
Accepting Myself

– Daily Thoughts

Copyright © 2022 by Doug Hoppes Studio, L.L.C.

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

For permissions, contact: doug@shadowmyths.com

Some characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

Cover Design and Illustrations by Doug Hoppes

First Edition, First Printing 2022

ISBN 979-8-9991621-9-9

www.ShadowMyths.com

Accepting Myself

– Daily Thoughts

A Zen and Art Book by

DOUG HOPPE

Table of Contents

Everything doesn't always work out	8
What is this book?	9
How to use this book	11
Understanding Myself	13

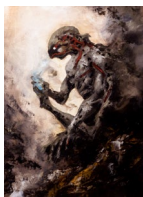
Gallery



A Deep Breath
Page 14



A Part of Me
Page 16



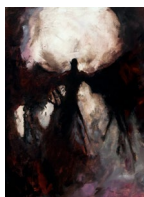
A Peaceful Day
Page 18



Always Running
Page 20



Anticipation
Page 22



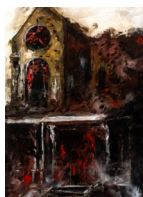
Avatar
Page 24



Changes
Page 26



Connections
Page 28



Creeping Doom
Page 30



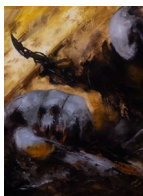
Crossover
Page 32



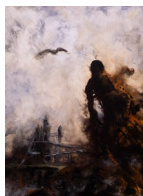
Curiosity
Page 34



Defiance
Page 36



Discovery
Page 38



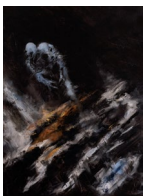
Doubt
Page 40



Dreams
Page 42



Dreams of Grandeur
Page 44



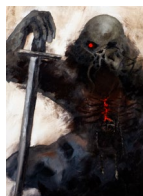
Duality
Page 46



Embracing One's Nature
Page 48



Emissary
Page 50



Exposed
Page 52

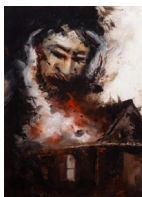
Gallery



Facade
Page 54



Focused
Page 56



Frustration
Page 58



Ghosts
Page 60



Guardian
Page 62



Healing
Page 64



Here I am
Page 66



Hidden
Page 68



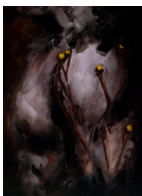
Hold Me
Page 70



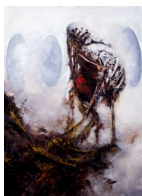
Humanity Lost
Page 72



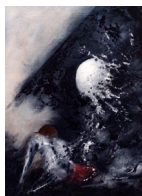
Illusion of Power
Page 74



Imperfections
Page 76



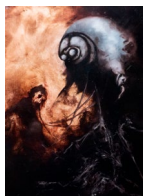
Inertia
Page 78



Infection
Page 80



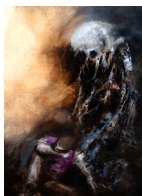
Malevolence
Page 82



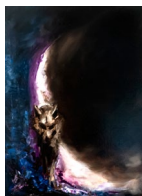
Surrender
Page 84



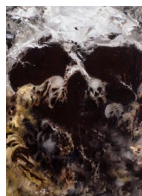
Modern Medicine
Page 86



Motherhood
Page 88

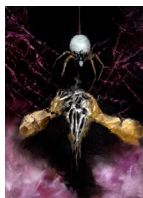


My Demons
Page 90



Obsessed
Page 92

Gallery



Past
Page 94



Poisonous
Page 96



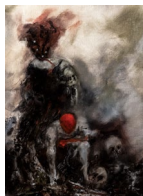
Promise
Page 98



Release
Page 100



Respect
Page 102



Responsibility
Page 104



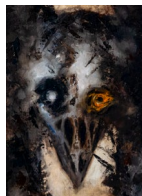
Risk
Page 106



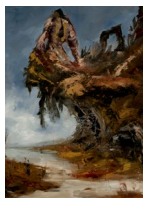
Sacrifices
Page 108



Scavenger
Page 110



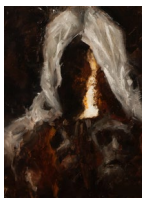
Scrutiny
Page 112



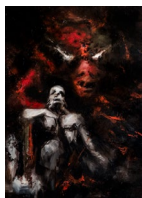
Secrets
Page 114



Shield
Page 116



Siblings
Page 118



Simplicity
Page 120



Struggle
Page 122



Unexpected
Page 124



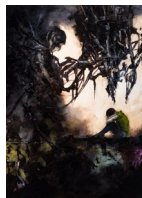
Unforgiven
Page 126



Unwanted
Page 128



Uprooted
Page 130



Wholeness
Page 132

Everything doesn't always work out

The world is not all sunshine and roses. So many books that are supposed to help you understand who you are really only talk about the positive things in your life. Things that you are happy to embrace and make you feel special.

