

**In the middle of a trial, proceedings are brought to a standstill when one of the parties is accused of presenting forged evidence. Although unknowingly, it is later revealed to be a set up by an outside source with no ties to any tribal community. The legal team handling the matter is later interviewed about the incident.**

### **Tribal Aversion**

A trial is underway in the tribal court. It is actually a jury trial where regular citizens and tribal citizens are invited and allowed to dispute the charges against the tried culprit collectively. While it is a mixed court system, the lawyers on both sides, and the judge especially, are adept at finding the truth and handing down verdicts. But what happens when one side accuses the other of dirty laundry?

The case on hand is what appears to be a murder case. Unfortunately, tribal courts cannot handle matters regarding capital crimes, so the case is lowered to assault and battery. The accused suspect in the trial is Gary Nolan, a black wolf wanted in connection to robbery and attempted murder by the local Nevada authorities. However, he was nailed on Nevada Highway 318 when tribal police busted him for attempting to flee under a different alias. It was later discovered he was a forger, creating fake identities to throw off suspicion. Nolan was taken into custody after a brief struggle. Now he sits in court with his defense team and their rivals fighting for justice. The tribal judge overseeing the proceedings is Juan Tivola, a white lion of African descent. Not only is he the chieftain of his own tribe, he also holds dual citizenship in both the United States and the African country of his residence. And he is face-to-face with the suspected scoundrel he is presiding over. Only this time, the white lion will not be presiding over the entire trial.

A brief recess is called for both sides to investigate further into the matter while the gallery deliberates the sentence so far. When court reconvenes, the two parties return but one of the members of the prosecution side is missing. Noticing this, Judge Juan Tivola beseeched striped hyena prosecutor Bauxi Gardi on the whereabouts of her partner. "Ms. Gardi, court has resumed already. Where is Ms. Sumari?"

Faced with a missing partner as a predicament, it should be no problem for the striped hyena to answer the judge. She begins to explain, "Um, Ms. Sumari needed more time to examine the background as well as the evidence that was presented already. She should be back by now..."

**OBJECTION!**

A sudden outcry of objection bursts into the courtroom, rendering the entire gallery and the legal teams silent. Black Panther prosecutor Bobo Sumari blows the court doors wide open in her announcement and she saunters over to meet her partner at the bench. It is unclear why she made her sudden presence into the courtroom but at the judge's demand, she points accusingly to the prosecution and declares, "Your Honor, the defense has been issuing forged evidence this whole time! None of it is real!"

The defense team, consisting of three male wolves, stare in shock. No one could believe their ears. The gallery suddenly goes into an uproar over the accusation and the judge literally roars from his stand to regain order. Once calm is restored to the court, the white lion judge then turns his attention to the defense, "Defense, is this true? Have you been presenting forged evidence this entire time? You do realize the consequences for this, don't you?"

"Chief, we know the outcome for presenting false evidence but if we may, the defense would like to request a plagiarism check to see if the evidence is actually real. Mr. Nolan is a fraud and he's trying to bail his way out through forgery." The middle wolf in the defense team is Nurakami Hokeno, who keeps a cool head and demeanor despite the tempest surrounding him and his two partners. The request, while intriguing to the judge, serves only to cement the prosecution's claim further, until they realize too that something is amiss.

Bauxi realizes the situation just from hearing Nurakami's request and subsequent explanation. She whispers something to her partner and then turns to the white lion judge for support, "Chief, the defense may be on to something. Mr. Nolan was nailed by the tribal authorities for trying to skip town under a false name, so chances are he's planting evidence on us - fake evidence."

"That may be so, I agree with both sides on this. But I fear we may have to postpone or call this off. Mr. Nolan is a threat to the community as a whole, so he must be transferred to a higher court." The white lion judge explains his thinking on the matter, which prompts an objection from the defense team.

Taking the lead is defense attorney Tyson Devereux, who later suggests, "We can't quit now! Since we can't handle cases with capital crimes, we must still proceed with the assault and forgery charges. Then we transfer him to a higher, local court, for the subsequent charge of attempted murder. The police also discovered his involvement in attempted murder before he was nailed, so we must continue!"

Nodding towards the tribal wolf lawyer, Juan is immediately humbled. The lion turns serious once more and dispatches a bailiff to conduct a forensic test on all the evidence presented to conclude if it's all fake or real.

With the test underway, the trial continues with the defense team getting to the heart of the matter where they call Nolan to the stand to testify. But upon subsequent cross-examination, the wolf trips up and becomes nervous. Standing guard are two tribal police officers, a wolf and a cougar, who see the thug's increasing nervousness on each question the defense attorneys present toward him. Even those in the gallery are becoming unnerved by the felon's behavior.

