

I was late for school. I'd overslept and even when I got to the station I still felt sleepy. Business people pushed past me, and tutted rudely - they weren't used to kids getting in their way I suppose. Every shove or sigh made the ringing of mum's words louder - she was pretty angry with me that morning. Better to be at school, but at least if I was late I'd miss science.

He was the only person in the whole station (apart from me) that wasn't rushing. He seemed to know exactly where he needed to stand on the platform, and found his way there without being rude to a single person. It was like he was invisible - no one shoved or tutted at him at all, and if it wasn't for what happened afterwards, I would have thought I'd imagined him. He looked different to everyone else.

Expressionless. Which seems a stupid word, as to express expressionlessness is to express something right, so you're not without expression, so it doesn't make sense. Either way, he looked kind of blank. or Empty. And the spot he needed to stand in was right where I was. He didn't care that I was so much littler than him, he just trod on my foot, which really hurt, and then looked down as if surprised to see me! And his eyes looking back at mine scared me - hollow, like the plastic ones glued onto stuffed animals that have been dead for years. So I didn't shout at him for hurting my foot, I just looked down at my shoes with his dusty heel print on the left toe.

All down the platform clusters of people drew closer together around doors that had yet to arrive. A deceptively pleasant breeze breathed soot, dirt and disease onto each of our faces as everyone looked down into the tunnel towards the rumbling. Except him. He was facing the wall opposite, that had a torn poster of a sunny beach now covered in grime. The rumbling came nearer, and people inched closer towards the yellow line as at the same time a voice told them not to. And then he stepped. One big step. And there was a thud. And then the train stopped. But no one got on. Everyone had to get off instead.

I forgot to breathe for a few minutes so that when I did again it began to hurt, and I wasn't sure if my throat was loose inside my neck. I don't know if I was pushed, or if I fell, but I was on the floor, and it looked as if I'd been decorating, as there were specks of bright red on my skin, and my clothes, and my shoes with his dusty heel print on the left toe.