

# **streetwise and invisible**

**By Jerold London**

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There ain't no sin and there ain't no virtue. There's just stuff people do.  
– *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck (1939)

**streetwise and invisible**

**The following spring (in the 2020's). MOLLY DEE is alone, doing some simple gardening outside her micro house, next to a woods on the grounds of a convent.**

**GRIFF enters, carrying his life's belongings in a large rucksack on his back. He goes up to MOLLY DEE as she stands.**

**GRIFF**

You work here?

**MOLLY DEE**

This is my house.  
I live here.

**GRIFF**

Oh.

**MOLLY DEE**

[*beat, studying GRIFF*] Can I help you?

**GRIFF**

I'm new in these parts.

**MOLLY DEE**

I can see that.  
We all were, once.

**GRIFF**

Just looking.  
For a place to stay awhile.

**MOLLY DEE**

Oh?

**GRIFF**

They say in town folks can stay awhile. Out here. With the Sisters.

**MOLLY DEE**

Folks?

**GRIFF**

People without roots.

**MOLLY DEE**

Like you?

**GRIFF**

You could say.

**MOLLY DEE**

Well, sorry.

My name's Molly Dee.

And I lived homeless once.

Longer than I'd like to remember.

**She holds out her hand to shake. GRIFF takes his rucksack off, puts it down, and shakes MOLLY DEE's hand.**

**Pause.**

**MOLLY DEE**

Who are you?

**GRIFF**

Who am I?

The Invisible Man, you could say.

Call me Griff.

That's as good a name for me as any.

**MOLLY DEE**

A grifter?

**GRIFF**

A drifter, more like it.

**MOLLY DEE**

Looking for a place to stay out here, Griff?

**GRIFF**

You could say.

**MOLLY DEE**

Well, there's not one open right now. But I'm sure we can find some food.

And a spot for you to sleep a few nights out here.

**GRIFF**

In the woods?

**MOLLY DEE**

Like camping in the woods.  
Or maybe next to one of our houses.

**GRIFF**

Better than a park bench. Better than washing your hair alone in the cold.  
Better than police, too early in the morning, rousting you out.  
Better than rats. Rats will eat fricking anything.

**MOLLY DEE**

I used to be there, surviving.  
Under bridges and sleeping in parking garages.

**GRIFF**

You seem okay now.

**MOLLY DEE**

Welcome to *my* Happy Place....  
You know, Griff, number one:  
Everything changes.  
Nothing, not bad luck, or anything stays the same.  
That's what I'd always tell myself when I was down:  
That for as many negatives as there are in the world  
There must be just as many positives. So I looked for the positives.  
So many beautiful colors, and things.  
You just need to look around for them.  
They're there. Plenty.  
And today's a beautiful day. Isn't it?

**GRIFF**

Are all you people out here this happy?

**MOLLY DEE**

To have a home?  
For the first time in years?  
Oh my God, yes.  
And friends.  
And not eating the way I used to, when I was homeless.

**GRIFF**

Snack, you mean? When you can. Until late.  
And then eat, if you can.  
Or you forget.

**MOLLY DEE**

[*points at him*] Absolutely.

**GRIFF**

Homeless rhymes with hunger.

**MOLLY DEE**

[*beat*] You have a story?

**GRIFF**

Do you?

**MOLLY DEE**

Not much of one.  
I grew up poor, after me Pa died.  
He was a master plumber.  
Before he died  
Sorta all of a sudden.  
And he taught me how to work.

**GRIFF**

Yeah?

**MOLLY DEE**

Me Mum and I got by after that  
Sorta. For awhile. In New York.  
She taught me:  
Every day's a good day to have a good day.  
Before she passed.  
She was an immigrant.  
From Wales. Welsh.  
And then I went homeless. New York's so expensive to live in.  
Even in abandoned bildings.  
So after a while I hitched a ride  
On a truck  
And got out of there....  
[*beat*] How about you? What's your story.

