

Dirty

Chapter 7: Shadows

The Twilight Zone: Night Gallery

You're in a kind of limbo. Neither here nor there. You're between the two, the real and the shadow.

I have called them the shadow people. Those living on the fringe of our lives. They are the different. Society loves the different. They are the ones exploited in the circus and in parades. We love to look at the crazy, different, and disheveled. On the other side, we lock them up in asylums, give them downer pills and diagnose the shit out of them. Do you want pills for that, we got them? There is a treatment for that. Just a few more sessions and you'll be ok. It's the crazy life of the shadow people.

Those that call people crazy are crazy to stifle them. Shadow people invent crap you need. They are the ones who thought of stuff many never think of. In the shadows they make lightbulbs, forks, and space travel. Doing what can't be done. They are the ones sitting in the back of classroom dreaming bigger dreams than we ever will. That's who the so-called crazy different creatures are: the people in the shadows.

Shadow people appear to be loners because we drive them to be. I am also one of them. We certainly want to express ourselves. We want to be accepted and loved. The fact that many can't stand ingenuity and out of the box thinking drive those of us that are different into the shadows. That might be exactly why the kid is in the back of the class. It might be exactly why we don't speak up. Yet, shadow people are screaming to be heard because expressing themselves is in their DNA. They are the ones chalking your sidewalk. They sing on the street corners. Telling you that doom is coming. They protest and paint. They write books and win wars. Most of what we have accomplished as the human race was done by shadow people. The thinkers, different, dreamers, dirty, and crazy people.

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There are moments when I can't stand a commercial. Who knows why? There is just something about them. I spend my time in front of the TV with the remote on one side and the mute on the other. I feel it's getting worse. All I have been reduced to is click, flick, and mute. Maybe if I can't hear them then they'll just go away. Is it effective? For my ears, maybe, but on and on we go with new annoying commercials. Maybe I'm just getting old? Possibly it's just businesses trying to sway my brain to conform. I hate brain swayers.

Sitting there last night it hit me. Normal people do that with the shadow people. They try and mute them, move them, and segregate each one of us. Conquer and divide. Maybe that's why the teacher always made us stand in the corner, where the dunce cap, and write on the blackboard 100 times we will behave. I can hear the teacher screaming *you will act normal*. I wonder if that is where the term *mutant* came from. If we could just mute these irritants, or at least make them normal.

This drive of the normal people has pushed kids into the back of the class. So, this is our refuge from the shunning: the back of the class. We hang out in basements playing dungeons and dragons. We wear strange clothes just to be different. Our heads are stuck in comic and space books dreaming. We are the shadow people.

There was a time when prayer meetings were full. We prayed in the pews, in the classrooms, and in the community. The people that prayed were normal. At some point in recent history it became uncool to pray in public. They removed it from the classroom, pews, and community. There have been wars on many things like race, religion, and smaller stuff like prohibition. I think humans love their wars. I feel that there has been a silent war on prayer. Prayer seems so innocent. Who are we praying to? Who is listening and who will answer?

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People use wells, tarot cards, and churches for making their wishes come true. I suppose as astrology and the likes have gained popularity, prayer has become the lower form. Prayers have become the shadow people too.

Some years ago, I was on the prayer team. We met for prayer walks and in the church before the services. For some reason, God drew all the weird people into prayer. It reminds me of the prophets. They were the disheveled ones. The likes of Isaiah and John the Baptist were the wilderness walkers. The strange ones speaking for God. I suppose to be called to pray is to be called to be weird. I knew no normal people in a prayer group. The church I was attending at that time felt we were weird too. They removed us from the sanctuary because it creeped people out. We were not banned but reduced to a broom closet. Even in church they make shadow people.

Who are these shadow 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.

I am reading *The Time Machine* by H G Wells. The central character is not named, but is called the time traveler. He is mysterious, moody, and awkward. The men in his circle are doctors and lawyers. Still, they can't pin the time traveler down. He is hard to describe. I feel he lives in the shadows of their lives. Many stories we read have a hero and a side kick. The poor man on the side usually saves the day by giving that last push to encourage or help the hero win.

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In the end we never see the sick kick but we picture the hero standing tall with a beautiful girl at his side. The side kick is a friend, companion, advisor, and a person living in the shadows of another.

