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## Following Shadows That Fell Upon Me

Edgar Rider

“Following shadows that fell upon me.” It first came hovering over him in a dream .  
The shadow engulfs the room encompassing the night lite.  
‘Following shadows’ Zach recites these lines out loud. He remembers it from a nursery rhyme.

His dream seems momentary. “Zach don’t be late.” Zach wakes up ready to go.

I won’t” Zach answers gathering his backpack grabs a granola bar and hurries down the stairs  
thinks about gliding down the rail but stops himself.

He runs out the door hears his mom yell,” Break...” the rest is a blur. The bus is already there and  
Zach is not sure he is ready for what the day may bring. He still thinks of the shadow but his  
attention span switches to the importance of finding a seat

Zach walks on the bus looks for a seat amongst the crowd. He spots his friend Grace right behind  
her is his other best friend Tommy the three of them have been going to school together most of  
their short lives. Zach has always been smaller than most of the kids in his fifth grade class.  
Tommy is a skater kid who combs his hair slightly over his face. Tommy towers over Grace and  
Zach by about six inches

Zach sits right next to Grace. “Hi Grace

“Hi Zach.”

“What are you doing.”

“Looking at my I Phone.”

Tommy looks over their shoulders eavesdropping but not saying anything.

“Does it have games on it.” Zach says curiously. Tommy eagerly awaits her answer.

“I don’t know.”

“Do you ever watch stupid videos. Like with cats and babies.” Tommy asks. Zach seems  
impressed by this question an eagerly awaits her answer.

“No I only use it for educational purposes.” Grace squints her eyes looking at her phone screen  
ignoring Zach and company’s impending derogatory comments

“You don’t like to have fun do you.”

Grace seems older than the two boys she dresses sophisticated for her age. She wears an immaculately tied scarf around her neck and pink speckled bifocals. She looks at both of them and then back to her i-phone. "Your both immature. I'm sophisticated."

Zach eases back into his seat almost falling asleep.

Once they are off the bus, Zach separates himself from his peer group. On the wall of the school, Zach looks up sees a shadow fall behind him and in front of him. Suddenly, an image of an older obese woman with glasses surrounds him that shadow quickly disappears replaced in front of him of an elderly man walking using his cane. A huge shadow engulfs around him like a giant. And then a two headed shadow appears before him startling him

On the other side of the playground Tommy rides his skateboard like a possessed pre-teen. "Tommy stop riding." Coach Martin yells but its too late. Either he couldn't hear the coach or didn't want to.

"They get stranger by the year. I have had all of those kids." He pauses and switches to a different view on the same subject. "They think they can have anything and do whatever they want. The Age of entitlement." Mr. Grendell chuckles while trying to walk away. He uses his cane with more force with each forward step.

You got that right Grendell." Coach Martin says slapping Mr. Grendell on the back softly and chuckles slightly to himself. Grendell walks away with a smile on his face.

Zach sees both of his teachers Grendell and Martin way back from the 3rd grade. Zach waves at Mr. Grendell. He points his cane at Zach waves it at him grimaces and then smiles. Zach smiles back. Mr. Grendell was nice but stern. He had a dry sense of humor and thought all young people had a poor work ethic but unlimited potential. He watches Mr. Grendell walk away and wonders what is like to grow old. Zach waves at Coach martin and the coach just simply nods back.

He then sees Ms. Tugboat as some of the mean kids call her. Especially Hank has been especially mean to a teacher who never defends herself. She is a fairly large teacher but Zach has always tried to be nice., Zach hears Hank say "Tugboat. Tugboat." He then whispers the same thing towards Grace antagonizing her. Ms. Lent overhears but acts like she doesn't. Zach tries to ignore these unfortunate comments as he enters the classroom and sits down near the back of the class

"You're so mean," Grace says. Ms. Lent hands her a piece of candy and says You're a good one deary.". Grace smiles back at Ms. Lent. Hank grabs a piece of candy out of Ms. Lent's pocket when she is not looking. Hanks squints his eyes at Grace as if saying 'Ha got one to'. "Hey you're not supposed to use your phone in class." Hank comments shoving the candy in his mouth.

"Ms. Lent lets me because I always look up important facts."

"Deary what did you look up this morning."

The Age of Enlightenment was a time when they were trying to advance knowledge and end superstition. It was a time of reason.

Okay great Grace here is another piece of candy. You're a good one."

That's great what a dork." Hank says sticking his gum underneath the table and pretending to fly his paper airplane.

Zach has always been kind of cautious around Ms. Lent. He wonders what she does on her free time. Probably sleeps in the back room at school where all the other teachers live.

There goes the bell little ones." Ms. Lent says as the class scatters out the door. She shakes her head giggling to much like someone half her age.

