

SHORT STORY

The Invisible Man

By David McGuire

He held a terrible power, that man. Every day he and I would meet in battle on a concrete field. He had experience and guile on his side, and decades of low cunning, but there was more to it than that. He had an old magic, old beyond my ken. I had nothing like that, but still I was stronger, and I think we both knew it. We would draw closer like ships in the fog and blind battle would be joined. He always struck first. He would force me to hunch my shoulders and huddle as I walked; it was cold, but it

wasn't that cold. He could bind me in fascination with my own shoes, or a frayed nightclub poster on the side of a bin, or a fume-coloured pigeon flying overhead. Anything but him. And that voice, whispering in my ears secrets of defeat and stone-cold shame. This was the pinnacle of his attack and the time my tunnel-eyed resolve was most sorely tested. Quite how he bent my will to his own ends I don't know, but try as I might I could never look directly at him. In his wizardry he made of himself a smudge, a peripheral smear, something

blurred that my eyes lit past in their flight from parked car to baby-in-a-stroller to woman-talking-on-her-phone. And then I made it past and his power was gone. I had defeated him once again. Shoulders back. Head up. I was free to look wherever I wanted, to live in the city I wanted with the life I wanted. That knowledge, that dream, was how I got past his dirt-eyed madness and the stench of his circumstances. That is how I beat him, that man with his frayed Starbucks cup of coppers, and I beat him every day.