But the final question in the defense team's cross-examination is when Nolan finally loses it. The third member in the defense team is Kiyiya Katagonya, and this golden furred wolf goes to the bottom of the matter to retrieve Nolan's motive. "What would lead to you doing something so heinous as forgery in the first place, let alone assaulting an innocent person?"

Panic sets in and Nolan becomes sweaty and unsettled. Suddenly, he makes a break for it, throwing the entire courtroom into an uproar. If it wasn't for the two tribal officers in his way, Nolan would have received his one-way ticket to freedom.

The two tribal officers attempt to restrain the wolf and take him down but he manages to break free and fight back, punching one of the cops in return.

The lawyers themselves try helping out and even the judge throws himself into the fray. After a short foot chase along the vicinity, Nolan is later captured and brought back into the courtroom for immediate sentencing.

As a result of his initial crimes, Nolan is to be transferred to a local Nevada court to stand trial, but for his attempted breakaway, the wolf is banned from the tribal community until his future court date.

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Following the abrupt end of the court trial as well as Nolan being escorted out, court is adjourned immediately. However, one of the members in the gallery left to seek out the judge and the lawyers responsible over the trial.

Being an independent freelancer, Janus is viewing the trial from the gallery when he tunes in to the subsequent accusation made by the prosecution. Seeing the suspect's escape attempt, Janus stays put, his face hardened at watching the legal team and the officers wrestle the wolf suspect to the ground. In his mind, the black

cat is already brainstorming a potential story to share with his viewers, so he gets up and leaves the gallery, just as the court trial is adjourned. With the suspect banned from returning to the land, it will make an interesting cover story.

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Inside the judge's chambers, the white lion chieftain is currently filling out his report on the trial proceedings for the day when his ears wiggle upon detecting movement. Thinking it is one of the lawyers, the judge calls out, "Come in!" He has no idea that the common citizen has entered his premises until he raises his head to notice Janus. Initially intrigued and surprised by the black cat's presence, Juan grows suspicious and demands, "What are you doing in the judge's chambers? This is for legal aides only!"

His tail gently swinging from side to side, Janus smiles mildly while pardoning himself and explaining his reasons for dropping by, "I apologize, Your Honor. But I'm curious about this trial and what led to it. My name is Janus and I am a freelance journalist. I would like to interview you as well as the other attorneys present."

Juan gives the black cat an incredulous look. The white lion pensively warns, "You do realize what you're stepping into, right? This isn't your average court. You're in tribal land, so this is much different from a common legal system."

"I am entirely aware of that, Your Honor. And I would like to educate the general public on matters pertaining to your culture." Informing the white lion of his awareness, Janus adds, "It'll serve pretty useful for educational purposes and awareness."

"If it serves to educate the common citizens and provide helpful advice, then I see no problem with it." Juan agrees to the interview demand and sets up a date with Janus for the interview.

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On the date of the interview, the tribal judge and the black cat agreed to meet in an office room for the interview. The lawyers present are the teams that handled the Gary Nolan case - prosecutors Bobo Sumari and Bauxi Gardi as well as defense team attorneys Tyson Devereux, Nurakami Hokeno, and Kiyiya Katagonya. The wolves sat to Juan's left while the black panther and the striped hyena sat on Juan's right, with Janus sitting before all of them, ready to start the interview.

Before Janus can open his mouth to start the first question, Juan interjects to speak first with a disclaimer and a reminder. "Let me just start off by saying that every time I hear of a case where an indigenous person is attacked or killed, my heart goes out to the victim and their family. They have done nothing wrong to deserve such a fate. It is very important to understand that us indigenous natives are similar to the common citizens, but with less recognition. Therefore, we all must educate the public on matters regarding indigenous natives everywhere, no matter what country they reside in."

"Understandable, Your Honor." Janus smirked. "I must say, you guys handled the situation quite well. I have never seen a judge throw himself into harm's way to take down a would-be thug. That's absolute bravery on your part."

Juan merely shrugs off the praise, dismissing the cat's flattering comment. The white lion judge claims, "Hey, it's not just me, it was the legal teams and the officers too. All of us play a part in keeping our community safe."

"I see..." Janus slinks his eyes between the judge and the lawyers while intrigued, and he begins the interview by his very first question directed to them all. "You guys seem to strike a balance between being primitive and modern. How do you do it?"