We need a side kick. We need the occasional friend. It's interesting. Did Jesus need Peter or Peter need Jesus? Oh, we could argue that till the cows come home. Did Sherlock need Watson? Did Batman need Robin? Johnny Carson was a funny late night TV host. He needed Ed McMahon laughing at everything. It made the show that much better. There is nothing like a mentor. Someone who is there to bounce off ideas and give great advice. When people become famous we hear about these mentors. They are the shadow people of the successful and famous.

I'd like to approach this interesting topic in three ways. I think there are three types of shadows. The ones we need, don't need, and the ones we create. Regardless, we have shadow people in our lives. You have that friend who is always right. They always speak the truth that you need and don't need to hear. King David in the Bible had several of them. One was his trusted warrior companion named Joab. This man did all the dirty work for the king. Another was the Prophet Nathan. This man risked his own life to speak truth to the King. One thing is for sure, David trusted these men with his life. Lastly there was Johnathan the loyal friend. Each of them played a role in the king's life. Each of them did things behind the King's back to keep David's kingdom intact. There are many types of shadow people among us.

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

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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.

We need these types of people in our lives. They could be a close relative. There are countless stories of troubles teens finding solace in a grandparent or aunt. I bet these people would say they are around those that mattered all the time. I equally believe, that in reality, they hardly saw them. Yet, it's the powerful advice or timely hug that makes their lives seem full of their love and attention. They say that most people have 1 to 3 close friends. I have hundreds of friends on Facebook, but I don't think I have a best friend. To me, they all are the best. I just know we don't hear from each other often. They are in our shadows as I am in theirs.

There are also things that inspire us. Things that move our morality meter. They are not alive like friends. They are those things we cherish and those we come across in passing. The Bible inspires us. Most of us hardly read it, but it still makes hay in our hearts. There is a term that says the Word of God is alive. That seems ridiculous because they're just words. However, time after time I have been moved by a verse. On any given day that same verse pulls my heart in a different way. The Word of God seems alive because its meaning and timing in our hearts keeps changing, moving, and providing comfort. Do dead things do that? Inspirational things like the Bible work like a shadow encouraging us along the way.

There are other books like *War and Peace* that have moved me. Some non-spiritual books have caught my attention in a different way than the Bible. I was inspired by a book called *Wild* by Cheryl Strayed. Her adventure to find herself made me think. Christian reading by Swindoll, Stanley, and Morgan have moved my heart and understanding. I know none of these people yet

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their wisdom has been timely in my life. I could read an article and be moved to act. A post on social media pushes me into action. I have happy, sad, enraged, and enlightened by the written words from God and humans. They come and go like the shadows. They are near to me yet so far away. The shadowy difference could be the shadow of a mountain or my shadow from the sun. books have cast a long shadow on me.

I do think that shadows in our lives are caused by events. A person becomes angry in life. Why? Maybe a small fleeting moment forever change them. Possibly it's something bigger like rape or a death. Sometimes there is something lurking with us like a shadow. It's what makes us avoid water, avoid 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? Did they always get noticed? Did they always win. Were you covered by their shadows or did your shadow cover them?

Jim Kelly was the Quarterback for the Buffalo Bills during their 4 consecutive super bowl appearances. They never won any of those championships. Kelly will forever be in the shadows of Sims, Ripken, and Aikman. It's weird because the backup Quarterbacks on the Bills during those years were under Kelly's shadow. People affect us as we affect them. They are friends usually. Rarely are they the close ones. These are our shadow people. They affect the fringes of our lives where our shadow casts. I suppose their shadow casts long into our lives and we are forever changed.

Sometimes people emerge from the shadows. During the 2001, NFL season Quarterback Drew Bledsoe became injured. A young buck of a quarterback Tom Brady picked 199th in the draft was called into action. Tom never looked back. It's fascinating that Brady lived in the

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shadow of the veteran. In that moment, Tom Brady emerged from the shadows to become the best Quarterback to ever play the game. Brady's legacy now interestingly casts a shadow on his predecessor. Last year, coach Mike Sullivan of the Pittsburgh Penguins Hockey team won the Stanley Cup in his first year as coach. He emerged from the minor system shadows to be the best. His shadow now loomed over the previous coach. Shadows are fascinating.

