

## Through Innocent Eyes

Nandini Tivakaran

The defense attorney stands before the jury, in reality, a wall of faded paint in a simple but practical office, the room's sharpness softened by the glow of a blazing fireplace. She holds a stoic position, her movements fluid yet firm, each step placed with unwavering surety as she rehearses a performance before nothing but herself and the quiet of the evening.

This case was an interesting one to say the least. The defense attorney had spent the past weeks endlessly poring over papers and meeting with colleagues to work and discuss anything and everything that could make her argument impenetrable. The skilled trader, Mr. Aeneas of Troy gained valuable information from his business partner and lover Ms. Dido of the Carthage Oil Company. Their intimate relationship and the trust Ms. Dido placed in Mr. Aeneas caused her to reveal information about a large oil reservoir under her family's land. With this insider information, Mr. Aeneas bought into the stock of that company, and after telling Mr. Zeus Jupiter and Mrs. Hera Juno, his old employers at the Olympus Oil Company, he gained a substantial profit. When the insider trading issue was discovered, Mr. Aeneas abandoned Ms. Dido and her company, attempting to blame the insider trading crimes on her. After the abandonment was discovered by Ms. Dido's family, her family sued Mr. Aeneas. The discovery of their affair and the shame of the insider trading, especially after he abandoned her, caused Ms. Dido to commit suicide. After all, she did, indeed, allow another company to rise above her family's company, causing her to lose the trust of not only her company but also her family. She had lost everything, *everything*, even her life, for placing her trust and love in Mr. Aeneas.

It was hard to defend a man who had caused a woman so much harm for his own gain, for he left to Italy, attempting to help his son settle with the fortune he gained through the insider

trading, and it was hard to imagine the plight of Ms. Dido's family. Mr. Aeneas had ruined Ms. Dido's reputation, but now... now, it was the defense attorney's duty to defend him. She begins, her sharp but calm voice piercing the silence.

“Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury, before beginning, allow me to ask you a simple question. When a messenger is responsible for delivering an unwelcomed message, who is at fault for the receiver of the message's anger? Of course, in the moment, the receiving end would feel as though the messenger were responsible for whatever harmful outcome, but is the cause not the order to deliver such a message?”

Silence. No, this doesn't seem right. She chides herself mentally, realizing how ambiguous her words are. How effective would this argument be if she were to confuse the jurors out of their wits by the end of her speech? A deep inhale and a heavy sigh later, she continues, voice more careful, calm, yet confident all the same. Simplifying her ideas to prevent confusion, she corrects herself.

“I am sure we are all extremely familiar with the idea of cause and effect. Where any effect is present, or any occurrence at all for that matter, there is bound to be a reason, a cause, behind it. The further one researches the cause, the further the responsibility of the outcome shifts. The blame is seen as deserved by another, then another, coming closer to the true source of whatever creator or cause created humanity itself: the influence that trumps all others and causes one to think or act in any certain way—the truth behind free will. There is an obvious disproportionate distribution of power, and when that power over all others trivializes human nature to mere pieces on a chessboard, rancor can be expressed easily with such power. Now, let us take a look at the defendant's, Mr. Aeneas's, story. To analyze the effects, the plaintiff has had much time to explain, let us look past superficial arguments to analyze the cause.”

Large young eyes of a 10-year-old boy peek through the small opening between the door and door frame. It was his mother, of course, speaking to herself again, but today, she sounded different, harsher, so unlike her usual nature. The young son couldn't help but be slightly fearful of what's made his mother's nurturing voice so, well, different.

“Mr. Aeneas, originally of the Olympus Oil Company, has always been a successful trader. We can see this from his excellent luck in the fall of the company Troy's stock price, when he escaped the substantial losses. Some say he was warned of this in a dream, but we cannot deny that he is a successful trader, being able to predict stock performance. Knowing that Mr. Aeneas is a successful trader, let us look at the events before this case. Mr. Aeneas's prediction of the rise in the stock price of the Carthage Oil Company caused him to gain a significant profit. As the plaintiff has attempted to call this insider trading, what is insider trading? I'm sure we are all very familiar with this concept. Insider trading is the illegal practice of trading on the stock exchange to one's own advantage through having access to confidential information. The plaintiff has no substantial evidence to prove Mr. Aeneas's supposed insider trading, as we know Mr. Aeneas has had much experience in predicting stock performance. This situation is nothing but luck, coincidence, as Mr. Aeneas has been merely lucky once again, but to even sue him for- “

No, that doesn't sound right. She needs to be clear and strong enough to defend Mr. Aeneas, even if she did not personally agree with him.

