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# Secret Heart

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

William Blake famously saw angels in Peckham. Joe Maloney, the hero of Secret Heart, sees a tiger in Helmouth, a neglected estate on the edge of an unnamed north-eastern city. The tiger has come with the final tour of Hackenschmidt's Circus, or at least its spectre has, for the circus no longer boasts wild animal acts. This is the story of a friendship between outsiders: Joe, the fatherless, stuttering truant, and Corinna, the orphan girl on the flying trapeze with holes in her tights; a tale of blighted dreams and fading hopes. Yet, like Blake's Tyger, Joe's tiger is both beautiful and terrible, and Almond conjures visions of longing, and rituals of tenderness and cruelty, that show both the best and worst of the secret heart. Corinna, wild and free as a lark in flight above the safety net; and the great wrestler Hackenschmidt, humiliated, beaten and bloodied in his own circus ring. While, in the dark wilderness beyond the motorway, like Kurtz in the African jungle, Joff and Stanny Mole hack off the head of a panther they have slaughtered. Almond's achievement is to transform a threadbare, despairing, and often violent reality into a visionary landscape that, through an intensity of imagination and compassion, offers a new beginning to his characters and a powerful experience to his readers.

Running Order:

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