**GRIFF**

I don't have a story. I have a stigma.

**MOLLY DEE**

Something happened.

**GRIFF**

I did something I didn't have a good reason to do.

**MOLLY DEE**

We all have reasons why we've done things.

**GRIFF**

And people weren't so friendly.

**MOLLY DEE**

So many people *aren't* so friendly.  
Especially when you're homeless.  
You've invisible to them.  
Most of them.

**GRIFF**

It was before then....

**MOLLY DEE**

[*beat*] Do you want to talk about it?

**GRIFF**

Not now.  
And why?  
Why should I be talking with you like this?  
I just met you.

**MOLLY DEE**

Okay.

**Uneasy pause.**

**GRIFF**

I wouldn't hurt a thing.  
Not a bug, or a bat, or a bird.  
Certainly not a person  
Or a flower....  
Or a child.  
Ever.  
I never would.  
And I just met you.

**MOLLY DEE**

So? Who did you hurt? Your girlfriend?



**GRIFF**

[beat] I can't talk about it.

**MOLLY DEE**

No problem.  
We are who we are here.  
And we're definitely not busybodies.  
We let people keep to themselves.  
It's the law of this land.  
With the Sisters, too.

**GRIFF**

Somebody got hurt....  
Me....  
I hurt myself....  
Bad.

**MOLLY DEE**

Why?

**GRIFF**

And then they made it darker.  
To kill the flame in us.  
They lined us up like turkeys taking aim.

**MOLLY DEE**

I suppose there are some things you just can't change.

**GRIFF**

I lost my life  
My friends  
My family  
Myself  
My country, even.  
And all they left me with  
To live with  
Was my shame being ostracized.

**MOLLY DEE**

But you can't give up. Never, never give up.

**GRIFF**

The past, I never knew, casts a bigger shadow than I ever imagined. Of hate.

**MOLLY DEE**

You make the best of what you've got.

**GRIFF**

Which is what?

**MOLLY DEE**

I just met you, but I can see already you care.  
You're a *caring* person.  
No matter what happened to you.  
No matter what they did to you.

**GRIFF**

They called me a snake in the grass. All of us, snakes in the grass.  
Wallowing in our sin.  
I tried to shed my skin  
To be reborn without this skin  
But the poison follows me wherever I go.

**MOLLY DEE**

You can't just walk away from it?

**GRIFF**

I'm marked.  
Wherever I go.  
Like Cain without blood. Like a leper.

**MOLLY DEE**

I turned my back once.  
On something that hurt me.  
Like turning your back on a devil and an angel at the same time.

**GRIFF**

What you loved?

**MOLLY DEE**

I don't need a lover anymore.  
That wretched beast in me is tame.

**GRIFF**

And I don't need excuses anymore for people  
Who are tired and who are lame.

**MOLLY DEE**

Then who's to blame?

**GRIFF**

Do you like art?

**MOLLY DEE**

Yes. Very much.

**GRIFF**

Who's your favorite artist?

**MOLLY DEE**

Gustav Klimt.

**GRIFF**

The Kiss?

**MOLLY DEE**

I have it in my home. Inside.

**GRIFF**

What if they said you could never look at it again?

**MOLLY DEE**

Who?

**GRIFF**

And if you did, you'd go to jail.

And then have to register for the rest of your life. As a sex offender.

Wherever you went.... If they could catch you.

**MOLLY DEE**

[*pause*] Can you tell me what it was?

**GRIFF**

A group of girls. Swimming on a beach. Laughing.

And then one takes off her bathing suit. Maybe on a dare.

And they all do.

And somebody they didn't know was there taking pictures on his phone.

And uploading them.

**MOLLY DEE**

That was all?

**GRIFF**

I'm not alone. Traveling light, how I do.

There must be a million of us in America, trying to forget. But they'll never let us.

**MOLLY DEE**

Wash it out.

**GRIFF**

They don't get it, what they're doing to us, and to their country.  
They don't get what they're doing to our country's young men.

