



## Watch the Shadows

### Robin Winter

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*Impressionistic writing invites the imagination into this sci-fi mystery with idiosyncratic characters.*

The sight of a plastic grocery bag drifting on the wind is common all over, but in Isla Vista it has taken on a truly menacing tone. The crows have left Freedom Park, the duck population is dwindling, and even the homeless are starting to disappear. In *Watch the Shadows*, Robin Winter gives the ordinary detritus of life a horrific spin.

The homeless are the first to notice something strange happening in their town, especially near their favorite haunt, Freedom Park. Soon others start to notice: Meg Berdiga's cat goes missing, Brian the postman keeps seeing shadows in his peripheral vision, and high-school science whiz Nicole notices the crows have fled her neighborhood and relocated near her friend Jack's house across town. As Nicole begins to investigate, she comes to a realization that defies common sense and must figure out how to warn people they're in danger from the impossible.

Winter writes in impressionistic strokes that invite the imagination to immerse itself in her world: "Nicole pried herself out from the press of the crowd, all the smells of perfume, perspiration and alcohol, the sweet waft of candy and melting chocolate combining with incense from the nearby apartment building with jack o'lanterns in the windows. Smoky pumpkin and a mixed reek of humanity."

The point of view moves among a cast of well-developed characters who all exist on the edges of society. Brian knows everyone in the neighborhood from delivering their mail but goes home to an empty house at night. Meg runs the homeless breakfast at her church but finds herself at odds with some of the more conservative members. Nicole is particularly refreshing as a smart, teenage heroine who notices boys but is more concerned with her own situation than getting their attention. Regular people battling the danger adds immensely to the feeling of anxiety and drama.

This book will appeal most to a young-adult audience looking for a sci-fi thriller that is heavy on thrills and light on romance.

CHRISTINE CANFIELD (Summer 2015)

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