

HERE'S TO THE NIGHTMARES THAT TEAR YOUR HEART  
THE BEAST BELOW HAS LEFT HIS MARK  
SEE IF YOU DARE TO PLAY GAMES WITH FATE  
THIS IS WHERE THE FORGOTTEN WAIT

*Between the dark and the light  
In the midst of the fight  
Falls the Shadow*

HERE'S TO THE KINGS WHO NO LONGER FEAST  
EVERY LIFE IS AN ECHO DEVoured BY THE BEAST  
EVERY END IS A MEAN TO ANOTHER END  
HOLD YOUR GROUND WHEN THE BEAST ASCENDS

*Between his life and his death  
At the gods' final breath  
Falls the Shadow*

HERE'S TO THE DARKNESS OF THE SIN  
THE BEAST FEEDS ON THE SORROWS OF MEN  
DARE YOU TO LIVE WITH THE GRIEF AND REGRET  
THE BEAST INSIDE WON'T LET YOU FORGET

*Between the word and the song  
Between what's right and what's wrong  
Falls the Shadow*

HERE'S TO THE COMING OF THE THUNDER  
THAT WOKE THE BEAST ONCE IN SLUMBER  
THE CHOICES OF MEN HAVE SINCE BEEN THUS  
MADE IN THE NAME OF THE BEAST WITHIN US

*Between the lightning and the storm  
When death is reborn  
Falls the Shadow*

HERE'S TO THE SILENCE THAT'S FOUND IN DISGRACE  
THE BEAST WOULD SMILE IF HATE HAD A FACE  
IN THE EARTH AND UNDER THE EARTH  
THE BEAST STANDS WAIT FOR DEATH'S REBIRTH

*Between the silence and sound  
Far beneath the ground  
Falls the Shadow*

HERE'S TO THE FORSAKING OF A NAME  
LONG LIVE THE BEAST WHO CAN NEVER BE TAMED  
HERE'S TO THE BLOOD THAT STAINED THE SNOW  
THEIR LIVES BELONG TO THE BEAST BELOW

*Between the truth and reality  
Between peace and sanity  
Falls the Shadow*

Do you see the Shadow Man, for he has surely come:  
If you see the Shadow Man, then take his hand and run.  
But do not trust the Shadow Man, whatever he might say!  
Trust in this - and only this - that he will save the day.

Do you see the Shadow Man? The Shadow Man is scared.  
The Shadow Man became the hope when gods no longer cared.  
But do not trust the Shadow Man or the ones he failed to save,  
For if you trust the Shadow Man, you'll end up in your grave.

Do you see the Shadow Man? He's come now to his end.  
If you see the Shadow Man, he might just need a friend.  
But do not trust the Shadow Man, whatever else you do!  
For trusting in the Shadow Man might end the life you knew.

Do you see the Shadow Man, a good man and the last?  
He tries his best to not look back and leave behind the past.  
But do not trust the Shadow Man, for he can run no more.  
All is lost and demons run when a good man goes to war.

Do you see the Shadow Man and do you know his name?  
If you see this blood-stained field, the Shadow Man's to blame.  
Do not trust the Shadow Man and stay out of the dark.  
For trusting him, as all good men, leaves scars upon your heart.

Do you hear the Shadow Man, silent heartbeats in the night?  
If you know the Shadow Man, he did what he thought right.  
But do not trust the Shadow Man or the coward's choice he made.  
He kept his word and saved a few but the rest were left betrayed.

Do you see the Shadow Man? The Shadow Man is dead.  
He gave his life in the end as all the skies burned red.  
Now you must trust the Shadow Man that he will rise again.  
He'll rise above these broken dreams and know what might have been.

Do you see the Shadow Man with a brand new face?  
A shadow in a burning world and a name left in disgrace.  
Do not trust the Shadow Man and the secrets he must hide,  
Of all the ones he loved and lost and all the ones that died.

Do you see the Shadow Man, a demon in his eye?  
If you want to know this man, then you must ask him why.  
But do not trust the Shadow Man, whatever he might say!  
Trust in this - and only this - that he will save the day.

He showed her the place that he'd hidden for years  
And said, "These are my ghosts and the tracks of my tears.  
These are the dead who bled through their graves.  
These are the people whom I failed to save.  
How can I be your hero?  
That man died long ago."

