Shadows by Reese Castillo in Year 10, St John’s Regional College

Shadows and those who lurk in them are not easily distinguished. In fact, a person can go their entire lifetime not realising that they’ve seen these shadow crawlers who are often mistaken for ordinary darkness.

A shadow crawler spends their life rendering itself invisible, watching as people bask in the light of the day, radiating happiness when they smile. *Happiness*. An emotion so distant, seemingly unachievable, yet it yearns for one everyday but lacks the courage to step out of the murky shadows that envelop it.

It has come to associate light with happiness, the sun’s rays as warm as a gentle smile.

The being of darkness hides in the shrubbery as a distant lantern approaches, swaying with the steps of its carrier. The light dances upon the bushes and illuminates the creature’s features, but it doesn’t dart away, its eyes are locked on the figure. Happiness is achievable…

It pounces out of the bush, clawing at the poor stranger. He loosens his grip and the lantern crashes to the ground. The shadow crawler scrambles in the darkness and grasps the light in it’s cold, sharp claws as the stranger flees. Enchanted by the lantern’s dancing flame, the creature stares hungrily at what it believes will grant it happiness.

Being out in the open for too long, it scavenges for darkness and scampers back into the woods. Alas, there seems to be no darkness to return too. Every inch of gloom seems to take off when it gets too close. Anguished and trembling, through hollow eyes it glares at the lantern.

The shadow creature was mistaken. Light vanquishes darkness, light brings vulnerability. If this rouge were to be truly happy, it would have to sacrifice it’s blanket of darkness, it’s cloak of invisibility. It would have to trade happiness for security, desolation for uncertainty.