

SHADOW IN THE WINDOW

CRIME & HORROR FICTION FROM THE EDGE
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SHADOW IN THE WINDOW

Letter from the Editor ... Welcome to a journey of a kind. Some time ago I conceived of a collection of tales depicting crime fiction and horror. I will admit that I share Virgil Thompson's draw to the macabre, but not, I believe, for obvious reasons. If you look closely, you will note the *shadow* is *inside* the window. While strangers commit terrible and terrifying acts against strangers, there is far greater terror in the wrath of intimates, trusted persons both casual and official. The betrayal by these associations is the underbelly of true horror and the feral edge of society that cuts so vividly at our sense of wellbeing.

Even so, I believe that within terror and tragedy something connects all of us inexorably to the light, the source, the force—whatever you want to call it.

In Thompson's *In Search of the Warm Earth* comes intransigent finality amid the remnants of something bitter that has traveled too far to be turned back. It is a glimpse rarely seen and perhaps little desired, in real terms, of destruction and loss.

The Beast, an installment from Virgil Thompson's upcoming thriller *Body Snatcher*, links hands with a horror that cannot be outpaced, confronted, or defeated in ordinary terms. How many of us want to meet the smiling man that in the dark grows teeth and turns hairy?

Jack Willard's *Runner* touches the untouchable, a moment in which tragedy begets enormous strength, and possibly hope, in spite of unspeakable cruelty.

Some of the tales give a unique and evocative voice to the voiceless, the ones sacrificed to the so-called greater game (or is it the greater good?) and swept aside without explanation and mercy, though all stories are works of fiction, and as such, any resemblance to real or actual persons and situations is purely coincidental. Let me restate: The collection of stories presented herein represents a work of fiction. All names, businesses, characters, and events are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Even when settings are referred to by their true names, the incidents portrayed as taking place there are entirely fictitious. Any resemblance to actual events, or to persons living or dead, is coincidental.

Continue at your own risk. You have been warned!

Terri Spano, Editor



Behind the house stretches wilderness. Lightlessness substantial as skin. I look up at it. The darkness is close and unnatural. Immense, it leeches color from the house, renders its frame bleak and gray. In the presence of this aberration I am afraid. My knees ache I'm so afraid. My blood congeals and gushes along only because my heart is banging like the engine of a locomotive.

There, the amber square of a lit window. The window faces the rose bushes. The silhouette of a man squats into the frame of the window: featureless, unknown. He looks outside at me but he is not a man. I know this as well as I know that I am on the third planet from the sun. He is part of darkness, some wild, lawless thing that has inexplicably achieved form. Looking at him I understand that I must run. I am, however, rooted. My organs are scorched with fear. Like the people inside the house, I am helpless.

—From “Final Things: A Novel of Suspense”
Virgil Thompson, 2002