

Penniless Soul

by Stuart Finegan

Late Evening Rush Hour, Liverpool Street. By the time I jumped into the carriage it was already full. Slowly walking between abandoned bags, pushchairs and outstretched limbs I found a window seat. One with size 5 feet resting on it.

“Excuse me, sorry your feet, could you move them?”

If looks could kill.

Without missing a word, the lady in the smart business suit gently tapped her shoes, leaving a small amount of dirt on the seat, before sitting up straight.

“This is yours I believe,” as I flicked the brown soil in her direction.

Her death stare that came in my direction was impressive.

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Years ago your business was your business. How times have changed. Today on trains, busses, in restaurants, people are happy or just don't care if whomever is within their vicinity hears all about their life in specific detail. This was one of those occasions.

Over the course of the next eighty odd minutes, my neighbour sitting opposite happily chatted to her friend in the striking yellow jacket about her day in court. Around us laptops fell silent, headphones were turned down and books closed. Work could wait, this was more important. I concentrated on the screen in front of me, while carefully tuning into their every word. It's started like this.

Old Bailey, Court No 2. 10:09am.

Michael Cup.

A city lawyer. Privately educated. From a family of seriously good stock. Filthy rich.

She was in full flow now. Building him up before dragging him down in full public view. The carriage fell silent as they both screamed like banshees with laughter. I froze with fear in case they looked in my direction. Michael foolishly, had at some stage during their marriage been unfaithful to the lady sat opposite. This had gone on for years, until the day she found out who the other person was. From what I gathered the lady in the business suit didn't care about the affair, she was only bothered about maintaining the lifestyle she had become accustomed to.

People got on and off as the stations came and went. Meanwhile they continued his character assignation.

Robert Jones Smith KC.

An old friend. He was going to ensure she took Michael's every last penny. A strapping man, over six foot five, heavy set but within the bear pit of a court room he was exactly what she needed. It was at this stage the few people sitting around made discreet eye contact as the story unfolded.

I had three stops left before I got off.

Michael was away most of the year, leaving my fellow passenger alone with his credit card. That wasn't the issue. As she happily advised our fellow passengers.

Two stops left. The couple sitting to my left got off, disappointed not to hear the reason why after all these years she decided to divorce him.

Without warning her friend popped the question and the words came in a chaotic order. Even I was shocked. In great detail business lady painted a scene that would break even the hardest heart. For a moment I felt pity for her. Question followed question. I struggled to understand the broken word answer that followed.

Robert's name was mentioned a few times, then Lucy, who was Lucy? The arrogant values of money mentioned turned my stomach. It was the final financial figure that took my breath away. The lady behind me coughed loudly. The train slowed down. She was planning on taking it all. Robert knew what to do. Two stops left.

John Steeple.

Out of nowhere he was now the main player in Court No 2. She loved him. Without John this story would never have been told. She found him in the small ads. By the sounds of it a greasy unlikeable man. But good at what he did. He broke the shocking news that cold misty Tuesday morning along the Thames. The grainy black and white photos. John also placed the seed for revenge. What we didn't know was how she found out. One stop to my station. Her phone rang.

It was Robert. John was dead.