Guess what? You're not special. I'm not special. No one is. Life isn't about having everything you want handed to you on a silver platter. It's messy. It's dark. It's going to hurt sometimes and you're going to want to give up.

You know what? That's okay. It should be dark and scary sometimes. Those are the times we dig deep into our soul and really understand what we want. Sometimes you can't do it alone. We all need help from friends, family, and even strangers. Just remember not to solely depend on that help. You have to do your bit, as well.

Now, just because the world can be dark and messy, that doesn't mean that it's always going to be that way. More often than not, it's just a passing moment. Granted... that moment may feel like it lasts a thousand years, but it'll pass.

So, what can you do about it? You can say "Hey! I've got issues, but so does everybody else! Can I overcome those momentary issues and live the life that I want?" This is the first step to understanding who you really are.

What is this book?

Is this a Zen book? A self-help book? Or is it just an art book with a lot of scary pictures in it?

It's all three of them and none of them. Like many things in life, it seems too easy to categorize things into something people understand, but that is too limiting. By categorizing something, we have immediately dismissed other possibilities without even considering their benefits.

So, let's go over each one and let me tell you about how I think about this book.

Is it a Zen book? Well, no. There is nothing in this book that relates to Zen Buddhism. There is no religion or belief attached to the book. However, like Zen sayings, you can meditate over each idea that you read and determine your own feelings about it.

Zen sayings help you understand your life better and follow a path to Enlightenment. The sayings in this book serve the same purpose. They help you better understand who you are and, if you need to change an aspect of your life, you can meditate on the meaning and how it relates to you.

Is it a Self-Help book? Again. Not really. Self-help books always have the premise of giving you ideas on how to overcome some situation. I

know. I've read a lot of them in my time while searching for my own answers to life.

This isn't one of them. This book has no answers unless you bring them yourself. The main issue that I have found with self-help books is that the answer doesn't fit everyone. The answers that they gave me were okay, but nothing ever stuck. They weren't me. They were for someone else.

This book is about giving you ideas about various topics that may affect you. That way you can bring yourself to the saying rather than the saying forcing its ideas onto you.

Is it an art book? Yes, and no. Isn't that the answer that most people hate? I hate it as well. Just tell me the answer and let me go on with my day. As with everything else, it's not so clear.

All of the paintings in this book were done by me. They are the visions I see when I'm contemplating a new piece. Each is an individual oil painting that started out as random black and white shapes created on a digital tablet. Like looking at clouds, I see things in the shapes and, fortunately; I can draw (or so I like to think. Other artists may disagree with me).

As I work out the shapes into some image, they tell me the story and the story changes the shapes. It's kind of like shifting sand. Eventually, I get the image that I want to paint and the story/meaning that I want to say. Once I'm done with that, I transfer the drawing to my canvas and use the digital image as a thumbnail.

So, yes... this also could be considered an art book. Like with so many of my products, I want it to be much more than something you pick up, look at the images, and then put it away on a shelf somewhere.

I didn't want to create that type of book.

How to use this book

Naturally, you can just use this book as a traditional art book and enjoy the meanings and stories that go with each painting.

Or...

You can use this as daily meditation and thought-provoking exercises that will change how you see the world. Who knows? Maybe the changes in you will radiate outward and the Universe smiles upon you and your newly found wisdom. The Universe decides you are the new Chosen One and will bless you with riches, a large following of people who listen to every word that you say, and all your dreams will come true. You may even reverse time and live your entire life again with your new ideas.

Or maybe not.

Just kidding. Using this book as a meditation book is fairly simple. Just let go. Concentrate on something that is bothering you and try to have

a sense of calmness wash over you. I do this by pushing out everything that is going around me and relaxing. I can feel the calmness surround my body, and then I'm ready. With the situation focused clearly in my mind, I open the book to a particular page.

