

## Questions for discussion

### 1. Can you see the shadow people?

We are all someone's shadow. We either work behind the scenes or in the limelight. No matter what, we can cast a shadow on others or work in the shadows. Those I call shadow people could be those who help us like a nurse. They might be the people who keep us safe making laws. On the other side are the famous. They cast shadows on the infamous like me. A mistake can cast a shadow of doom. Can you see the shadow people now?

*"Who are these people? They are the abnormal. They are the people who do the jobs we hate. I suppose they are the ones who have the creepy jobs like a mortician and sex shop owner. That's mean, the sex shop owner? If there wasn't a demand he would not own a sex shop. If there wasn't a demand he would not be a mortician. The hard facts are that normal people need people to work in the shadows of their lives. People in the shadows serve the normal. They make their lives less complicated. The shadow people do what must be done. Things that normal people wouldn't touch."* Chapter 7, p, 3

### 2. Who are the shadow people you need?

I have friends that pop out of the woodwork to say hello now and then. I feel the need to encourage someone I have not talked to for awhile. We can live in the shadows of other people's lives. Who is your secret voice of encouragement? Who is the one that says negative things all the time? These people also live in your shadows of life. A teacher, pastor, or doctor give you good timely advice. They are not in your daily life, but you need them from time to time. Who is in your shadows that helps you sometimes. Who are you in someone else's shadow?

*"I think Facebook was set up to create more friendships. I suppose it was to draw people out of the shadows. I have a lady friend I have never met. She is a friend of a friend. From time to time, she has inspired me. I suppose I have done the same for her. We both have never met and probably never will. Yet, she is my good friend. This is the wisdom I draw on from the shadows of my life. I posted one of my writings and someone hated it. While, another friend texted me they really needed to hear that. She said it was timely. I was one of those shadow people for her."* Chapter 7, p, 4

### 3. What events or people have affected you?

My dad's opinion of me casts a long shadow in my life. I had a teacher in grade 8 that still casts a shadow over me in a good way. I have been in accidents that have

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affected me. There are people and places I don't wish to see because of bad experiences. They cast a shadow over me too. Do some people and events control you. What I mean is do they affect what you think and where you will go. I have a friend who won't go to church because of one bad experience 20 years ago. It's stuff like this that cast long shadows in our lives.

*"I do think that shadows in our lives are also caused by events and people we don't need. A person becomes angry in life. Why? Maybe a small fleeting moment that forever change them. Possibly it's something bigger like rape or a death. Sometimes there is something lurking within us like a shadow. It's what makes us avoid water, people, or life itself. I think one of my family members believes they lives in my shadow. They certainly do not, but maybe that is why they avoid me. Maybe I'm just creepy? Is there someone you feel you cannot measure up to? Why is that? Did they always get noticed? Did they always win. Were you covered by their shadows or did your shadow cover them?" Chapter 7, p, 6*

### **4. What is hidden behind your mask and shadows?**

People refuse to do things because of bad experiences. You can call them phobia's, quirks, or hang-ups. We plan our daily lives based on avoiding certain things. Sometimes we can't avoid things so we stress, get angry, and lash out. Shadows in our lives cause harm sometimes. Within all this we create masks to endure and look brave. Do you retreat into the back or shadows to avoid things? The way you do life tell us a lot about what you think.

*"Horror is the removal of masks*

*- Robert Bloch*

*Yes, it is indeed! The shadows of our lives are the masks we wear. The fishbowl we place before people is all we are willing the light to see. I have been stunned when masks fall down. For a month, my wife and I talked and grew to understand each other. Then it's the first date, the first misunderstanding, the masks on the floor. She always says now my gloves are off. I always thought fighters put them on? Still, the true self emerges as the mask is discarded. Usually we fight because of surprises. We never saw that coming because it was hidden in the shadows." Chapter 7, p, 8*

### **5. What truths are you hiding from?**

I wrote this book about feeling dirty. I never expected to talk about abuse. To me that is a dirty word. Men don't get abused. Then in this chapter I realized I was writing about abuse, it shocked me. I realized that I avoid situations because of abusive people. I

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also realized I will go here but not there because of abusive memories. Abuse may have stopped for me, but it still controls part of my life. It's true, what truths are you hiding from like abuse?

*"I have read so many books and accounts of abuse. Some of it we bring on ourselves by the choices we make. What I have found more times than not is that our heart betrays us. Victims tend to love more, care more, and need more. Abusers treat that like candy. They devour us ferociously. They are addicted to candy. Equally we are addicted to being candy. They call it cycles. Yep round and round abuse goes. That's why it's hard to get out. You have to admit to yourself that you are a victim and a victor all in the same place. It's almost impossible. No wonder victims rarely come forward. They retreat to the shadows. I know because I hid too."* Chapter 7, p, 11

### **6. What do you see in the mirror?**

Do you see an ugly duckling or a swan in the mirror? It does matter. This story hit me like a ton of bricks when I began to see abuse in my life. I was horrified at how much it has me still in it's grip. I want to see a swan. I really do. I know I am not an ugly duck, but I can still hear the abusers saying I am ugly. It takes a long time and I have come a great distance. It's time you looked in the mirror and catch a glimpse of a swan. Keep looking daily for it.

*"Unfortunately, these types of people are the abused much of the time. They spend a lifetime trying to believe they are swans. They feel dirty in the company of others. Not, because they are crazy. Not, because they are dirty people. No, they have been rejected and told their ugly ducklings far too often. Looking in the mirror and seeing a beautiful image seems so easy. Normal people point out flaws. They never want you to believe that different is beautiful. Do you know why? It's because if they did, it's possible they might have to contend with the ugliness in their lives. They would become that duck who looks in the water and sees something strange, liberating, and special. Normal people want us swans to remain hidden in the shadows of the reeds. Yet, it's time for us to see the real person in the waters reflection."* Chapter 7, p, 16