

The Jury Needs an Answer

by Sho Botham

Beads of sweat trickled down her slender back to a moist pool soaked up by her loose cream linen shirt, tucked into black tailored trousers. Her thoughts returned again and again to wondering if there was a visible damp patch on the back of her shirt.

“Mrs Baker-Temple, the court is waiting.”

“Sorry, could you repeat the question please?”

“What time did you arrive home on the night in question?”

Her focus was on a single bead of sweat not soaked up by her shirt. She felt it slide down to her bum and join other beads of escaped sweat making the back of her underwear damp.

“Really, Mrs Baker-Temple, the jury needs an answer.”

In the spartan toilets, she stood in front of the narrow but long mirror fixed to the dark green wall and twisted round to see the back of her shirt. A tiny damp patch emerging just above the waistband of her trousers filled her with disappointment.

“That Mrs Baker-Temple is a right one. She’s a nervous as a kitten. Guilty as hell, don’t you think?”

“Well, guilty of something but she’s not the one on trial although she looks as if she knows more than she’s saying. She doesn’t look as if she’s here half the time.”

“Now Mrs Baker-Temple, on the night in question, we need you to go through what happened between ten o’clock in the evening and two o’clock the following the morning. In your own words tell us what happened during these four hours.”

“I can’t, my mind’s a blank. It has been ever since that night.”

“Come now, Mrs Baker-Temple, you must remember something about how you found your kitchen covered in splattered blood.”

“I don’t, not really. I mean, I saw the blood on the photos but I don’t remember seeing it for real.”

Mrs Baker-Temple’s face took on a look as if she’d gone to a place far away from the drab court room. She spoke in a dull voice.

“I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking. Inside my head has been like this since that night. I see the world through a lens recording I don’t know what. I feel the dampness of the sweat trickling down my back and I don’t know why. Nothing makes sense anymore. I want the camera shutter to close but I have no control over it just as I had no control over that night.