Remember. The meaning will not tell you how to solve your problem. It will let you know what type of issue you are facing. Once you have decided how to interpret your given situation, you are on your first step to solving it.

Accepting Myself



A Deep Breath

There are times when we are so overwhelmed that we can't breathe. Job. Home. Spouse. Children. All clamoring for our attention, but we don't have anything to give. The well has run dry, but we still push on. We push on until we can go no more. Then we are lost. Before reaching that point, we must learn to accept that we will not live up to all expectations. All we can do is our best, and that sometimes our best is not enough... but that's okay. We're only human.



A Part of Me

We're always looking for that "thing" to make us whole. We feel something is missing but don't know what it is. It's just an emptiness that can't be filled. Some try to find it by burying themselves—in work, in alcohol, in addiction—and hoping it magically appears. We're frustrated, but if we look around at what we already have, we may find the solution right in front of our eyes.



A Peaceful Day

We've had those days. The world beats us down, and everything around us is on fire. We need to get away from it all and decompress. We must remind ourselves of the good things—the friends who strengthen us, the family that loves us, and our pets that brighten our days. This is our armor that shields us, but it's important to understand that we can only control the world around us and our reaction to it—no sense worrying about things we can't control.



Always Running

We feel like we've spent our entire lives running. We have no idea who or what we are running from. All we know is that if we stop, it'll catch us. The fear keeps us running. The fear of people finding out who we are. The fear of them mocking us. The fear of realizing we're not good enough for them. We constantly run, but we don't know where we're going. One day, we'll find that we are just running from ourselves. Stop Running.



Anticipation

Hope and Expectation. We feel it building up with every passing moment while it consumes our waking moments. There is nothing that matters other than what will happen when the moment comes. However, sometimes what happens is not what we expected, but may be what we actually need. Try not to put too much pressure on the moment, but instead, enjoy the process of getting to that moment.



Avatar

We see what we want to see and believe what we want to believe. When someone tells us about something, that new knowledge enters our minds and, if we agree, we have difficulty ignoring that new knowledge. In this painting, our minds see a winged figure with a moon behind it. However, the figure is also a part of a masked face. Which is the true and original image? The mask or the winged figure? It is up to you to decide which one you believe.



Changes

Change is always hard. We don't know what will happen. Will things get better or worse? Will we improve or become a lesser version of our current self? Change is a risk. If we accept the consequences, our lives will probably be better, but it depends on why we are making the change. Sometimes, we can't see the benefit until the far distant future. Change, though, is not for the weak. Once it happens, we cannot go back to the way things were, and... that's okay.



Connections

Life is about creating and destroying ideas. The old ideas are not necessarily bad, but they may have no use in the world in which we currently live. Sometimes, this is good. Sometimes, this is bad. In everything, we are connected through the life and death of ideas, and they affect our minds and, in turn, our bodies. When we are open to those changes, no matter how much they may affect us, we can learn to grow beyond our wildest imagination.



Creeping Doom

Small changes over time almost always go unnoticed. The peeling of the windows in our homes is not seen until we paint the house. Gaining weight goes unnoticed until we realize our old clothes don't fit or a friend we haven't seen in months comments about it. Most of the time, it is when we no longer pay attention that it becomes a problem. Focus on the small changes, and the big ones will follow.



Crossover

Death awaits in the darkness, and we fear him. However, we don't honestly know anything about the next journey we'll make. All we know is conjecture from people like us; this unknown makes us afraid. Yet, is it what we should fear, or should we see past what we have been told and judge what will happen to ourselves? Rather than worrying about the future, focus on the now and the loved ones around you. Why worry about something you cannot control?



Curiosity

We react with curiosity or fear when we see something radically different from the norm. Much of this is based on past experiences. Yet, if we embrace that curiosity, we can learn what others teach and use that new information to improve our lives. We can always learn from someone else. Learning doesn't mean we have to accept what they are saying. It just means we are willing to listen and open our minds.



Defiance

The storm is coming. We know it. We can feel it. However, no matter what happens, we've decided to stand our ground. We have our beliefs, and no one can tell us differently. Yet, are we sure that we are right? Many people will stand for their beliefs despite harming themselves and others. We don't want to believe that we are wrong. Sometimes, that's okay. And sometimes, that is holding us back.