**MOLLY DEE**

It's a crime. I don't think I could let them do that to me.  
No one's going to stop me from doing the right thing.

**GRIFF**

It seemed like the truth once. But not that way today.  
Not how they tie our hands and throats.

**MOLLY DEE**

They've ruined your life.

**GRIFF**

You could say....  
Are you a Christian?

**MOLLY DEE**

I love Jesus  
Probably more than he did himself  
But no, I don't believe all that they say in his name.

**GRIFF**

Around here? Who do you talk to?

**MOLLY DEE**

Mother Mary, only her.  
She understands.  
What about you?

**GRIFF**

I just steer my way clear of justice centers  
And everything else built on the rot of so-called morality.  
Year by year  
Month by month  
Day by day  
Thought by thought.

**MOLLY DEE**

Couldn't you fight it?

**GRIFF**

The only fight we're allowed is in prison.  
To fight for our lives.  
If you don't give in, they threaten more prison time. And worse.  
Once accused, your life is shot.  
Once you give in, there's no going back. So I ran.

**MOLLY DEE**

For seeing pictures of naked girls having fun on a beach?  
I've seen more in Renoir and Mary Cassatt.  
And what about that famous photo from the Vietnam War?  
No country has the right to control your mind that way.  
Starve you, maybe, but not your mind.

**GRIFF**

[beat] I had a sister. Once.  
She died when she was only ten.

**MOLLY DEE**

She died?

**GRIFF**

I never loved anyone like I love her.  
She was the most beautiful person in the world to me.  
And I began to look at pictures.  
Dumb, I guess. But not sexy.  
I never felt the slightest twinge of sex.  
It was missing her so much. My soul needed solace.  
Bats will swoop for moths in the middle of the night. It's their way.  
The way pictures soothed the pain of losing her in me.  
And it's a never-ending wound I can't heal.  
Loving my sister like that. And losing her like that.  
And now no one who knows about it will have anything to do with me.  
It's like they think I'm some kind of pedophile.  
It's burned out the insides of my heart.  
They've made it seem sordid, how I feel about her. And I have nothing left.

**MOLLY DEE**

You have yourself.

**GRIFF**

That's nothing.  
How do you survive with nothing?

**MOLLY DEE**

Talk. Like what we're doing now.  
I always told myself, at my lowest point, that I was saving my life.  
That that was what mattered.  
You're a person, you know. Not a thing.  
And you're the best person in the world.

**GRIFF**

For what, for Christ's sake?

**MOLLY DEE**

For remembering your sister, for one.  
It doesn't matter who or what it was that threw you out. Or what they said to you.  
It only matters that you don't drown.  
It only matters that we live to tell our stories.

**GRIFF**

I don't think so.

**MOLLY DEE**

Look. Even if you have to pretend. Pretend your life is the life you wished for.  
The battle you wanted for the betterment of other people's lives  
If that's what you have to do, do it.  
Just pretend. Do what you have to do to get through this.  
You're worthy of getting through this.  
I was. I am.

**MOLLY DEE takes a piece of paper out of a pocket, tears it into several smaller pieces, and puts them on her tongue. Then, making a face, she moves her tongue, back and forth, in and out of her mouth a few times, wiggling the pieces of paper on it.**

**MOLLY DEE**

What am I, Griff?

**GRIFF**

I don't know. A BitTorn file?

**MOLLY DEE**

A homeless lizard.

**GRIFF**

You're a goof.

**MOLLY DEE**

I never thought I'd see the day again.  
Life's that way, I guess.  
You get to find out who.  
Who.  
Who's going to be with you along the way.  
Come. Stay with me. In my house awhile. There's room for the both of us.

**GRIFF**

Why?

**MOLLY DEE**

Because it feels good to be a blessing in someone's life again.

**Bells ring the hour. They listen.**

**END**

**Amanda (MOLLY DEE), click [here](#)**

**and click [here](#)**