

SHADOW CUT

Written by

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The banter, shouts and giggles of school children create a din over the bus' roar. BOY (15) is slumped in his seat, hands fall from his worn pockets, head rests on the back of the bench. School yard bullying is pointed in his direction. He watches the window. Northland farmland rushes past.

GIRL (15) take notice. She rises from her seat and slowly glides down the aisle, using the seats on either side to balance. She is calm amidst the swirl of movement, noise and clutter. Boy rolls his head across the back of the bench, a strained but lazy movement. He sees Girl. She stops exactly at his seat and sits without hesitation, body turned in his direction. She smiles, he shyly returns it.

OLDER BOY

Oi! Girl! Oi! That your boyfriend?  
Looks like he's got too many  
feelings. Come back here for a real  
poke.

(laughs)

I mean smoke.

(laughs)

Ehhh.

Girl refuses to turn and acknowledge the older boy. She rolls her eyes and shakes his words off, and then presses her head against Boy's shoulder. Boy exhales, as if for the first time that day.

Boy and Girl's gaze retreats to the window. Golden light flickers upon their face, creating patterns and shadows.

OLDER BOY (CONT'D)

Stuff you then! Stuff you. I could  
do better. I could do way better.

The whoosh of passing countryside takes over. School boy banter continues but becomes an unintelligible muffled blanket of sound.

Boy and Girl travel along their worn monopoly board town - a rural road lined with the peeling paint of pastel houses. Boy scuffs his feet. Girl skips backwards to face him.

GIRL

What are you doing now? Going home?

Boy bites into his bottom lip.

BOY

Nah.

GIRL  
Where are you going then?

BOY  
Nowhere.

Girl laughs.

GIRL  
Wanna do something then?

There is a long pause. Boy keeps his head down, avoiding eye contact with Girl.

GIRL (CONT'D)  
(slightly silly)  
Wanna do something?

Boy continues walking straight ahead.

GIRL (CONT'D)  
(sillier)  
Wanna do something?

She's done it - she has made Boy laugh.

3 EXT. PAINTED CORRUGATED FENCE, MOEREWA - AFTERNOON 3

Boy faces a painted corrugated fence - a patchwork of colours and textures. Girl stands poised against it, motionless except for her rhythmic chewing of gum. She watches Boy. With the last stroke of Boy's chalk pen he steps backwards to survey his work. Girl throws him a cheeky look and blows a large bubble to steal his attention. He pops her purple masterpiece. They burst into laughter and tumble out of sight. Boy's drawing on the fence is revealed - a winged outline of her silhouette.

4 EXT. MAIN STREET, MOEREWA - AFTERNOON 4

Boy leans against a shop column. He is lost in thought. Girl sneaks up behind him and grabs the small journal sticking out of his pant's pocket. It starts off as a playful game of cat and mouse - until Girl begins to read from one of the journal's pages. Boy roughly snatches it out of her hands. This is not like him and Girl takes notice.

5 EXT. KINGI'S HOUSE, MOEREWA - LATE AFTERNOON 5

KINGI (35), a large man with a sweet moon face, relaxes on his picnic table atop his deck. He smacks his lips on an oversized sausage roll and a cream filled lamington. He spots Girl and Boy running past and throws them a whistle. Girl halts and makes a direct line for him.

As Girl approaches Kingi's house they acknowledge each other with a smile and a head nod. Boy fidgets across the street.

GIRL  
Hey uncle!

KINGI  
Hello niecey.

Girl hops on top of Kingi's table.

KINGI (CONT'D)  
Ehh. Get your ass off my table aye.  
That's tapu.

Girl hops off and on to the bench. She leans forward and swipes the cream from his lamington

KINGI (CONT'D)  
Who's this? Who's your friend?

Boy slowly starts to make his way to Kingi's porch.

KINGI (CONT'D)  
What's *her* name aye? Is *she* shy?

Girl shoots Kingi an unimpressed look. She looks back to Boy, widens her eyes and motions for him to hurry up.

KINGI (CONT'D)  
Nah is that ya boyfriend?  
(beat )  
Bit too young for boyfriends there  
my niecey -

GIRL  
No.