Discovery

Seeking knowledge is not for the faint of heart. Some paths must be taken that can only be done with strength of mind and heart. At best, we learn something that enhances our lives. At worst, we challenge our assumptions. This is where the balance is the most difficult. How do we know that the path is necessary? Are there times when we've gone too far? In a perfect world, we always know the answer. In reality, nothing is ever straightforward.



Doubt

What are we even doing here? They don't want us. Look at the way we look. All we will do is scare them until they run away or—worse—start laughing at us. We have nothing to offer. And we all have doubts and inner fears about the worst that can happen. However, if we give in, will we find that many of the best parts of life have passed us by? Sometimes, it is better to be alone until we find those who want us rather than be with those who don't.



Dreams

We all have visions of how we want our lives to be. For many, the life we live and the life we want are vastly different, and we feel trapped because we believe we can't reach our dreams for one reason or another. Money. Family. Ourselves. The obstacles are endless. But perhaps the path to our visions involves making small, incremental steps rather than giant leaps and ignoring those who try to impose their own dreams on ours.



Dreams of Grandeur

We don't want to be forgotten, so we believe we are stronger, smarter, or funnier than we are. In our minds, we are the hero of their world and can always step in and do what is needed. Why? Because we want to be remembered positively. So, when we are no longer around, we are still thought of fondly. How we are seen in the eyes of others will never match how we see ourselves in our own eyes.



Duality

We're of two minds. One mind is the one we show the public, our outward persona. One is the one who talks to us in the darkness, our true thoughts. Yet neither one is true. Our minds change as our circumstances change. The world we live in and our current conditions alter those thoughts to fit in with others. Most believe it's better to alter our thoughts to fit in rather than to be alone. Choose wisely, for we can be of both minds.



Embracing One's Nature

We all know those people who can't live a quiet life. The risk-takers. The rock climbers. The racers. The marathoners. The entrepreneurs. Many of them don't want the simple life of a family with children and the day-to-day of going to the same day job until they retire. They feel life is more important than that. They are right, and they are wrong. Life is not absolute, and one way is better than the other. Life is about being true to our nature.



Emissary

Death is a natural part of life. Our deaths bring life to others. In the natural world, it feeds the animals who depend on death to participate in the circle of life. For humans, it reminds others that life is so much more than just working every day. It reminds people that there are friends to be enjoyed, people to love, young ones to care for, and adventures to be had. The knowledge of death brings nourishment to the lives of others, for we enjoy it more when we know we won't be around forever.



Exposed

There is a part of us that is always shown to everyone around us. No matter how strong, pretty, or tough we are, everybody can see it. It is in the way we look at others, in the way we care about others, and in the way we define how we see life and treat others. It's our inner self, and no matter how hard we try to hide it, it is always there for others to judge. Our true friends are the ones who will accept our inner selves. No others.



Facade

We all wear a mask when we are out in public, and, unfortunately, sometimes that is the same face we show those closest to us. In reality, no one knows what we are going through and our current troubles. It doesn't matter if they could help; we just don't want to be a burden. So, we show them that everything is okay. This is the same lie that is present on social media. Be open with those you trust, for they may genuinely be able to help.



Focused

The warrior understands that the cost of a mistake is their life. During training, they are focused on what they need to do to achieve their goals. For most people, life doesn't require such commitment. However, it does require such focus. No matter our goals, we must understand what it takes to achieve them and the sacrifices needed to make them a reality. What are we willing to do to reach our goals?



Frustration

Screaming. Fighting. Drama. Never a moment of peace. For some of us, home is not a place where we can relax and be ourselves. Home is a place where we are judged and criticized. Yet we hold it in until we can't. How do we escape such a situation? Sometimes, we can't. Sometimes, we need the help of a friend. Sometimes, we need a strong family member. Someone who will listen. Someone who will care.



Ghosts

We walk through a graveyard and only see death. However, the reality is that it is life—the lives these people have lived. This is apparent when families show up to pay their respects and remind the ghosts that they are loved. This doesn't only happen at a cemetery, either. It happens in our favorite rooms in the house, at the diner where we and the deceased hung out. All places have ghosts and memories. Appreciate the memories you have, not what you lost.



Guardian

The world will beat us down and not care about us one bit. No one is strong enough to withstand this, and we need someone on our side to help. When we are young, it's usually our parents and family. As we grow older, it's friends or family. These are our guardians. Their role is to help us get through life and enjoy it. As time moves on, we become the guardians of others.