She looked in his eyes and he tried to lie.  
Was he a good man without an alibi?  
She was scared and it showed on her face.  
He knew there were scars he couldn't erase.  
His heart filled with dread  
As she raised her voice and said,

**"Who are you and what the hell have you done?  
Where is the man who was second to none?  
Is this what happens when heroes fall?  
Do our little lives even matter at all?  
This is something you can't undo.  
Am I only a ghost to you?"**

He closed his eyes and looked down at his hands,  
Begging his gods that she'd just understand.  
He's done it all for humanity's sake  
But she was scared of the blood in his wake.  
She turned to walk away  
But not before she heard him say,

"Hold on a minute and let me explain  
Please know I never meant to cause you pain.  
These people once fought wars in my name.  
But they all died and I'm left with the blame.  
The lives of the many outweigh the few.  
And I beg to the gods that could be true."

He'd been caught in a moment of life and death,  
The moment before the stars' last breath,  
On the brink of silence, in the midst of lies,  
Knowing he'd live if everyone dies.  
He made his choice that day.  
The gods had turned away.

**"But who gave you the right to make that call,  
Of who should live and who should fall?  
You dug their graves and yet here you are,  
The soldier left without a scar.  
So what does that make you?  
You're not the man I knew."**

The man she knew was brave and strong.  
The man she knew could tell right from wrong.  
But the man that he was had a secret to hide,  
Of the name that he lost when everyone died.  
And what is in a name  
That death cannot reclaim?

“I know it was wrong but what else could I do?  
It was save the universe or save the few.  
In the name of peace and sanity,  
This choice became my morality.  
I never took time to count the cost.  
I played against the gods and I lost.”

His hands were red from the choice he’ d made.  
She could see in his eyes the souls he betrayed.  
All he had left was the pain and regret.  
This was a crime he should never forget.  
That’ s how he had to live.  
‘Cause no one could forgive.

**“Is this how you live, is this how you keep score?  
I’m more scared of you than ever before.  
Are these the ghosts that haunt you at night?  
How is it that you thought this was right?  
Your name became a lie  
When you sent those men to die.”**

Fury and kindness were never the same  
But both tell the story of his tarnished name.  
The story of men who ended up dead,  
Ghosts in fields where no angel will tread.  
A good man went to war  
But now will fight no more.

“The name that you choose is a promise you make,  
A promise I broke when lives were at stake.  
There’s a time to live and a time to sleep.  
And maybe this time, a promise to keep.  
The ransom must be paid  
Before their ghosts all fade.”

He bowed his head and walked away.  
Said, “No one else needs to die today.”  
She knew in her heart she’ d never see him again  
But wanted to remember him as the best of men.  
And there’ s nothing in a name  
That death cannot reclaim.

Have I not lived long enough?  
Do you accept this traitor's bluff?  
Tell me now, the ransom price.  
What blood will heed the gods' device?  
I am here on their behalf.  
This last song, my epitaph.

You call yourselves the gods of men  
Because you know what might have been.  
But I've played god, I know the lie:  
For one to live, the world must die.  
Let blood be yours, for it you crave,  
But lead the ghosts back to their grave.

My beating heart the beast devoured  
And I became a lonely coward.  
There's no one left to reminisce  
'Cause I'm the one who broke the promise.  
Before I, too, am but a phantom,  
Take what I have left as ransom.

Take my mem'ries with my sorrows,  
Take my dreams of lost tomorrows.  
Take my scars and hide my ghosts  
Then seal my fate and call a toast.  
Take my heart and slay the beast,  
Take it all then have your feast.

Gods want ransom for the dead,  
A price of blood upon my head.  
But count my sorrows, count my tears,  
I've lived with death across the years.  
Mercy is not yours to give.  
No dying god would quick forgive.

My name was paid in sacrifice.  
Let that be the ransom price.  
Ghosts are fading into shadows.  
Let this graveyard be my gallows.  
The long war ends with my last breath.  
Please let my name return in death.

Carly Twehous

Author's Note: An Epitaph

I'm going to be honest and say that this kind of just ran away once I had an idea. It definitely didn't turn out how I envisioned it two weeks ago, but it has certainly been fun. Once you said I could write poetry, the ideas came flying. (Let's be honest. It was never going to be just one poem.) I sat for an afternoon trying to decide what to reflect on, then I guess this just came along. I don't really know why I chose this specific topic, other than I could string together a few rhymes and it sounded interesting in my head. It is a story probably more than it is a reflection, but I believe the reflection part is still there. It's poetry, after all. - *Alma*