KINGI  
Yes. Yes, you are.

Girl shrugs his words off and swipes more cream from his lamington.

KINGI (CONT'D)  
Ehh. Get your bloody fingers outta  
there.

Boy arrives. He shakes King's hand.

BOY  
Kia ora.

KINGI  
Kia ora.  
(beat)  
So, what are your intentions with  
my niece there boy?

Boy looks taken-a-back. All he can manage is an airy stutter.

KINGI (CONT'D)  
And why are you fullas not at  
school?

GIRL  
Its five o'clock.

KINGI  
Oh. Well, five o'clock, when I was  
your fullas age I was -

Girl pays not attention to Kingi's story and swipes more  
cream from his lamington.

KINGI (CONT'D)  
Eh bloody hell. Get your fingers  
out of there.

KINGI (CONT'D)  
I was working at the meat works by  
now when I was your fullas age.

King shift focuses and turns to address Boy.

KINGI (CONT'D)  
You wanna work at the meat works?  
University of Moetown?

BOY  
(under his breath)  
Nah.

KINGI  
Nah? Well, you probably wouldn't  
last bloody 10 seconds in there  
with those bloody chicken legs.  
Jeez boy.

GIRL  
Oh whatever. Leave it alone. You  
don't even come round any more.

Girl stares Kingi down, poised for his excuse.

KINGI  
Yeah, well, your dad never picks up  
my calls. I text him. I brought him  
snapper. Nothing. What's up with  
that fulla?

For the first time Girl fades. Boy leans closer to her.

GIRL  
Umm. He's been sick.

Kingi stays still and quiet.

GIRL (CONT'D)  
Sick of your face.

KINGI  
All right. That's it. How about you  
fullas go and play at the jungle  
gyms? I've had a long shift. I just  
want to eat what left of my  
lamington, go have a moe and wake  
up for my next shift tomorrow. So,  
you fullas run off, aye?

Kingi sits tall and crosses his arms. Girl rolls her eyes and  
before leaving swipes the rest of his lamington's cream.

KINGI (CONT'D)  
(calling after them)  
Hey hey hey! You don't need that  
niece! You'll get a puku like me.  
Stick to them veggie juices.

6 EXT. HOUSE, MOEREWA - LATE AFTERNOON 6

Boy is revealed leaning over the fence of a small house,  
quickly picking oranges. A dog barks and the fence rattles.

7 EXT. NETBALL COURTS, MOEREWA - LATE AFTERNOON 7

Leftover citrus peels are scattered along the court. Boy and  
Girl recline on their schoolbags. She holds Boy's hand above  
her face and traps the sunlight between his fingers. A grid  
of shadows are cast upon her brow. She runs her thumbs along  
his palm and scans it.

BOY  
What are you doing?

GIRL  
Reading your palm.  
(beat)  
It says, you're going to make  
beautiful things.

Boy smiles and shakes his head.

GIRL (CONT'D)  
We're not gunna be here forever you  
know. We're going someplace else.  
(beat)  
Come on, I'll race you there!

Girl jumps to her feet and pushes over Boy. Boy scrambles to  
his feet and chases after Girl. They leave their school bags  
and food scraps behind.

8 EXT. MEAT WORKS FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

8

Girl cuts through an overgrown field. Boy gains on her. Boy tackles Girl, a pile of intertwined limbs. They giggle in the tall grass, then fall silent and still. Girl looks up and back towards the meat works and then to Boy. She shoots him a knowing grin and a cheeky nod. Boy shakes his head no. Girl leaves.

9 EXT. ROAD TO MEAT WORKS - DUSK

9

Boy catches up to Girl. She turns to face him. She walks backwards, slowly but confidently, careful long strides. She stares him down.

BOY

What?

GIRL

(slight mocking)

What?

BOY

What?

GIRL

(more mocking)

What?

They cough giggles.

BOY

No, what?

GIRL

Nothing. Just...

(beat)

Tell me something.

Girl waits for a response, but Boy keeps his eyes hidden.

