

# Shadow – creative writing



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Despite it's been two years since I last saw my father, the shadow of his back still remain vivid and clear in my memories. That winter, mother died and father lost his job. It was a day of tragedy and sadness. I left London for Stoke-On-Trent to join my father in hastening home, the sight of the disorderly mess in the courtyard reminded me of mother. I couldn't help but shed tears. " Now that things have come to such a pass, let's get over it, after all every cloud has a silver lining," he said.

When father arrived home, he pawned and sold things in order to pay off his debt, then he borrowed new loans to hold the funeral. During these days our family was in such a state of sorrow and distress due to both the events of the funeral and the near-collapse of father's firm. Once the funeral ended, father had to return to America in a hopeless attempt to save his firm, and I had to return to London to finish my degree. Since we hardly had chance to see each other, we decided to depart together.

After an old friend took me for a tour around Manchester, I was supposed to catch a train heading for London in the afternoon the following day. Father was over occupied by his business matters so instead of seeing me off at the train station, he asked a hotel waiter to accompany me. Anxious and worried, he relentlessly urged him to take good care of me. However, he didn't feel reassured and mulled over it. Ironically, his concern was completely unnecessary. I was already a grown up and had travelled to and from Manchester several times before, but he insisted and said, " It's better off this way.

These days people simply can't be trusted. " Getting out of the taxi, we entered the train station. While I bought my ticket at the ticket booth father tended to my luggage, which was quite a huge load. When I came back father was busy bargaining with the porter over the fee. I was then such " smart aleck". I felt that he was so terrible at haggling over the price that I was about to chip in words when the bargain was finally clinched. Boarding the train with me, he selected a seat right next to the carriage door for me.

I spread the overcoat he got tailor-made for over the seat and sat down. Then for the tenth time, he reminded me to be watchful on the way and be careful not to catch cold at night. Miraculously, he somehow still managed to summoned up the courage and plead the train attendants to look after me. The disapproving and disbelieving eyes they gave us, it was so hilarious! I laughed at father for being so impractical and naive. These days people only cared about money, it would be unlikely that they'd take of me.

Besides, at age twenty I was obviously capable of taking care of myself. Alas, when I come to think of it now, I can see that I was really too " smart" back then. " Dad, you better hurry for your appointment now," I said. But he looked out of the window and said, " You'll need some refreshments on the way. Stay here don't go anywhere, I'll be back in a few minutes. " Outside the railing and beyond the other railroad platform were several vendors waiting for customers. To reach that platform, he'd have jump down the railway tracks, cross them and climb up the platform.

For an exceptionally fat man in his mid-fifties, this proved to a physically demanding and strenuous task for father. I volunteered to go, but he

insisted, so I reluctantly let him off. Dressed in a top black hat, worn-out morning dress and stripped trousers, I watched him totter towards the railway track. He climbed down the tracks with ease, but after crossing the tracks he struggled when climbing up the platform. Fingers gripped tightly onto the platform, legs huddled up, his corpulent body tipped slightly to the left.

He was obviously exerting a huge amount of energy. Then I noticed the shadow casted off his back, tears gradually streamed out of my eyes. I quickly wiped them off for fear of embarrassment. When I gazed of of the window, father had just turned away from one of the vendors, holding two fists full of brightly-packaged chocolate bars. As he reached the edge of the platform, he placed he bars down, climbed down cautiously and then retrieved them back again. As he approached near the train, I ran out to help him. Back on board, he laid all the bars on my overcoat.

Patting the dirt off his clothes, his expression looked somewhat relieved and after a while he said, " Go back to your seat. Don't leave yours things unattended. " I, however, did not return to my seat until his shadow was lost among crowds of people hurrying to and fro, and could no longer see him again. Then returning into the train and settling down, my eyes were again streaming out tears. In recent years, both father and I have been constantly on the move traveling here and there, and circumstances of our family got even worsen.

When father was young he left home to seek a livelihood and did achieve quite a few things on his own. To think that his fate should now be so bleak

and gloomy at old age! Series after series of discouraging and unfortunate events filled him with a sense of dread and sorrow. He could no longer retain his emotions, as a result he would often vent his emotions on small mishaps and treat me harshly. However, after two years of separation, he has become soft and forgiving, and he dearly misses me and my son.

A upon my arrival in London, I received a letter from him, in which he said, " My dearest son, I'm in an excellent state of health except there is much pain in my shoulders, causing me undesirable pain whenever I try to hold a pen or use chopstick. Perhaps it won't be long now before I rejoin your mother... " Amid the glistening and bitter tears which these words brought to my eyes, I once again saw the familiar shadow casted off the back of father's corpulent form in the top black hat, worn-out morning dress and stripped trouser. Alas, how I long to see him again! Yet, little did I know that it was the last time I'd ever see him again.