

## A Personal Reflection by Chante' Johnson

I've always been drawn to stories that live in the margins—between memory and myth, silence and testimony, sacred and haunted. *Sanctified Shadows* is one of those stories. It's a work of fiction I've been developing over time, rooted in spiritual tension, generational reckoning, and the quiet power of those who endure.

The idea came to me not as a plot, but as a feeling. A pulpit. A journal. A daughter returning to a place she never truly understood. I didn't know the full story yet, but I knew the atmosphere: red clay roads, whispered prayers, and spirits that don't stay buried. I knew I wanted to explore what happens when faith becomes a mask, when silence becomes survival, and when legacy refuses to stay in the past.

At its heart, *Sanctified Shadows* follows a man—a preacher—whose spiritual gifts are tangled with trauma. He's revered in his community, but haunted in private. His wife, Sheila, speaks little, but sees everything. Her silence isn't weakness; it's resistance. And their daughter, long estranged, returns years later to find a journal tucked behind the pulpit. What she finds inside isn't just her father's truth—it's her own inheritance.

I write this story in fragments. Sometimes through sermons, sometimes through dreams. Sometimes through the quiet rituals of women who were never asked what they believed. The spirits in this story aren't just ghosts—they're memory, metaphor, and maybe something more. I leave that ambiguity on purpose. I want readers to wrestle with what's real, what's imagined, and what's inherited.

This project is deeply personal. It draws from places I've lived, voices I've heard, and questions I've carried. It's not autobiographical, but it's emotionally true. I'm interested in the ways we carry our histories—in our bodies, our beliefs, our silences. I'm interested in the tension between survival and transformation.

I'm sharing this glimpse not to give away the story, but to honor the process. *Sanctified Shadows* is still unfolding. It's a layered, atmospheric work that blends literary fiction with spiritual realism. It's part Southern Gothic, part ancestral meditation, and part emotional excavation.

If you're curious about the intersection of storytelling, identity, and voice, this is the kind of work I create when I'm not designing learning experiences or building digital solutions. It's where I explore the deeper questions—about who we are, what we inherit, and how we choose to heal.

Thank you for reading.

—Chante' Johnson