*not that  
in my opinion  
to do it  
I guess*

I didn't work on this a whole lot in class. I prefer to work at home where people don't stare at me when I randomly start tapping out a beat. The peer editing part of the equation was difficult this go-round. More so for my group mates than for me, I think. I felt bad giving them poetry, but I really wanted someone to look it over. Most of the time, they didn't really tell me anything and I relied mostly on self-editing and my father's opinion. I realize that poetry is hard to edit and I'd give them things to watch out for in my author's note, but all the editing was done mostly on my own. - *Good to know really*

My official topic was 'Names.' I think. Like I said, it's much more about the story. But basically, overall, I'm writing about this man—the Shadow Man, as I call him—who made grave mistakes in his past that cost people their lives and it's all really about him losing his name. Or so to speak. It makes sense in my head and in the poems, I believe. Each poem is told from a certain perspective about the Shadow Man and all are set after he did what he did. I don't spell out exactly what his crime was, but I dance around it on quite a few occasions. I'm just going to go into what each poem is supposed to mean in detail because I think I confused my group mates. It makes sense in my head. So I'm going to explain what I'm thinking. (And this author's note is probably going to be super long.) - *I can see that. But at least it's*

*written  
well*

*Interesting* - In my head, I imagined each poem as part of a play. And if I knew people who could act and had spare time, I'd present it that way. There are four characters that would have roles in my imaginary poem-play. First, the narrator who may also be like a court jester. Then, a crazy mad man who might actually know what he's talking about. Last, the Shadow Man and a girl. I'll explain in further detail the roles of each character who is imaginarily reading my poems.

## A Toast

This is the first poem and it's not directly about the Shadow Man. (But it is.) It was meant to be the most general of all the poems and could possibly stand alone. At the same time, it's meant to sort of introduce the piece and connect to the other poems. Therefore, it is kind of vague and general and is more of a prologue. In this poem, the Shadow Man is silent and is taunted by the narrator and the mad man.

The narrator—who at this point is acting as a court jester—is taunting the Shadow Man about 'the beast inside.' He's teasing the Shadow Man to make him feel guilty of what he did, I suppose. He wants the Shadow Man to feel guilty but it also serves to warn the audience that the story's not getting any brighter. The narrator makes reflections on the nature of the beast inside humanity, not just the Shadow Man. That serves to demonstrate that the Shadow Man is really no greater than the rest of us. He's just an ordinary man who made mistakes.

The interjections between stanzas are meant to be read by the mad man who knows what he's talking about. I suppose it also serves as part of the reflection of this poem. The mad man is telling the audience about the Shadow Man, really. Or about the nature of his title, perhaps. It serves as a connection to the next piece especially.

## The Shadow Man

This was my favorite poem to write, by far. It was so much fun, I can't explain it. I loved it. I spent the most time trying to perfect this poem because I wanted it to sound just right. I had a specific view of what I wanted it to be.

Despite its title, this poem is not meant to be narrated by the Shadow Man. I wanted the mad man to narrate this one. Because of this, I made it repetitive with a very strong beat to it, something that would easily fit the ramblings of a crazy man. I imagine him saying it in a thick Scottish accent, if that helps at all. Though a crazy person is narrating, I wanted it to be understood that the Shadow Man is *everything* in the poem. And I purposefully contradicted most of the lines. The Shadow Man is a very ambiguous character. Only a crazy person would understand him. (I wonder what that says about me.)

The audience begins to get a glimpse of what the Shadow Man might have done. More than anything, I wanted to emphasize that he is a good man but he made a mistake. Well, a very large mistake that possibly ended worlds.. And you must ask him why he did it and why you can't trust him. (That's the next poem.)

I presented this poem different from the others because it basically explains who the Shadow Man is, even if it doesn't make complete sense. I put it in an envelope, like the others, but I placed a wax seal on it. That is meant to be a sort of 'warning' that you must make the effort if you want to know the truth. More or less. It's a warning seal. I also pushed the limits of my ability and actually wrote the poem out by hand. I felt that that would be something the mad man would do as well as because it was the best way to convey the feel of this poem. (Since my cursive handwriting is terrible, I'll also include a paper copy.)

This poem reflects mostly on the Shadow Man. It doesn't tell events, but it leaves hints. Mostly, it focuses on his ambiguous nature which will influence the rest of the story.

(Also, you should probably know that I stole a direct quote from *Doctor Who*. It's about half way through and the quote is 'Demons run when a good man goes to war.' I didn't know how to italicize my cursive handwriting and quotation marks threw off the flow, so this is me citing it. Stephen Moffat wrote it for the episode 'A Good Man Goes to War' in 2011. Copyright BBC. It really just fit perfectly, so I borrowed it. Sorry.)

