

MOOR STREET TO NEW STREET UNDERPASS (AREA C)

CHRISTINA COLLINS

On the underpass
He murmurs,
'Spare change, please.'
His words squint in the sulphur light;
Drown in the echoes of concrete steps,
Unable to keep pace
With the Moor St – New St commuters.

I turn and frown,
Arrange my face into some package
Between apology and warmth,
Empty as my empty pockets
Because no one carries change
In 2023,
And walk on.

But behind me, I hear him;
'It's ok.
You've given me money before.'
I stumble, and look back
To his smile
Spinning out on a ribbon
But I don't manage
To tie the knot of my own smile
Before I'm gone.

These two spaces,
In the concrete glare of the underpass,
Mine with purpose, direction, meeting,
His, with only
The ripped, damp sleeping bag
At his feet.
And we are one metre apart.

Continued

The gulf is too wide
Because it's invisible.
Yet everyone can see it –
The most Signifiable sign of our city.
We can walk the miles of its length
And find no way across.
A woman in motion,
A man blocked,
Unable to reach across the boundary
That keeps the other safe,
Unable to break through it,
And speak.

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