I have a cousin who tried to make the NHL. After several different teams, he gave up on that dream. In talking to him I realized that it was a series of events (bad coach, changed management) that paved his path. Sure, he could have played better, but unforeseen forces were at play too. Successful people can see the people and decisions that propelled them into stardom. They just needed a chance to shine like Tom Brady. The likes of Churchill and Roosevelt climbed to the top of the world stage when the world needed them. Like a phoenix, they emerged from the shadows to greatness. I think what I'm saying is that we don't make our greatness half the time. Sometimes it's dumb luck.

There are shadow people we don't like. In 1888 a series of brutal murders began in London town. They were never solved. 11 deaths were linked to the infamous serial killer *Jack the Ripper*. The girls worked in the shadows as prostitutes. He worked in the shadows as a killer. The interesting part is who he was? There were several sources that pegged him as a doctor or royalty. Did this killer move to the shadows to be something he was not in public? I just find this fascinating because men look for sex workers in the shadows away from the public eye. Bad things happen in the shadows.

John 3:19-20

“And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. 20 For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed.”

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The places of shadow are usually a bad thing. We need the light. However, retreating into the shadows seems to be who we are sometimes. I hate to harp on it but the kid in the back of the class is a great example. There is a reason he is there. I remember in school the teacher questioning what was going on back there. It's not always about hiding, but being able to do what people can't see like Jack the Ripper. The shadows can be useful.

I feel that is why villains and hero's wear masks. It's to hide who they are. Both of them are tormented inside. One lashes out in rage while the other tries to be the hero they are not. They are not? Yes, in public, these heroes are mild mannered Peter Parker in Spiderman. Bashful Clark Kent in Superman. Strangely enough these people are abnormal, ordinary, and reserved in the real world. The villains on the other hand hide themselves because they usually are the famous, important, and visible people. The mask protects them from exposure. They cast a shadow over us too.

Robert Bloch "*Horror is the removal of masks.*"

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. I never saw that coming because it was hidden in the shadows.

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There is a comic character called *The Shadow*. He uses the hypnotic to cloud men's minds to his presence. I loved that show. The cool part is the mask: he has none. He lurks in the shadows. The best part is he sees the real you in your hidden lives, your shadows. We all hide something in the shadows. I wish it was not so. I know a man who insists he does not willfully sin. It annoys me to no end. That's a good mask. What is hidden in his world, in his shadows?

Within the third type of shadow people are two themes. The first is those who push us in the shadows. I had a terrible teacher that gave me an excuse to skip school. I had a father that enticed me to be reserved. I had a wife who demanded I cower before her. I have friends who say they are always right. A worker that hates the way we work. I have people in my life that want to change me. They expect me to be something else. All of these people drive me into the shadows.

What drives us into the shadows? Who drives us into the shadows? Check out this list from the violent abuse website.

Guilt over the failure of the relationship, attachment to the partner, fear of making major life changes, feeling responsible for the abuse, feeling helpless, hopeless and trapped, belief that she is the only one who can help the abuser with his problems.

I do believe that I have felt dirty in the company of people because of abuse. As a male that digs deep into my core. I have been told by my Dad that I need to suck it up. He wondered out loud if I needed some balls to be a man. Maybe that's why I'm so passionate towards masculinity. I was told I had none. Yet, abuse is exactly that. The list above is nasty. We certainly cause our own grief at times. Yet, those who choose to infect us with lies dig deep. I believe they know where to dig too. I feel that abusers love to probe. To know you intimately. I

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have never watched or read fifty shades of Grey, but I get it. Abusers are crafty at hiding intent by suggesting this is our passion.

Mary Lou said *“The irony of life is that those who wear masks often tell us more truths than those with open faces.”*

You want the best wife. Then be the best man. That is a true statement. Yet, the intent is receiving. The abuser tells us to be better, do better, act better. There we stand at a cross roads. They ask us to forgo our true selves to complete them. The statements above on abuse is ringing in my heart. Guilt and fear are great tools of the abuser. They say we need to change. I was a man in an abusive relationship. For the man, it’s a terrible place to be. My Dad and others told me that men don’t fear, cry, or retreat. Men are to be understanding, the protector, and sustainer of the females. There is truth in it, yet that is where the lies lay. She said be a man, but she had a list. The masks I wear paint a story of abuse.

