

streetwise and invisible

By Jerold London

**Copyright © 2021
Jerold London
All rights reserved, etc.
jlondon@deepweaversfaith.com**



Photo by [Nicholas Githiri](#) from [Pexels](#)

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](#)**