GIRL (CONT'D)

What do you keep writing? What is that?

Girl motions towards Boy's pocket.

GIRL (CONT'D)

(taunting)

Is it your diary?

BOY

Its nothing. Just homework.

Girl looks incredulous.

BOY (CONT'D)

For drama.

(beat)

That speech thing we have to give.

GIRL

Ok. So...

She twists her feet to face the meat works and continues walking.

GIRL (CONT'D)

What one are you doing then?

BOY

None.

(beat)

I'm not doing theirs.

GIRL

What?

10

INT. MEAT WORKS CUTTING ROOM - EVENING

10

Boy and Girl explore a stainless steel room of cutting tables. It is barren and sterile. They are mid conversation. Their voices echo throughout the room, making them feel even more alone.

GIRL

Why?

BOY

Because their bullshit.

(beat)

I'm writing my own.

GIRL

What is it then?

Boy makes his way to Girl. He stops at a breaths length from her. His voice cracks into rhythm.

BOY

It's hard to see here. Standing still, stuck still. They drive by with closed eyes. I stand by, blurred by, stuck by. Nothing.

So loud but scared to make a sound. To be heard. To be what we were and what we are. But fenced in, into no one.

Everyone into everyone and everything into everything and you into them and me into that.

(MORE)

## BOY (CONT'D)

This land is home, but what do I have? A long closed road. A streetlight at the end if I dare go there, but it goes nowhere. Because when I leave I can never come back.

So while you still see me. And while I still am me. Hear me.

11 INT. MEAT WORKS COOL STORE - EVENING 11

All crashes. Girl has taken a wrong turn and nearly collides into a hanging steer carcass. It is one of many strung from the ceiling.

Girl is frozen. Boy quickly arrives. He looks to the carcass and then to Girl. He pulls her in. Girl dips her head down. Boy presses his forehead against hers and leads her out of the room.

12 EXT. MAIN STREET, MOEREWA - NIGHT 12

Boy and Girl make their way down the barren main street of town. All is quiet and still, except for the highway traffic which passes by and illuminates their faces. Boy slowly moves between scanning the closed shop fronts and watching Girl. Girl faces straight ahead, avoiding all contact with Boy. She is still, as if she is holding her breath.

They reach the edge of town. Boy stops. Girl continues.

Boy looks back to their small town and the streetlight at the end. He turns to face Girl's direction. She has disappeared into the darkness. A woman riding a white horse crosses the road. She looks to Boy. They watch each other but say nothing.

Boy follows after Girl.

13 EXT. GIRL'S BACK YARD, MOEREWA - NIGHT 13

Boy walks across a moonlit lawn. He sees Girl sitting on her back stoop.

BOY  
Not going inside?

GIRL  
Soon.

Boy sits next to Girl. The light from her house spills on to their faces. They are utterly alone - quiet, soft and slow.

GIRL (CONT'D)  
 What are you doing?

Girl smiles, attempting to lighten the mood, but it quickly fades. She knows Boy has been hiding more than his poem.

BOY  
 I'm -  
     (beat)  
 - telling you something.  
     (beat)  
 I'm not going home.

Girl giggles - half nervous, half sarcastic.

GIRL  
 You just wanna stay here again.

Boy grows in confidence and adavance.

BOY  
 I'm serious. I'm leaving tonight.  
 For real this time. You can come.  
     (beat)  
 Come with me  
     (beat)  
 I have to go.

She looks to Boy again and scans him. Boy waits in anticipation of her next move. Girl takes a long moment and looks around her home. She is somewhere else - distant and inward.

GIRL  
     (quiet and broken)  
 Maybe.

Girl hesitates - she stops and starts a series of sentences under her breath.

GIRL (CONT'D)  
 I can't just leave now.

Boy drops when he hears Girl's words.

GIRL (CONT'D)  
 I won't be here forever.

BOY  
 Promise?

Girl shakes her head yes. She press her head against his shoulder.

BOY (CONT'D)  
     (quiet and broken)  
 I'll race you there.

Boy stands and disappears into the darkness. Girl is left sitting on her stoop, alone.