

A word child

The tube train was even more crowded than usual that morning. I had done the walk to Gloucester Road passing the now forever numinous place where I had met Lady Kitty, and had at first rejected her. The dawn, which had been a pale glowing primrose yellow behind the bare trees of the park, was already clouding over by the time I reached the station. Jammed body to body, we yawned and swayed, breathing into each other's expressionless faces, like forms packaged up for hell. I kept, as always, a sharp lookout for people with colds. I breathed nervously, consciously, feeling the elasticated in and out of the warm intrusive bodies of my fellow passengers. Reggie Farbottom often lauded the pleasure of being crushed against a bosomy typist. This could not please me. Female forms and faces were, in this stuffy insipid proximity, if anything more terrible. The tired made up faces of girls, thrust up against mine, smelling of cheap cosmetics and expressing the vacancy of youth without its joy, seemed simply to declare the poverty of the human race, its miserable limitations, its absolute inability to grasp the real. Or were these spiritless surfaces simply the mirrors of my own mediocrity? I thought about Tommy sitting in her dressing gown over her cup of coffee. No glove puppets this morning. No joyful quartets.

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Iris Murdoch.

QUESTIONS

1. Where is the character going?
2. Who lauded the pleasure of being crushed?
3. Who was he aware of?
4. What did people look like?
5. Means of transport. (5 or 6 lines)
6. Vocabulary:
 - Crowded
 - Dawn
 - Poverty
 - Vacancy