

# SHADOWED SHAME

CAROLYN SWARTZ

Collarless, he was lost.  
Roaming distantly down the sidewalk  
Though his desire was behind him,  
Sore back facing his overgrown yard.

Perhaps the single streetlight held peace.  
Too obvious was that conclusion.  
Clarity can be small, can be subtle.  
Light on his own porch's safety lantern.

By his force, the switch fell downward  
Pointing to his worn-out fabric check.  
Check yes to darkness,  
Check no to sanity.

Demand numbness through meditation.  
Demand irrationality by fear.  
The fork's silver prongs fill the wounds  
Tasteful sweets turn painfully bitter.

Repent. Build acceptance through metal plates.  
Iron bars pollute his mind.  
Lock in self-doubt,  
Lock out self-confidence.

Under-hugged, under-loved, invisible.  
Deaf ears behind closed doors,  
A broken toy at a shiny new day care,  
Another test score on a desk.

Avenge the love murdered in the kitchen.  
Knife through the breath of hope.  
No, bullet through the head for disappointment  
Bullet through the heart for shattered promises.

Release the strength within his walls.  
Bandage the cuts from yesterday.  
Loosen the tightness in his soul.  
Stop pushing out and start letting in.

