

There Are Two of Us

by Vasvi Kejriwal



Image: “Shadowplay” by Megan Merchant. “There Are Two of Us” was written by Vasvi Kejriwal for *J \ ILÆs* Ekphrastic Challenge, May 2020, and selected as the Editor’s Choice.

Two faces pressed against
the heat of a smoky, burner stove sky.
They stared outside each other.
One spoke, “My husband’s last word
was morphine.” The faded canary
of her dress reeked of tiredness and wine.
To this, the other said, “The war goes on.
Like the river beyond this north wall
does not forget to flow.”
He reclined, bare-chested,
like a pumiced wooden doll.
She countered, “sometimes, we forget
whether we are animals or Gods.”
Against the night-black morning,
the pearls on her throat were a bloodless white.
He smoked away his conscience with his pipe,
with the air of an immortal
as if to fuel an entire sun in his chest,
and declared, “The river does not care
that we kill or we love.
You cannot step on it twice.”
His lips then froze where they slightly parted
like edges of a still lake.
They sat in quiet, their faces ablaze,
and listened to the flap
of a blackbird’s broken wings.
One thought of its feathers.
The other thought of its flight.