Healing

Over time, we've all experienced a broken heart. Hopefully, later, we'll also experience a healing heart. This is when someone changes our feelings, or we've learned to love ourselves. Either way, the pain diminishes. Not gone. Just not as strong as before. When we experience a healing heart, we'll find our bodies and minds repair themselves so we can become whole again. It's then easier to find joy in life and others.



Here I Am

Sometimes, we're so focused on what we think is important that we forget what makes our lives enjoyable. The work deadlines, the money, and the life we think others will envy are all important—to a degree. What about making time for our loved ones? Our children? Our pets? Ourselves? When do they become important to us? Will we look back and realize that we forgot them? The now is guaranteed, but the future isn't. There is no better time than the present.



Hidden

We all have thoughts that control us and define us. Things that were done to us or things that we've done to others. Some of it, we've regretted. Some of it, we haven't because others truly deserved it. Yet that was all in the past. Would we do the same after we've grown older and supposedly wiser? Would we be comfortable accepting our actions, or would we make excuses and say that those actions were justifiable... even if they weren't?



Hold Me

So many people think the solution to dealing with internal demons is direct action. Sometimes, a simple hug is all that is needed. A hug tells a person we care about them—no words, no grand gestures, just a soft connection that far exceeds any words. The hug. The touch. These simple gestures take little effort but can mean the world to those who are hurting. They show that you are there for them and that you care.



Humanity Lost

What happens when we are too focused on what computers can do rather than what we can do? Technology creates opportunities to realize our dreams, but it comes at a price. That price is the loss of who we are. The social media likes. The computer-generated art, stories, and articles. We think these are our ideas, but they aren't. They are the computer's ideas that we wish would happen. When do we lose ourselves and become just a part of a machine?



Illusion of Power

The mantra of “Violence never solves anything” is unfortunately incorrect. Over time, if we rely on violence too often, we lose who we are and those around us. Usually, those who rely on aggression as a solution to their problems are weak in mind and inner strength. We can easily diffuse the situation by having confidence in ourselves and understanding when it is time to walk away and when it is time to act in defense.



Imperfections

There is a prevailing thought that our lives will be perfect if we are perfect. If we have the perfect body, a great paying and satisfying job, incredible intelligence, great wisdom, etc., everybody will love and accept us. In the end, the body and mind will decay. There is no way to preserve everything, even though we'll try to. We age. We die. Yet the imperfections stay—making us unique.



Inertia

Most people do not like change. They become comfortable, and even if the change is demonstrably better and will improve their lives, they won't take the chance. Part of it is because of the fear of the unknown, but most of the time, it is because their routine is better than the chaos of something new. Change is hard. However, sometimes we only grow because of change. We must learn to embrace it, for it will make us stronger.



Infection

Little by little—drip by drip—we feel pain slowly take over in our bones until we feel nothing. Eventually, we won't care. There is only pain, an infection that takes over our minds, bodies, and spirits. It takes away all joy in our lives. Everybody has pain, but we can do something about it. We all learn to live with some level of pain. Those lessons can be taught to others in the hope that, by some small measure, their life can be improved.



Malevolence

Everybody wants the world to be perfect. However, what we want is different from what someone else wants. Some people are not nice. Their happiest moments are when they are bringing others down. They love drama. They are manipulative, and they care more about themselves. We don't have to have them in our lives. It is okay to cut them off, even if they are family. We are more important than the pain that others bring to us.



Modern Medicine

The old saying—"The road to hell is paved with good intentions"—is quite accurate. We often think we are helping someone, but in reality, we are causing them more harm. Not that we shouldn't help. However, before trying to help, consider determining whether we are helping them or making ourselves feel better. Helping is about empathizing and understanding others, not showing how wonderful we are.



Motherhood

All we can do is watch from a distance. We want to help our children with their problems, but if we do, they won't grow and become strong enough to stand alone. It's difficult to know when we can help and when we have to let them solve their own problems. Both situations teach lessons. The best we can do is to prepare them to think on their own and make their own mistakes. With luck, they'll learn from their mistakes and become stronger.



My Demons

We all have that part inside of us that haunts us. Past regrets. Past failures. Broken promises. Times we sabotaged our own efforts. That's a part of being human. No one is immune to it. The point to remember is that it's in the past, and it can't be undone. We can, though, fix it and make up for it. That's also a part of being human. Being sorry is not enough. We must work to regain lost trust and acknowledge what was done. Being responsible for our actions can truly make amends.



