

Eye for An Eye

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FADE IN ON:

INT. JUDGEMENT CHAMBER - DAY

An antiseptic hexagon. Pristine white.

Cameras hang from the ceiling like icicles. Inlaid drawers line each wall.

Video MONITORS installed above them. A CROWD of CURIOUS FACES peek from one display.

A larger screen depicts a classic courtroom.

JUDGE DAVID O'CONNOR (50s) fills the screen: Gray hair. Black robes. A grave expression on his face. A glass console covers his ornate desk.

In the hexagon:

FOUR NAKED MEN shiver along one wall. Two in their twenties. One middle-aged. The last a teen. Helmeted GUARDS and handcuffs hold them in place.

COUNSELLORS KATE WATSON and LAWRENCE ROBBINS (30s) stand in opposite corners, facing O'Connor's screen. They wear matching smart-watches, gloves and microphones. Designer business suits complete the attire.

O'Connor types at his desk. One monitor flashes a status warning: "Sentencing phase. 13:00:43."

Watson steps forward. Beautiful. Cool. All business.

WATSON

Judge O'Connor? Prosecution requests permission to commence closing arguments.

JUDGE O'CONNOR

You may proceed.

WATSON

With pleasure. I promise not to take up much of your time.

JUDGE O'CONNOR

You'd best not. You've got three minutes.

WATSON

(smiles)

I doubt I'll need that much. The facts in the case speak for themselves.

"Sentencing" disappears from the screen. Replaced with two icons: One thumbs up. One thumbs down. Votes tally beneath each picture.

Watson turns towards her video audience.

WATSON

The jury is already well aware of the facts. But since the victim, Ms. Morris, cannot speak for herself, I'll refresh the details as succinctly I can.

(beat)

I apologize in advance. They will be... unpleasant.

She waves a gloved hand at two flickering vid-screens.

One reveals PATRICIA MORRIS (20s). Delicate. Full of life. The other screen displays a rusty, dirty BUS.

WATSON

As we know, the assault occurred here. Perpetrated by these four men.

The "Thumbs down" counter springs to life. Already, it's the overwhelmingly popular choice. Robbins COUGHS loudly.

ROBBINS

Correction. Two men. One just drove. And another is a juvenile.

A few "Thumbs Up" votes peter in. The smile creeps back to Watson's face. Unlike her, it ain't pretty.

WATSON

My mistake. "Participated in" by these four males. One of whom is seventeen.

Another flick of her wrist.

The screen reveals: the filthy bus interior. Torn seats. Protruding springs. Blood splatters. Everywhere.

The video audience GASPS. More "thumbs down" votes. Robbins starts to look concerned.

ROBBINS

Objection!

He waves at the screen. The picture disappears. Watson waves it back. Robbins flicks it off. Again.

WATSON

On what grounds?

ROBBINS

The display of inflammatory material.

WATSON

It's only evidence. And facts.

The attorneys swivel towards O'Connor to break the tie.
The magistrate types at his desk.

JUDGE O'CONNOR

Appropriate for sentencing. I rule the
court will allow.

The display reappears. Watson uses her glove to scroll
across the shot - displaying each gory inch of mayhem.

WATSON

Lured inside, Ms. Morris was sexually
assaulted for two hours. Beaten. Bitten.
And worse.

The MIDDLE AGED PRISONER staggers forward. Is pulled back
quickly by a guard.

MIDDLE AGED PRISONER

I didn't touch her, your Honor!

WATSON

No. You drove. And ignored her screams.

Watson zooms in on the photo. A close-up of a crowbar.
The metal's not visible - hidden under a slick, slimy
coat of RED.

WATSON

(to Robbins)

I believe the *juvenile* wielded that?

Another GASP from the audience. Robbins turns pale white.

WATSON

(to the video 'jury')

After the assault, Ms. Morris was dumped
on the side of the road. Her intestines
outside her body. Despite all medical
efforts, she died three days later. In
God knows how much agony.

The TEEN PRISONER struggles against his restraints.

TEEN PRISONER

She spit on me. I got mad. If she hadn't
fought back, she'd be okay!

Robbins shoots a look at his client: "Shut the fuck up."
Watson flicks her wrist, and "kills" the display.

WATSON
(to O'Connor)
How am I doing on time?

JUDGE O'CONNOR
Not bad. Two minutes, thirty seconds.

WATSON
I'll use what's remaining to summarize.

She walks past Robbins. A cocky spring in her step.

WATSON
All we ask for is justice. A fair
balancing of off-kilter scales.
Prosecution invokes the retribution
clause of 2030. For all four defendants.

The teen SCREAMS. Robbins jumps in Watson's face.

ROBBINS
You can't!

WATSON
Why not?

ROBBINS
It's inhumane!

WATSON
As were the actions of your defendants.

ROBBINS
As a society, we should take the higher
path. The law must remain civilized!

Watson appeals to O'Connor, a mild expression on her
face.

WATSON
Civilization requires a rational populace
that follows rules. When monsters such as
these arise, we have a moral obligation
to have them excised. And set an example
for others who may dare to take their
place.

ROBBINS
Defense offers a plea bargain.
Incarceration. For life!

WATSON

And have law-abiding citizens foot the bill? That's not fair to the taxpayers, Counsellor. Is it?

The two swivel towards Judge O'Connor.

ROBBINS

Judge, I beg you. Show mercy.

JUDGE O'CONNOR

Not my decision to make.

He types on his console. The last screen flickers. Projected on it: a MIDDLE AGED COUPLE. Agony and loss on their faces.

JUDGE O'CONNOR

Mr. and Mrs. Morris, I presume?

Mrs. Morris nods - unable to form actual words.

JUDGE O'CONNOR

(gently)

The time has arrived for sentencing. We present to you two options for those who murdered your daughter. One: Indentured servitude. Proceeds to be distributed to your family for the extent of their lifetimes - such as they are. Two: The retribution clause - to be carried out immediately. The court defers to you: what do you say?

Mrs. Morris SOBS on her husband's shoulder. Then WHISPERS in his ear.

MR. MORRIS

Judge, we choose retribution.

More GASPS from the video audience. Judge O'Connor steeples his fingers. Looks grim.

JUDGE O'CONNOR

I understand. Would you like to watch?

MR. MORRIS

I would. My wife, however, should be excused.

Mrs. Morris dashes off screen. Mr. Morris stares at the prisoners. Unblinking.

MR. MORRIS

I want to see everything.

JUDGE O'CONNOR

So mote it be.

O'Connor BANGS a gavel. One of the prisoners faints. The teen SCREAMS. Is restrained.

Watson toggles a panel on one wall. A drawer slides out, revealing the crowbar from before. The metal's spotty - it hasn't been cleaned.

WATSON

(to a guard)

Position the first prisoner, please.

Robbins dives in front of the condemned men.

ROBBINS

Think of the consequences! This'll lead to more murders. They won't dare leave witnesses alive!

One of the guards pins down the unconscious prisoner's shoulders. Another one spreads his legs wide.

WATSON

Then we'll have to make sure this last for the full two hours. Make sure we disincentivize.

Watson strips off her gloves and puts them aside. She advances on the prisoner with clinical precision - crowbar raised.

The prisoner SCREAMS (OS). Blood SPATTERS.

The video audience GASPS in horror. And delight.

FINAL FADE OUT:

SUPER: In Memory of Jyoti Singh. Never again.