Zach is tripped outside the door by Hank he drops his backpack and picks it up. Hank looks up sees a man standing in the doorway. "Later dork" Hanks says pushing and brushing past Zach

Zach turns back around a shadow rises. he is not sure what to think. A man is standing behind him.

"Didn't mean to startle you I am your shadow for the week." Zach doesn't question the man because every once in awhile a teacher comes to help him. Zach has always had trouble paying attention in class. He has a tendency to wander. Zach needs guidance

Okay. What's your name."

You can just call me Mr. Steve."

"Okay Mr Steve".

Zach shows Mr Steve around. Mr. Steve's job is to follow Zach around from class to class. Mr. Steve's job is to keep on task and teach him little lessons. Through several days Zach has been accustomed to Mr. Steve "tagging" along

Mr. Steve eventually starts to impart some advice on the young pupil. "Your teachers are trying to make things easier for you. So you don't have to go through some of the things that we have had to." Mr. Steve says smiling puts his hand on Zach shoulder. "You want to make things easier on yourself. Have you ever heard the old saying work smarter not harder. You want to get in the habits now. " He pauses, collects his thoughts and switches topics. "Even when you leave your teachers will always be with you. " Mr . Steve smiles chuckling slightly "Buddy you and your classmates have a long way to go no offense."

Mr. Steve follows Zach from class to class, down the hallway, and waits for him in front of the restroom.

Like the rest of his teachers, Mr. Steve disappeared as quickly as he came. There is an old legend that says shadows stay for a moment sometimes they disappear and come back other times they just change their shape.

Zach hears the bell and runs for afternoon recess. Tommy rides his skateboard onto the playground. He looks for Zach and Grace. He grabs a basketball dribbles it. The basketball's shadow keeps dribbling even when Tommy has stopped. Before he can find them things get out of control. On the playground the shadows invade and every kid screams as shadows engulf them. The adults don't see anything. The kids are screaming running around in chaos.

"I don't know what that ice cream man is selling but they all need to stay away." Coach Martin says shaking his head.

The shadow of the ice cream truck screeches past its three dimensional counterpart.

Zach watches the shadow and chills go down his spine as he realizes spirits or whatever they are abound in plenty.

Grace waits for the bus. She sees a shadow form around the wall it quickly moves around to the other side. Even though Grace is nervous she follows the shadow fascinated by its quick departure. The shadow is carrying a bucket and a mop. It points at her and then to a soda can and a banana peel. The shadow runs over grabs a shadow of a garbage can, She realizes the shadow wants her to pick stuff up.

She sees another shadow wave her over. The janitor shakes its head as if saying "don't go."

He is the ice cream man. There is something wrong with his smile. Grace becomes terrified. His shadow stands behind him. He invites her towards the van. At first, she watches petrified. Grace runs as fast as she can. The ice cream man runs to his car tries to follow her.

Mr. Dave Persik and Mrs. Anne Persik have always had classrooms next door to each other. Mr. and Mrs. Persik have been teachers at the school for many years. They seem perfect for each other same height but different temperaments.

When the class enters the kids are all screaming. One student yells, 'Did you see that.'  
"What were those things."

"What's going on."

Mr. and Mrs. Persik there were these shadows and they were all after us.

“Okay sure kids what are you all on. I hope just cokes and candy.”

Be nice dear. Settle down guys everything is alright.” Mrs. Persik has always had a way with calming down classes.

Within a few moments the class feels safe and gets ready for their daily lesson

“Before we take out our textbooks. You know what the role of teacher and student is supposed to be. Complete control and utter domination. That’s what we’re here for to make your lives miserable After all, we are teachers; we are mean people. And you thought it was all about learning.” Mr. Persik looks at his class

“Oh Mr. Persik their good kids for the most part.” Mrs. Persik counters him trying to be helpful and encouraging.”

“Oh Mrs. Persik their little devils when you leave the room.”

“Oh be nice.”

“Mr. Persik do you hate us.” Tommy yells out.

No hate is a strong word don’t understand that would be a better expression.

“Oh kids don’t mind him. See you all later. Bring your binders.

“Good cop. And then there’s me. Grace anymore random great thoughts today. Interesting facts.” Mrs. Persik gets ready to exit. Grace Grace

“No Mr. Persik.”

Mr. Persik walks Mrs. Persik to the door. Zach notices as Mr. Persik and Mrs. Persik share an embrace something happens.

Their two shadows become almost entwined. Almost like two heads.....

He remembers the old man shadow, the obese shadow, and the two headed shadow Zach realizes the shadows are some of his former teachers and the other people he has met in his life

On the way home from school Zach decides to walk to clear his head. He doesn’t understand what is happening is this a dream a nightmare somewhere in between.