Nature

Nature can be cruel and harsh. At its root, it's about survival and taking care of our families. Sometimes, we need to be fierce and dangerous. Sometimes, we need to be caring and understanding. Being too fierce or too caring can both lead to problems—a lonely life or being taken advantage of. It's a balance. The wolf is a perfect example of this: Loving with their cubs but fierce in their protection of the cubs.



Passage of Time

In our minds, we view ourselves as young, strong, and physically attractive. On our way towards death, there are subtle reminders that this is no longer true. What was light is now heavy. Recovery from ailments and injuries now takes longer. Physical pain comes more easily. However, that doesn't mean that our life is over. It just means that the strengthening of our mind should replace the decay of our body. A strong mind can easily compensate for a weak body.



Phobia

We all have that irrational fear that stops us in our tracks. Others may belittle us because they don't experience it. However, they have their irrational fears. No matter what people say, we don't have to overcome fear to live our lives. If we need to deal with the fear, consider learning how to adapt to it and lessen its impact. The fear will almost always be there, but it doesn't need to prevent us from living.



Regret

No matter how old we are, we've made bad decisions and mistakes that haunt us. It's not the decisions where we worked too much or didn't take a chance that bother us. It's the time we hurt someone through our actions or inaction. The past is the past, and, honestly, the only thing you can do is accept what happened, apologize, and move on. Life is about learning from our mistakes and making amends for past decisions.



Resurrection

There are parts of our lives that we hold dear. Moments that are important to us or people who we cherish. Forever in our minds, we have that moment on a pedestal, and everything is perfect. Whether or not the memory is true doesn't matter. All that matters is that it is important and we feel more alive than anything. Remember the feeling of that moment rather than the actual specifics. That cherished feeling will never leave.



Shadows

What are you feeling right now? Happy? Sad? Frightened? Calm? How we feel changes how we perceive things and what is spoken to us. A kind word or gesture can be seen as criticism during a bad mood. During a cheerful mood, a harsh tone may not even be noticed. The skull is a perfect example of this. When one is sad or depressed, the skull represents death and destruction. When one is happy or calm, the skull is beautiful and elegant. People are like that as well.



Submission

There will be moments in our lives when we cannot just do what we want. We must obey and follow someone else's lead. In many cases, this will make us stronger and our lives better. However, if we give in too many times, it is easy to lose who we are and become just a vessel. Life is a matter of give-and-take, and as long as we are moving towards our desired paths, detours along the way are okay.



Support

Sometimes, all we can do is be there for someone. No giving advice. No giving money. Nothing. Simply be in the presence so that if they feel like talking or need a hug, you are available. To hug back. To listen. So many people want to give advice, but that person may not want to hear it. They just want to know you'll be there for them if they need help. They just want to know that someone cares about them.



Survival

We are the world around us. We are the product of what was done to us. We are the product of what we have done to it. The world is a dangerous place and it will swallow the weak. By focusing on our strengths, we can keep it at bay and live the life we want. In order to do that, we must allow it to affect us but, more importantly, we need to just take what we need and return the rest. If possible, the part that we return would help someone else.



Surrender

He stares back at us from the other side. He's waiting for us to tell him what he wants to hear, but we don't know what that is. We hope he'll leave us alone if we give him what he wants. But that never happens. We give in. And he's still there. Strength at one time is hard. Strength over the years seems nearly impossible. The small moments of strength are more valuable than the explosive displays of rebellion.



Tethered

We gain so much from others. So much more than we can ever do on our own. When working as a team, the sum is more powerful than the individual. Yes, we all may have some faults that make the objective impossible. But if we can work through them, can we imagine how much farther we can go or what we can do? Although we can make progress on our own, it is small compared to the progress of many.



The Eyes

The phrase “the eyes are the windows to the soul” is fairly accurate. A simplistic beauty exists within someone just by looking into their eyes. Peering into the eyes of another gives a good indication of what they are thinking or feeling, of who they are. That look can often make others more beautiful than they first appear. However, by the same token, it can detract and make them appear uglier than they are. The eyes are a reflection of their thoughts.