The trouble is the violence. The glass smashing, verbal barrage, and punching and scratching. Who is a man going to tell if it’s happening to them? It’s not masculine to cry out. We serve. We protect, because were men. I began to change in an abusive relationship. The person I was began to disappear. What was left was a fear of disappointing. A fear of not being the man she demanded. At one point she told me to leave or get help. I suppose I became intolerable because of the change in abuse. That’s the crux of it. I became worse because she said I was the worst.

Eventually I went to the doctor. By the way, health care professions believe woman are the victims. They never think men can be abused. Maybe it’s true and I’m just less than a man and crazy. I was prescribed anti-depressants because he recognized the signs. Ahh yes, but the

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why was never discussed. Years later I am three months into my divorce. One day I was told I looked happy. Then it hit me, I felt lighter. Imagine how guilty I felt being happy outside my former family. The emotions that exploded in me during those weeks because of the freedom and the withdrawal of abuse. Interestingly enough, I experienced the same thing in a church for ten years. Ironically, one pastor sent me for counseling. The councilor advised it was the wrong church for me. He plainly stated I was not crazy but in a bad church relationship. Wow, a bad marriage? Me?

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 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.

We lived in the ghetto. I never saw a woman there who wasn't abused. You look at the way your mother is being treated and you think this is the way you're supposed to be treated. I was surrounded by drug dealer chicks who spent their money on cars and clothes. The people I knew sat around drinking and cursing and living in denial. These were my role models. Life was about surviving ~ getting money any way you could. - Mary J Blige (an abuse survivor)

Sometimes normal people become victims because of abuse. I certainly see that in the lives I've encountered. However, I find it's the abnormal people that love to share their quirkiness. I think abnormal people get abused the most. I have a female side but I am by no

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means gay. My Dad absolutely hates that about me. The gay community probably hates the fact I will not explore my feminine side. I am ruining their cause. I look male and masculine, but I love crying, compassion, and love stories. It's me. Yet, love women intimately. I am the abnormal. I am in a grey area, the shadows. It's not that I want to wear the victim badge but I am.

Mary Blige caught my attention because of her honest report. Sometimes we look for help in those we love. I have spent years trying to find a mentor in Christian circles. One thing is for sure: God has wanted none of it. Someone said the other day Jesus is my inspiration. I am Christian but that strikes deep into my core. Yes, I agree, but I am here. Are there no human inspirations? Where are the hero's and mentors these days? They seem hidden in the shadow's.

In the public sphere, we only have what we see and hear. Jesus is not physically in the public sphere. There are those in our lives that model life. Some of them are bold in the light. Others are displaying the wrong path. A path that fools people. We get tricked into the shadows. It's like a seductive Jack the Ripper drawing us in. I have always wanted a mentor keeping me on the good path. Keeping me out of the shadows.

There are those who think they are the normal. Abnormal people make them feel uncomfortable. That usually leads to abuse. They hate who we are. Strangely enough they want to keep us down, hidden in the shadows. In a way, they want us under their shadow. A place where they can bring normalcy. It's true, but cheaters, abusers, and adulteress refuse to get divorces most of the time. I found that nuts. If you hate me and want out then why not cut ties? It's because they need to keep feeding on us. An extra stash on the side. I think there is always a fear they will lose the ability to keep us down. It might expose the corruption in their mask of normalcy they fabricate.

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Ok, enough of that victim talk. They need our hand and help. So, how do we do that? Abuse hotlines, distress centers, and victims shelters help are terrific. The telephone lines for assistance are open 24 hours a day. There is a way out. Still, one thing is true in many abuse cases. It's the circle. It takes many instances, many months and years to realize abuse is real. One of the attributes of victims is what is real? If they call me crazy, then maybe I am. George Carlin was a class clown. It did not go well in school. Yet, in comedy he is amazing. It's about accepting who you are first. Only then can you begin to soar.

I'm sure you have heard the story of the ugly duckling but let's go over it once again. My version. There were 5 eggs to be hatched. In the original story, it's not told how the ugly ducklings egg got there. It was bigger than the rest. I figure it rolled into another nest. Anyhow, in time they all hatched but that one egg took much longer than the rest to hatch. When it did it produced one ugly duckling. He was bigger, louder, and completely different than the others. Not normal by any stretch.