“...to sue him for Ms. Dido's abandonment would be ridiculous in itself, as Mr. Aeneas was never bound to her by marriage. If this trial is about the abandonment of Ms. Dido leading to her suicide, then this in no way is substantial enough to punish a man who was following

directions of his superiors. Mr. Jupiter, as we know from the witness Mr. Mercury, had instructed Mr. Aeneas to leave Carthage and Ms. Dido.”

The boy, having only finished the fifth grade, could barely understand his mother’s words, unsure of anything but her tone of voice. He’d heard pieces of the case when colleagues had come to his home to work on the case and when she had been on the phone to discuss the case, but the amount of understanding was still very small. He hears few words like “affair” and “abandonment”, but wasn’t his mother defending this person? Wasn’t she on the good side? How could his mother be trying to prove a liar innocent?

“They had an affair, and Ms. Dido became attached, even when Mr. Aeneas had to leave. We know what results, but- no, that’s too long a sentence.”

She added with a sigh, shaking her head in disapproval, hastily fixing the mistake.

“We know the result of this now, Ms. Dido’s suicide, which paused Mr. Aeneas’s journey. Of course, the plaintiff could argue that Mr. Aeneas’s affair with Dido was the cause of her death, but why did she die? Her sister Anna tells us that Ms. Dido committed suicide as a result of her heartbreak, but was that heartbreak truly the defendant’s fault? Did he have any valid reason to stay with her? Did he have any duty to her? No, because he never married her. He held no true responsibility for her or her household at any time. She was merely a business partner, but we do know that as a business partner, he had been innocent. Had he remained with Ms. Dido, he would be in the same spot where he is now, stuck, unable to act on his own volition. He would be unable to leave and fulfill what Mr. Mercury has stated is the defendant’s destiny or direction given by Mr. Jupiter, his duty to fulfill, which could also lead to harm to himself from his godlike superiors.

Ladies and Gentlemen: Can such a duty be compromised for the sake of an incident that holds no true value or validity? Can the orders of those higher be overlooked for the sake of a mere- no, no, no.”

She stopped abruptly, muttering those three words under her breath, feeling as though her words were merely travelling in circles. They weren't convincing enough... but how could she possibly make the jurors see as she did?

“Can higher orders be overlooked for a mere show of affection, an affair?”

She paused momentarily, pursing her lips into a fine line as she imagined the words written on her notes. It didn't feel convincing. She needed to sell her argument, place words into a statement so impenetrable that no doubt could possibly enter anyone's mind.

*Affection.* ‘Why choose that word for this?’, the innocent young boy wonders. He'd heard this word before... but she now uses it with such a blunt voice. Was his mother saying that affection didn't mean anything? Was his *mother* saying that liars could do whatever they pleased to even those they love?

“If the defendant were following orders throughout his story, being manipulated by those who sit above him, then how can one blame Mr. Aeneas? He had no control over even finding himself near Ms. Dido's family's company. If the cause was not his free will, as we have proven through the words of Mr. Mercury and Mrs. Venus, those who have testified that the defendant has been constantly reminded of his duty, a duty given by those of Mr. Mercury and Mrs. Venus's high status, then Mr. Aeneas has been merely a pawn in another's game and has been blamed by moves he did not make of his own accord.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the only fair decision in this situation is in favor of the defendant to protect a man from blame for crimes he did not commit, to protect a man from blame for

crimes committed by others. He was not the true cause of Ms. Dido's death, for the true cause was the source of his actions. He was the messenger, following orders with a higher goal in mind. As I am sure, we have all heard this saying: 'Don't shoot the messenger.' Thank you."

After concluding her argument, she took a seat at the worn chair and wooden desk, unaware of her son's presence at the door as she began to review her notes, scribbling simple notes to herself before readying herself to practice her words once again until they were perfect.

A child, hearing the same story but unable to understand fully, cannot necessarily understand the depth, but a child is in no way completely ignorant. Innocence holds more truth than one can imagine, and this child couldn't help but wonder if, despite the costs, losing love of any sort, even a parent's love, is truly and inexplicably deplorable.