

 BLUE DELTA BOOKS®



**JOE'S
SHADOW**

EVAN JACOBS

CHAPTER 1

THE SHAPE.

Joe Risco angrily walked home from school. Bullies had picked on him again. Michael was the worst of them all.

Insults were hurled at Joe on his first day at Windsor High School. He didn't like going there. Medina High would have been better. That was in Fallbrook. It was supposed to be Joe's school. He had lived in Fallbrook his whole life.

Joe was starting ninth grade. Halfway through summer, his parents had sat him down.

Bad news came next. Joe's high school would not be Medina. This was a nightmare.

His dad's tone was serious. "We're falling behind on our house payments. Grandma needs more care. We're moving in with her. All of us will need to pitch in."

Joe barely knew his grandma. Now he felt like she had ruined his life. Her needs outweighed his own.

His parents sold their house. Then they packed up and moved to Windsor. It was two hours from Fallbrook.

Joe had hoped to join some clubs at Medina High. Doing that with his friends would have been fun.

Instead, his social life had to start over. A new school made that harder. His old friends rarely texted him anymore. Joe had no friends at his new school. He felt all alone.

Being at his grandma's house didn't help. Outside, the white paint was peeling. Clutter filled the inside. Mail was stacked on old newspapers.

Plus, the place was always so dark. Joe's parents both worked later shifts. That meant they slept at odd times. Drapes were pulled to keep light out.

Joe headed upstairs to his bedroom. It was next to his grandma's. She stayed in bed most of the time. A loud machine helped her breathe. The heavy breaths she took could be heard through the wall.

Usually, Joe was home alone with his grandma. It annoyed him that his parents worked so much. They hadn't even taken time to unpack all the moving boxes.

Joe flopped down on his bed. He didn't like this gloomy house. Being at school was almost better.



In cooking class, Joe's face was bright red.

Why is Michael so mean?

He had just made fun of Joe in front of the whole class.

The teacher had made a dish for the week. It was rice pilaf.

"Who wants to try some?" Chef Mosley had asked.

Michael had pointed at Joe. "Give it to Joe. He could use a free meal."

The whole class had laughed.

Joe resented Michael. He was angry that Michael's life seemed easy.

Michael had money. He liked to show off. His clothes were the best quality. Friends always surrounded him. Michael's parents drove an expensive car. Their house was big too.

Joe had none of that. His family was barely getting by.

The city of Windsor was small. Some parts of town were nice and classy. Other parts were run-down. Michael lived in the nicest part. That made him popular at school.

Windsor High was the worst. It was too big. The buildings were outdated. An athletic field was in the back. The field had an old dirt track with rusted equipment. Still, Joe liked to hang out there sometimes. That was where he stormed off to after being embarrassed in cooking class.

It was peaceful out there. Joe could put in his earbuds and zone out. He played his music loud. His favorite band sang about finding your place in the world.

Soon Joe's earbuds made a beeping noise. That meant they were about to die. The buds

barely held power anymore. He pulled them out.

Then he looked at the brick wall next to him. It was tall and had orange paint on it.

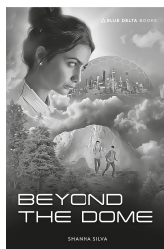
Joe studied his shadow. It didn't look like his at all. The dark image was much taller than Joe. In fact, it appeared to be wearing a large hat. But Joe never wore a hat. His long, shaggy hair hung loose.

Maybe the shadow belonged to someone behind him. Quickly, he turned around. But no one was there.

Joe glanced back at the wall. The shadow looked normal now. It resembled him.

How did it change?

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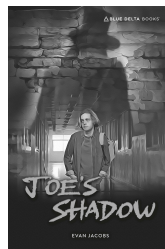
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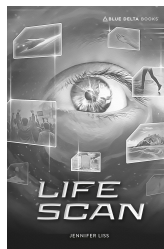
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HORROR

JOE'S SHADOW

Joe is having trouble with bullies at his new school, and he doesn't know where to turn for help. Soon he finds a companion in the most unlikely form. But is this the friend he has been hoping for or something more sinister?



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