

# SECRET

An Exploration by Shelby Scott



**Contents**

Black..... 4  
Beige..... 14  
Ivory .....28  
Shadow..... 36  
Cerulean..... 46  
Crimson..... 54  
A Final Note.....62

“What are you really scared of?”



The paralysing comfort of stillness — a fear of action, the heaviness that makes getting out of bed feel dangerous.







Black

A light oppression.  
Disguised as a moment of softness - a small weakness.

settles on my chest in the morning, like phlegm  
it's not so bad, I tell myself.  
I spit it out when I brush my teeth.  
I think.


It coaxes me to stay in bed.  
Whispers of catastrophe if I lift my head.  
The weight of imagined winter disaster.

Yet you're warm.  
Inviting.  
You promise comfort.  
You say, "Stay a little longer"  
"you'll feel better soon"  
But you lie.

you drain me slowly -  
like a bulb losing power  
Flickering to stay lit.  
I dim & quieten.

Not in Anguish,  
but in hesitation.

This is how you win  
Not with chaos,  
but with stillness.

An open book is shown against a plain, light-colored background. The book's cover is a light beige or off-white color with a fine, woven fabric-like texture. The left page is also covered in this same textured material and is mostly blank. The right page is a smooth, white sheet of paper. In the bottom right corner of this white page, there is a short paragraph of text. A person's hand is visible at the bottom left, holding the book open.

A quiet fear of shrinking — of existing safely, invisibly, until the safety begins to choke you.

Beige.

Rough like a healing scab. It scrapes  
— dry, dull, like sandpaper on skin.

Unremarkable.

Unthreatening.

Just there.

It doesn't demand attention.  
It doesn't take up space.

It obeys.  
It blends.  
It lives quietly within the lines.





But then - it grows.

A tickle in the throat.

A dry cough.

It lingers. It seeps.

I can't breathe.

This harmless shade -

this passive, forgettable presence  
becomes everything.

Beige suffocates. Not with violence,

but with stillness.

With routine.

With silence.

A slow, colourless fear of  
being seen.

A quiet horror of standing  
out.

I shrink. I disappear.

And in that invisibility,  
I rot.









The fear of not  
belonging in a  
white world.



Ivory.


Everywhere I go.



I am a dark  
speck in a  
sea of white.







The self-disgust that grows in the  
mirror's reflection. The mind is  
deceitful like a shadow. Like a  
silhouette.





Silhouette.

I'm being stalked.  
I feel your breathe - soft, warm - graze the back of my neck.  
I turn, but you're gone.  
Just the mirror.  
Just me.

Your claws drag across the glass -  
slow, deliberate -  
as I scan my face for flaws.

For improvements.  
For better versions of me that don't exist.

At first, there is no pain. Just your breathe on my ear.  
I'm almost tickles.

My ears flush with heat. I assess:  
Lips - almost full enough.  
Eyes - slightly tired.  
Hair - never fucking right.

All of it in rhythm with your lunging breathe.

The warmth begins to burn.  
Scorching now.

A bullet under the skin.

Suddenly -  
revelation.  
It strikes through me like vacuum.


I am ~~disgo~~ disappointed. Disgusted.  
But more than anything -  
I'm afraid.

I look average.

And in that moment,  
I die a little.

---





A surrender to numness — not  
emptiness, but peace — and the fear of  
what it means to stop feeling.



•• Cerelean.

Numbness.

Nu-u-umh.

What a gorgeous word-

it feels good in the mouth.

Mmm-umh.

That bit.

I could say it all day.

Soft on the tongue.

Heavy in the throat

so pleasing to the body

And yet - we fear it.





Num-um-ums like a  
meditation song.

As it leaves my lips.

My body becomes a raft  
Adrift in cerulean blue.

Rocking gently to the  
rhythm of the moon.

I'm not scared anymore.

My thoughts dissolve,

my fear floats away  
Cerulean baptizes me.


A colour like water  
like stay, like silence.

Num-um-ums.

I can rest.

I can breathe.

I am finally allowed to feel nothing.



The fear of becoming what you  
hate — anger, cruelty, and  
accepting that even monsters  
are sometimes just girls



Crimson.

Sometimes I feel it rise.  
Thick, Sharp.  
A surge of heat crawling under my skin.  
Brown turns red -  
then white.

Rage.  
Where does it come from?  
I watch myself twist.

Cruel.  
Something.  
Bitter.  
A blade for a tongue.  
I think -  
this isn't meant for me.

It can't be me.  
Some parasite surely.  
Some shadow in my blood.  
But then I hear it.

Oh, shut up.  
It is you.  
You've come.  
You're bitter  
And that's okay.  
You're a teenage girl.  
You're not your father.  
You are simply human.





## A Final Note

**T**his is a book about fear, after all. It's my attempt to face the very thing that holds me back: my own expectations. Working within the context of horror, I came to understand how Black women are rarely allowed to exist introspectively within the genre. Instead, we are often reduced to stereotypes or functional roles. But horror is so much more than just a cheap thrill or a fleeting scare—it is a “What are you really scared of?” space for self-examination, framed within the fantastical. And Black women deserve to experience the same level of introspective power and humanity within this genre.

Inspired by my own fears and the voices of other young Black girls I've had the privilege of speaking with, this project seeks to uncover the layers of fear we carry and explore where they originate. Rarely do we fear physical harm or external threats. Our fears are often psychological—sometimes even self-imposed. The biggest, baddest monster? It exists within.

This collection of poems explores the emotional fears that many of us—particularly Black girls—grapple with daily. Using color as a metaphor, it takes you on a journey through honesty, self-reckoning, and reclamation. Along the way, it invites you to ask yourself the question: “What are you really scared of?”

I wrote a lot of this by hand, and included any and all mistakes. By embracing the imperfection of my handwriting, I allowed myself to break free from the fear of failure and perfectionism. In doing so, I was able to create something honest. “What are you really scared of?”  
Brave.

S.S

Fin.

**You Can Breathe Now**

Photographed and designed and written by Shelby Scott,  
Garment design and styling: Shelby Scott  
Model: Sophia Tiliakos  
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