



# Tales from the Inner City

Books Reviewed:

[Tales from the Inner City](#) [1]

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Reviewer:

[Clive Barnes](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

How might you portray the relationship of humanity and the natural world and the threat of habitat destruction and species extinction? Perhaps, on the one hand, with the statistics of decline, or a documentary horror show? a dead de horned rhino or a sea-bird ingesting a plastic bag. And, on the other hand, the fascination of an Attenborough documentary, all the natural glory of what we take for granted and are losing. In these twenty-five tales and poems, as you might expect, Shaun Tan takes a different approach. In prose that is at turns reflective, anguished, angry, sad and ironic, and in jaw dropping illustrations, he moves within and beyond these straightforward reactions. Perhaps taking his cue from those animals who have long lived with us and those others who have adapted themselves to city habitats, living mostly in secret in our midst, he imagines a surreal urban landscape in which animals and humans co-exist in various ways. Here our mutual dependence is acknowledged and our own animal self is never forgotten. And what can I say about these illustrations? They are remarkable, sometimes creating a dramatic narrative, sometimes evoking wonder, always provoking our response, opening our eyes in so many ways. It is a masterful collection, whose visionary power is perhaps best expressed in the story of the Moonfish. The single illustration for this story graces the cover of the collection, and, in the classic stance of the fisherman and his catch, encapsulates both our love and pride of the natural world and our impulse to exploit it. This beautiful creature, whose transparency embodies its vulnerability and its glittering glamour, is destined for the restaurant table.

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