Zach is led down a dark alleyway. Shadows form all around him. He thinks to himself that before shadows were pure good and helpful but these shadows have been mischievous. One shadow forms waving him away confronting the other shadows. The shadows push each other back and forth.

Another lone shadow steps forth. Once he sees who it is the shadow seems less intimidating than the real thing. Hank is standing in front of Zach. Zach tries to run but Hank grabs him. You're so weird" Hank says. Zach struggles to break free but Hank's grip is too strong. Zach looks up sees another shadow looming over Hank. Zach points to it. Hank laughs, "nice try". Hank turns around sees the shadow What the.."

A smaller shadow appears and cowers in front of the bigger shadow. Suddenly the smaller shadow fights back. The smaller shadow flies through the air with an impressive aerial assault in some kung fu movie. The smaller shadow kicks the bigger shadow hard making the bigger shadow fly through the air. Hank and zach are watching the shadows fight as if they appear on a movie screen. After the bigger shadow becomes defeated ,Hank looks at Zach. zach gives him a tough guy look and shakes his fist. Hank becomes scared. " i gotta go." Zach watches him run down the street a smile emerges from his victorious face.

Tommy, Zach meet with Grace at the library and try to figure this whole thing out.

So what happened guys to you today. Grace says immediately taking charge.

Each one recounts their story

Alright all start .There was this janitor. And his shadow followed me. And a bad man's shadow soon after..."

This shadow followed me on the skateboard. It was imitating me teasing me or mocking me..

Different shadows followed me. On the wall. Some were helping me others They scared me it was if...." before he finishes his sentence Grace cuts him off

Grace looks at her iphone. "It sounds like these experiences..ummm...I have been looking up this one source. Its called Zipopedia because it's fast and you can look up things in a zip but not completely accurate. We better look up a different source. But first.... Let's see it says."She waves for them to read with her and on the screen the words appear:

#### **ZIPOPEDIA:**

*The Legends of shadows: What are the nature of the shadows. Shadows can be the Shadows of people from past experiences that are supernatural humanoid figures according to believers, are seen flickering on walls and ceilings in the viewer's periphearl vision. They are often reported moving with quick, jerky movements, and quickly disintegrate into walls or mirrors. They are believed to be evil and aggressive in nature, although a few people consider them to be a form of guardian angel.*

"Okay we need another source. The University of Paranormal Study Shadows by says that by nature shadows are helpful but some shadows are dangerous and appear to have their own agenda." Grace takes extra time trying to decipher the words. "Paranormal research suggests that these are energy sources left over not from the deceased but can also be energy that has surrounded ourselves from life lessons projected from our minds by people who have influenced



and inspired us throughout our lives. But also those that can harm us are also projected like a warning board.

“So we need to be careful. We can’t just blindly trust. Their motives can be different. How do we tell” Zach says contemplating his next move

“Exactly right You can’t just automatically trust them. It says their motives can be misleading” Grace says shutting her I-phone off

“Woaa” Tommy says both Grace and Zach stare at him as if to say is that all you can say.

Zach, Grace and Tommy go their separate ways after leaving the library.

Zach runs down the street. He sees shadows fighting each other. The shadows are everywhere A shadow of a police man helping traffic stops noticing a criminal shadow carrying a bag. The police shadow begins chasing the robber shadow

A shadow forms before Zach it holds its arm out protecting from traffic. A car zooms past him. He waves at the shadow the shadow waves back.

Shadows loom everywhere and even begun engulfing the town. The shadows seem more prevalent as they invade every part of the town. The kids realized they can’t stop the shadows they are there to stay. They realize that was never the point in the beginning.

Zach goes home exhausted from the days events . He eats his dinner quietly and tells his mom he is going to sleep early. Zach has one more dream about shadows.. This time in his deep slumber, Mr. Steve is standing in front of him.

“Shadows will appear when you really need them. They will be there sometimes just to let you know they are with you always. And the ones that will cause you trouble I think you know what to do. You can control them Zach and you can teach your friends and others.”

“Mr. Steve who are you really.”

Mr. Steve quickly vanishes just as suddenly as he appeared.

Before Zach knows it another day rises. Zach and his friends have a new understanding of the shadows invasion. Zach realizes him and his friends can control the impact of shadows .Zach shakes hands with the shadows that form into various teachers he has known all his life.

Grace high fives a shadow Zach and Tommy look on surprised but approving. That was pretty cool,” Grace says.

Tommy rides his skateboard a shadow follows him giving him a thumbs up sign as they both glide down the street.



There is one lesson Zach has learned from all of this. Shadows can be trusted but proceed with caution. There are those that can help in your life and others that can be mischievous . Its knowing the difference that can make or break a young person's productive learning period

Following shadows that fall before all of us.