

SHADOWS' CHILDREN

SELECTED POEMS I



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SHADOWS' CHILDREN

HAIKU BY

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Lembeth Hall
Chapbooks in Poetry

Shadows' Children

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Author's Note: Each of the poems in this collection was written over a number of years, separately. None was intended to be part of a sequence. That is not to say that it could not be so used. Haiku have an uncanny ability to coalesce, as though magnetized, into patterns. The trouble with this tendency is that each may lose its individual power and force and "succumb" to the wider montage. Ideally, each poem should have its own page, its own white space around it, but that was not possible. So let us say the theme is shadows. And let it go at that.

SHADOWS' CHILDREN

NO ONE

IN THE CLOSED PLANT NURSERY ...

A SMALL FULL MOON

THEY WADE IN, AND

SUDDENLY THE MOON'S OUT

WITH THEIR ARMS

THE TREE RUSHED UP AND BURST

OUT THERE

IN THE STELLAR SPACES

TO THE RISEN FISH

THEIR FINGERS GIVE

PARTICLES OF THE BROKEN MOON

THE HANDS

DOWN THIS RAILING

TO THE SAND

ALL THE FOOTPRINTS

FILLING THE WET SAND -

FILLING WITH IT

**THEY TAKE THE BEACHCHAIR
UP AND WITH EVERYTHING IN IT
GO**

**WAREHOUSE-THEATRE'S
MUFFLED CRIES THE
SOFT NIGHT RAIN**

**THE SHADOWS THAT STRETCH
BACK FROM THEIR SCRIMMAGE
TO THE WOOD'S EDGE**

THE RELIGIOUS SCHOOL -

IN THE NIGHT, LEAVES FROM THE ROAD

BLOW IN

EVERYWHERE YOU WALKED WAS OPEN ...

NOT A WALL

FOR A SHADOW

THAT WALL ACROSS THE STREET -

IT KEPT THE LIGHT LONGER,

DIDN'T IT

TOO SOON THAT STARK -

THE TREE NOT

TO COME BACK

HOW THE SHADOWS FALL

ACROSS EXISTENCE

AS A ROMAN WALL

SOMEONE RAKING

LEAVES BY THE WINDOW

HAS MOVED AWAY

LEAVES ARE TURNING
IN A FIELD WHERE A BAND PLAYED
AND THE DEAD WAVED

DEAD LEAVES SCRAPING
AROUND IN THE DIRT LOOKING
FOR WHAT

RUNNING IN THE WOODS -
THE LEAVES WERE CRUMBLING
UNDER OUR FEET

A BITTER DRIZZLE ...

THE STREET-PREACHER'S HEELS

RISE FROM THE BOX

HIS BREATH WENT AWAY

WITH THE STEAM FROM HIS TROUSERS

IN THE WINTER RAIN

WINTER RAIN ...

LEGS END

IN SHOES

THROUGH THE WALL -

CRYING ... OR

NOT CRYING

UNDER THE MARQUEE -

THE EYES OF A DEAD LADY

HOUR OF RAIN

WINTER RAIN

TALKING

TO HIMSELF, A DEAF-MUTE

DENSE TREES ...

THE MIST MOVING OVER

TRODDEN OLIVES

THE LONG BRIDGE -

IT GOES SILENTLY ALSO

INTO THE MIST

THE INCENSE DRIFTS OFF

FROM THE COFFIN

AND GOES ON ITS WAY

MIST SEEPS

OUT FROM WHERE THE ECHOES

KEEP

A LOW GRANITE SKY -

IT TEARS

THEIR OVERCOATS

NEAR HERE IN THE FOG,

A PRISON

NO ONE SEES

WINTER LIGHT:

IN THE CLOSING STORES

SHADOWS GATHER SHADOWS

OPENING THE DOOR

AT A STATION - THE LIGHT FLEW OUT

INTO THE WILDS OF SNOW

NIGHT-SLEET, A CRAB-TRAWLER -

WHAT ARE THESE SWOOPING BELLIES

IN THE STORM?

A FULL MOON -

BUT ON THIS STREET THE OLD WIND,

BENT INTO PIECES

BLOWN ACROSS

THE OLD STREET,

RAGS AND PEOPLE

LIGHTS UP AHEAD -

WHAT ARE THEY?

WALKING FASTER ...

A BUS CROSSES -

THE LIGHTED SHADOWS

DO NOT LOOK OUT

BLACK DOG RUNNING

TOWARD ME THEN BEHIND

ME THE WINTER SKY

A SMALL MONGREL

WITH HER FOLLOWING ...

FIELD OF SNOW

FERRY'S ENGINES

FEET

ON MIST

OARS UP, THEY PUSH OUT

TO THE UNMISTAKABLE ISLAND

THERE, IN THE MIST

THE OARLOCKS

OF THE OTHER BOAT

IN THE MIST

CHILDREN IN TWILIGHT:

THEIR CRIES

- OUT LOUDER

SHADOWS' CHILDREN - YOU, TOO,

RAN WITH THEM ...

THE NIGHT LENGTHENED

IN THE DARKENED CAR:

SHADOWS OF THE RAIN LINES

DOWN THEIR FACES

THE MANNEQUIN'S SHADOW

COMES TOWARD US

UNDER THE RUSHING CARS

ON THE TRAIN BACK TO SCHOOL:

A PRISON WALL,

FEET FROM US

FOG-WISPS ON THE WIND -

THE CHILDREN RUN WITH THEM

UNTIL THEY FADE

HIS LINES,

FEELING DOWN INTO THE BLIND

FISHERMAN'S DARK

ON THE BOTTOM

IN THEIR DARK

THE CRAB TRAP SLOWLY CLOSES

NIGHT BUS COMING IN:

THE SHADOWS RISE

IN WHITE LIGHT

WHEN THE MIST HASN'T SETTLED

WHEN IT ISN'T

IN THIS WORLD, WITH US ...

THE TREES - SO SOON

REMOTE FROM US

IN THE MIST

WHO SAW IT CAST OVER US

SO QUICKLY,

THE MOON TOO IN ITS TOILS?

SKATING ON THE COVE:

ON AND ON AND ON AND ON -

IN THE WHITE FOREVER

BACK HERE! - BACK HERE! -

THE SNOW-CRIES ... BUT IT SWEEP

BEHIND US LOST ACROSS THE ICE THE NIGHT

WHO WAS IT WHO KNEW,

BACK THERE, IN THE MIST, WHO WAS IT

KNEW

WHITE WOODS

NO ONE

EITHER END

Acknowledgements

"through the wall" *New World Haiku* and *The Haiku Anthology* 1st and 2nd eds, Simon and Schuster, and *The Haiku Anthology*, W.W. Norton and Co; "his breath went away" *New World Haiku*; "warehouse-theatre's" *Tweed* (Australia), *The Haiku Anthology*, all editions; "winter rain/talking" *Cicada*; "bitter drizzle/heels" *New World Haiku*; "the long bridge" *Modern Haiku*; "too soon that stark" *Tweed*; "winter rain/legs end" *Tweed*; "under the marquee" *Seer Ox*; "they take the beachchair" *Noon* (Japan).



