick up on the voice and voice-change better.

**Disclaimer:** These are not autobiographical stories. However, they are informed by my thoughts, observations and experiences.

Happy reading!

## translucent

There is no shape to the feeling that has gripped me, no name. Manifested in amorphous sensations and currents rippling through me – bringing one moment a tear, then a smile; there is no comprehending this wave. A hummingness courses through my mind.

At the day's very end, just this one thing seems to still tether me to humanity. The rest of me is blurred, like tears on a water colour.

Each day I go into the studio alone, leaving my life alone. From beyond the silence, beyond the darkness behind the eyes, stretched tight, I summon swirling shapes, bright lights and eerie colours and paint them on the waiting, gaping canvas.

The brush and fabric dance to make up their own rhythms. I watch. I bleed into paint.

Vast stretches of cosmicness, pure and radiant, look back at me.

Remote. Calm. Intense.

Some things otherworldly, some things unfathomable, coalesce; as if I've captured the essence of mangled dreams.

Inchoate spirits scream!

*Do you think they see me?*

Do they know how far I seem to travel in these hours in which I wield the brush? Do they realise that I am becoming translucent, more insubstantial, with each rainbow-sunset day? Disappearing into the void...

*Can you see through me into the cold?*

*Could you come get me?*

*Bring me a candle perhaps?*

*And share a cup of tea?*

~~\*~~

## pain

I'm enmeshed in the reign of pain.

Ever since I hurt my back, movement has been slow and painful. And now, the stinging needles and burning triangles of it threaten to immobilize me completely.

Why did this happen? I was always so careful with myself. Did everything that was right and safe. Always guarded the instrument. And now this! Just a moment of inattention and you apparently need to pay for it with the rest of your life; in criss-crossing chains of screaming muscles and bone.

All my life's work will drain away without ever being realized. For a sculptor, working with their hands is crucial and hands must be supported by a strong and supple back. And I work with sturdy materials that need dexterity and strength to handle — metal and stone and sometimes even bricks! How do I do any of it now?

I used to work out just to keep up with the demands of my medium. Part toiler, part dreamer, I was. Of fantastical shapes, of inspiring spaces, of, of—

Each day I sit still like this, something vital drains away from me. Immobility eats into my very spirit. The ripples of my concentricity fading far away...

Without making, what am I?

*Hollow.*

I can feel a big empty sphere expanding its reach right at the centre of me.

I feel the impact of each hurt, each setback — twice. Once for me and again, even more agonizingly, for my art. For the crying artist caged within, desolate in the resounding silence. That is pain unlike any other.

The pain meds make me even more sluggish. I always kept fit, now I'm just puffing up. Those medicines I'm sure; it's not like I have any appetite.

I dragged myself though the pain, maybe to distract myself, to the studio. Rather the spare room that serves as the studio. For as long as I can pay the rent on this 700 square feet flat. Which will be what, a few more months' maybe?

My babies stared at me with half-gestated longing. I had three pieces going on together. I like — liked — switching between pieces, just to keep my energy and interest high; to keep the momentum going. These were commissioned pieces. If I don't deliver in a month, I'll probably have to return some of the advance.

How will I do that? Give it back, when I spent so much on my treatment?

But how do I complete them? I can't even lift my hand without shooting knife pains. And my arms shake so much, getting a precise line or shape, is impossible.

T.V's just so much noise nowadays. The long rectangle of the window has become my only solace. I watch the light flooding and receding from the world, the sky changing colour, clouds floating away.

The dancer tree – I don't know what tree it is, Ma calls it the dancer tree – waves to the wind, with her large vibrantly green oblong curvilinear, almost quatrefoil leaves. Her branches point outwards, tilting upwards, arranged in a graceful crescent-shaped whorl, like she's taking a bow.

The kids from all around converge like honed arrows in late afternoons to play in the street below. They shout and shriek and run around like mad, spinning hummingbirds in rhomboid flight.

And wavering days pass, on their own. They do not consult me. Except to bring more pain and take away hope and vital energy.

The wind brought me a present; it slipped a scrap of paper through the window and the curling railing. I've been playing with it all evening. It's very mouldable actually. You can make concrete or abstract shapes out of it, without too much effort. As a medium it even contends with my shaky attention to it. It takes my new constraints in its stride and fashions itself into surprising forms.

It feels like flying within heart-shaped fireworks!

For a bit there it felt as if the pain receded. It ceases to claim attention I think, when your attention is otherwise occupied. Ah! Clever pain, to consume one so, and still leave one a way to escape! I will, I think, be able to break away from you one day.

I think I have some sketching paper in the studio and there's the stack of newspapers on the coffee table, gathering dust.

So many possibilities...

It's time to make again!

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*Liked these stories? There are 10 more such stories waiting for you to read them, in Broken Shadows!*

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Thank you!