This is the interesting part. The normal ducks were normal because they all looked and acted the same. That was not the case with the ugly duckling. It's not that this duck was ugly. It's that it was different. In time that poor duck got abused because of those differences. The other 4 ducks hated their brother. They outcast him into the shadows of the family. At times, even the parents wondered what went wrong.

In time this duck began to change while the others stayed the same. One fine sunny day in the spring, this duck was wandering among the reeds of the lake. He heard a strange but familiar sound. It was his sound. Through the reeds was a flock of swans. They were white and

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absolutely gorgeous. This timid duck was intrigued because he sounded just like them. This flock noticed him hiding in the shadows of the reeds.

In conversation, the ugly duckling inquired why he sounded like them. They thought that was weird because they were talking to one like them. These Swans told the ugly Duckling he was a swan like them. The duckling said “no.” he was an ugly duckling. The Mother asked him to look in the waters reflection and see. The moral of the story is this. The ugly duckling believed he was ugly because people told him so. It never occurred to him to check for himself if that was true. That day, for the first time, the ugly duckling looked into the mirror of the water and saw a beautiful Swan.

I am an abuse victim. I have lived in the shadows for far too long. For many years, I kept going to councilor after councilor looking for one who would say I was an ugly duckling. Over and over they repeated *I was a swan*. But I’m weird, crazy, and dirty? Each one said *so what*. But those I loved said I’m not normal like them. They councilors said *that is true, you are a swan*. They said I wasn’t relationship material. My new wife says she loves the swan in me. Many people will say you’re an ugly duckling. That is what they live for. It might take time, but there are many more that believe something completely different. We need to seek out those who see a swan and not an ugly duckling.

Who are the shadow people? They are anyone who has something to give to this world, but are told they give nothing. We are forced to retreat for a time in the shadows. Moses retreated into the desert for 40 years. I knew a friend that was so devastated by divorce that he retreated into his parent’s basement for 8 years before dating. His first wife looked like a 1, but his second is a resounding 10. I have been amazed at what the abused can accomplish when they finally believe

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they are a swan. The trouble is it takes time. The trouble is you need a few people along the way saying you're a swan. It does not happen overnight.

I am a Postal Worker. When you get home from a hard day's work your mail is waiting for you like it magically appeared from Santa. Santa has side jobs like delivering mail. I am a shadow worker. I get nods of the head from garbage persons, cops, and utility workers. We usually love our jobs. We serve you. It's in our DNA. I have talked with many of them and they are the same as me. We are the unusual swans. We work and live in the shadows of society. The mortician and the sex trade worker do a job nobody wants. In many ways their job horrifies the normal. Yet, there they are providing in the shadows of society. People want paid sex. People die. I suspect those two are the oldest professions. Demand is always key.

The waitress, usher, librarian, and street cleaner are all shadow people. In Cairo I passed several men in blue jumpsuits cleaning the streets with a broom and dust pan. I was shocked. Are they noticed? It's funny that in the winter I get a ton of compliments on my struggles with delivering mail in the cold. In the summer, they say I am spoiled working in the sun. Us shadow people are never noticed unless the normal people see something they would not do or wished they could do. Shadow people don't think that way. We love being in the shadows. It's a fun life.

There are several other types of shadow people like class clowns, artists, and actors. It's weird that they become the famous. More often than not it becomes a disaster because they get thrust out of the shadows and into the lime light. There is always a list of the rudest famous people. They are not really rude folks. They are the weird that have been exposed. That tends to get their backs up. Marshawn Lynch was a running back for the NFL Seattle Seahawks. He always acted like an idiot in interviews. He butt heads with upper management for not answering

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questions. He was a special player that loved football but not interviews. He wanted to remain in the shadows.

The shadows are an interesting place. It's where evil lurks. It's where the abused retreat. It's where the misunderstood hide. It's also the place where things get done. All the inventions began in the shadows. In the back rooms, closed doors, and lonely places. Shadow people think way too much. That's what makes them great. They want to be loved but they don't love to be loved. There is a difference. Shadow people desire to share. They want no credit. They live to serve. They live to hope, love, and express themselves.

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.