How DARE YOU!!! - L. J. King

## The Promise of a Name

I think this was my biggest risk-factor poem. I tried doing a conversation between two people last year in my poetry anthology and that poem was a train wreck. I really don't know what prompted me to try that again other than the fact that I had to get the Shadow Man to explain himself. So this is what came of it. I definitely edited it the most. I scribbled all over at least two copies trying to get the flow and the wording and the rhymes right. It took me forever, but I think I've got it pretty much where it can stand on its own two legs without falling apart in the middle.

This one, since it's a conversation, is narrated by the narrator, the Shadow Man, and the girl. (The Shadow Man's part is right-aligned, the narrator's is centered and the girl's is on the left.) I think one of the biggest problems was trying not to have this conversation come across as a love story. I wanted it to be more of a confession.

Basically, the Shadow Man takes this girl—who thinks he's a hero and obviously didn't pay attention during the last poem (or maybe she did and now she's here to question him)—to the place where he killed everyone. Definitely not a place for a date. But basically, he starts off by explaining that this is why he can't be a hero. Then she comes to a sudden realization and becomes his sort-of accuser. She's questioning her role, but mostly pointing a finger at him (not necessarily in a bad way.) He had a plan of how this conversation would go but after hearing her reaction, he begins to realize what was actually happening. She's trying to make him realize the gravity of the situation.

At that point, the Shadow Man becomes defensive and tries to justify himself for a majority of the poem until he finally accepts what she's saying (or comes to his senses.) Then he makes the reflections on his name, which is basically the thesis of my project. The narrator serves to emphasize and clarify what the Shadow Man is saying, especially about the nature of his name.

This is the pork and beans of my piece—not the best, but the most important—because it gives the reflective part to the story. Or I think it does. It all made perfect sense in my head.

## Ransom Price

This basically picks up where the last one ended. The girl is gone and the Shadow Man is left alone to pay the ransom for the lives he's taken. He does this by talking to the gods—or his gods. He's there to pay the price that they name for his peace, his freedom from the ghosts.

First, though, he does some accusing of his own. He points out, basically, that they are false gods. Hungry, ravenous gods. Bad gods. Basically, I wanted to make the distinction between what we believe about our God and what these gods are. Our God shed his own blood and these gods feed on the blood of others. These gods cannot give mercy. They're about as false as it gets. And the Shadow Man knows that. But, nonetheless, he has to pay the ransom, because these are his gods. What he believes. So he pays with his memories, his heart, his life and his name. Obviously his name. Then he dies, begging the gods that he'll reclaim his name in death.

I guess the gods bit became another part of my reflection. They're mentioned in the other poems, but they don't become prominent until this one. Basically, this whole piece is my reflection on the gods and name and death of the Shadow Man. Hope it makes sense.

Just so you know, this poem didn't want to be written. It was content staying up there in my head until I forced it out. It cooperated eventually, with some incentive.

*Shadow was the number 1 poem*



## Presentation

I chose the letters and old wooden box to emphasize the fact that the Shadow Man human and secondly that he could be (or have been) anyone. It seemed simple. Obvious. Made sense in my head. I liked the old feel that it gave off, as if the memories really were forgotten for a time period.

I imagined that the box actually belonged to the Shadow Man, so I included some things that he would have had as mementos. First, I have rocks. The intent was they are the last fragments of his home, his world or whatever it was that was destroyed, or memories from the graveyard where all his ghosts are buried. Something like that. Remembrance of his crime. Second, there is a broken watch that will not tick, signifying that though even the Shadow Man, who played god, was bound by time. He was not the boss of it. Finally, there is a burnt note that says, "Sorry" on it. Well, it's half burnt. The story there is that throughout his story, never once did the Shadow Man try to apologize, so he wrote it down on that note, as if to remind himself to do so. Then, he decided it wasn't important, crumpled it up and tried to burn it, but then remembered that he actually was sorry and kept it with his other mementos.

## Rationale

In a nutshell, that is the story of the Shadow Man. I seem to have created a whole mythology around him. It was incredibly fun. I loved it. I don't know if the story is reflective or if it makes sense or if it is appealing to anyone besides me, but I sure had fun doing it. I could write more, if I had the time. Probably more than just poems that only seem to make sense to me. Nonetheless, I enjoyed this time with the Shadow Man. And it was reflective-ish in my head. Or at least I tried to make it more reflective with this four page author's note. (Sorry for that, by the way. Does this break a record?) I hope that counts and perhaps deserves an A.

L.A. Coker had  
an hour long  
video author's  
note last year - so not quite