The Search Never Ends

Waiting is always the hardest. When we want something, we have two choices: Go out and get it or wait for it to come. Most people will wait. They think that if they go after it, they will miss it when it comes to them, or they believe the fallacy of “good things come to those who wait.” But more times than not, it won’t come. It’s on its own journey and won’t come to us unless it’s looking for us. Waiting without preparation never produces the results we want.



Three Worlds

Shadow, Light, and the world between. Cats easily move between all three and maintain a balance of what is essential. Work, Home, and the world between. We can easily move between all three, but many of us struggle with it. We spend too much time at work and bring it home. We spend too much time at home and do not advance in our careers. Balance the time in each world so that we have a balanced life.



Tribute

We are all individuals isolated in this world. We think we know someone and understand them; however, we're always surprised to learn how they feel or treat others. What we see and understand of others is also altered by our perceptions of how we view the world and how observant we think we are. Yet we may learn much more about others if we place ourselves in their lives and can see the world from their point of view.



Underlying Reason

We never know the real reason why someone does or says something hurtful. Often, it is because they are under a lot of stress due to work, financial concerns, or relationship issues. It's a part of life to, sometimes, say or do the wrong thing. However, some people take pleasure in their negative comments and behavior, using them to control others and make themselves feel better. Regardless of the reason for their behavior, we don't have to tolerate negative behavior.



Unnatural

We see the approaching horror and cannot wrap our minds around it. Is it a weird creature coming out of the darkness or a spider? Both prey on our primal fears. Initially, the mind forms negative thoughts about what it cannot easily understand, but understanding overrides that fear after a while, which can help protect us. As we increase our knowledge, we may not accept it, but knowledge becomes our understanding.



Unwanted Host

For some, the unwanted host sneaks up on them. For others, it pounces and takes control at a moment's notice. That paralyzing feeling that renders us helpless. It's like being invaded by an alien creature that takes over our minds and bodies. We are no longer in control, and it's hard enough to get out of bed. Yet getting out of bed and removing the unwanted host may just be what we need.



Virus

A voice whispers to us when we are alone with our thoughts. It's the sound of the past that reminds us of our failures. The insidious seed that prevents us from trying something new. The laughter of everybody who has made fun of us. This virus has infected us, keeping us from being true to ourselves. Why do we let it have power over us? It is a disease that needs to be purged from our thoughts.



Voice of Experience

In the back of our minds, we can hear it. We've been in this situation before. We're in it again. Was the experience pleasant or harmful the last time we were here? Did we learn from it, or did we repeat our mistakes? We all have experiences we draw from. But what do we do with those experiences—learn from them or foolishly make the same mistake?



Welcome Home

For many people, we're always welcome home no matter how long we've been gone. The memories are still there. Those who welcome us only remember the good times. We will too. However, we will also remember the bad times. The fights. The loneliness. The times we couldn't wait to leave. And no matter how much we've grown, we'll always find that going home forces us into the old habits we had before we left.



What's Wrong With Me

Who's asking the question? The doctor or the patient? The doctors are so wrapped up in technology that they don't see the patient before them. They rely on the equipment, not the patient. The patient is so wrapped up in social media that they are comparing their lives to others, or they don't realize the "research" of their issues is misinformed. Technology is great until we lose who we are and how we feel. Until we lose our humanity.

Gallery of Nightmares



Jonathan knew life would never be the same when he entered the Gallery of Nightmares. Inherited from his mother, the gallery flooded his sense of reality with mysterious shadow people and dark voices from creepy paintings. He thought he could handle it until he stepped into the Shadow Nook. In that room, he was transported to a world of nightmares and realized his problems

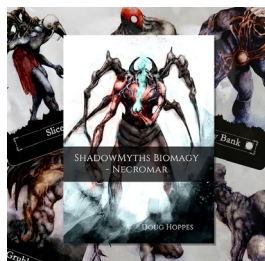
Visit Gallery Gift Shop at shadowmyths.com

Sacramancy Cards



The Shadows and Light paintings present in this book are located in different wings of the Gallery of Nightmares. They are also available as Sacramancy Cards. The cards are used for Tarot/Oracle reading, DnD campaign idea generator, writing prompts, and as therapy tools.

Biomagy Cards



The monsters Jonathan encountered in The Shadow Nook inhabit my fantasy world, Caelith (the world Jonathan enters). The Biomagy deck contains each creature's descriptions, interactions, combat, and attributes. Biomagy is the study of the world's creatures and how other races learn to communicate with one another.