Juan begins first by explaining their switches, "It's not just through the clothing but through the mindset. We switch between the two when it comes to important matters such as ceremonies, tribal duties, and secular jobs. Naturally, I'd say for myself it's easy. But speaking collectively for all of us present," Juan pauses in emphasis with the others nodding their heads in agreement, "it's more complicated than you think."

"Most of us live on reservations inside of normal cities and some of us live in more... primitive areas, for lack of a better term." Tyson spoke up. "We're more wild than you think."

"We may appear to be that way but we aren't." Bobo interjected in an objecting claim. "Collectively speaking, if the Chief Judge allows," Juan nods his head in allowance, parting his mane while giving the female black panther more leverage to speak, "We are more diverse than you think. Our culture may seem strange, but it's our way of life."

"I can see that just by looking at how all of you are dressed." Janus observed. This makes Juan suspicious, prompting him to question the black cat in return. "Janus, is it? What brought you here to a tribal court in the first place?"

Janus laughs, "I'm glad you answered that. I actually received an invite from an anonymous source to attend said trial. And I noticed the officers themselves too. Something about you all struck me as different, so I wanted to see for myself how this played out."

"You're welcome to come and visit at any time, Janus!" Juan invited, stretching a hand out to the black cat. "We're always open to visitors!"

"I appreciate the kind gesture and I will take you up on your offer." Janus stands up and moves in to shake the white lion's hand, sealing the deal. However, an off-topic thought then struck him. "Your Honor, most mammals are exclusive to certain areas. Lions, hyenas, wolves, they're all exclusive. What led you, Ms. Gardi, and Ms. Sumari to come to the U.S?"

"Dual citizenship. That, as well as wanting to travel abroad." Juan stated. "Wanting to see what the United States is like since so many are flocking over there."

Bobo wistfully sighs, "It's a complete mess here with all kinds of problems plaguing the actual public. It's no better than where we originally came from."

Bauxi observed, "Each place has its own problems. No matter where you go, you'll find 'em."

"That doesn't disclose the common problems we still face with us being stereotyped as savages and crazy people." Tyson grumbled in agreement while snorting. "Discrimination is still an ongoing problem."

"It's a shame, really. But you guys are strong for one thing. Strong and beautiful." The comment that Janus gives makes everyone blush. This leads to a bit of silence and head-turning when Kiyiya himself finally acknowledges the black cat, "You think we're... beautiful...?"

Janus assures them, "I stand by what I said. It's true too. You people are unique in your own special way. What I see are a bunch of responsible, hardworking people who take their stuff very seriously."

"We appreciate that." Juan cracks a smile at the black cat, grateful at the compliment. "Can we get back to the interview?"

"Right..." Janus clears his throat. "It is about the trial that happened today. And I am asking this towards you all collectively. How notorious was this suspect?"

"You know, very little is known about Mr. Gary Nolan until this trial. We never heard of him until he was arrested by the authorities." Bobo claimed.

Nurakami relates, "Forgery and fraud are in the same category, but to a certain extent. But upon finding out the details of the case, it was obvious this was gonna be another long one. It's just... we had no idea this claim of forging evidence was gonna pop up."

"The bailiff tested the evidence that was presented and came back as real evidence." Janus pointed out. "Nothing was fake."

All eyes switch to Bobo at this very moment, for she made the bold accusation against the defense team of presenting forged evidence. The female black panther later apologizes, "Forgive me, but I had a hunch that something wasn't right. I had a feeling something was off and that would be it. I'm gonna lose my law license as it is."

"Our client actually framed us, so you're clean." Kiyiya speaks up in defense, sparing Bobo the punishment of losing her law license. However, the wolf reminds her, "Ms. Sumari, you still may be penalized for making a false accusation but you kinda made a good claim in your theory. At the same time, none of us saw this coming."

"You can't pass off real evidence as fake." Janus frowned. "That's impossible."

"Try sweeping away a crime scene with items used in it and replace it with something similar." Tyson argued, "25% of the attendees here will spot the difference unless someone has good eyesight or attention to detail."

The gray wolf makes a valid point in his argument. But there is still one thing still bothering Janus. "That last question you asked him, Mr. Katagonya, what led you to deduce the suspect's motive?"

Kiyiya throws his hands up in reason, "I wanted to get to the heart of the matter, you know? What is his motive for forgery and fraud in the first place? He's already guilty of assault and attempted murder - the murder charge is for the higher courts."

"Possibly gambling, but in the wrong way. Greed also plays a part too." Bobo reasoned among them.

Bauxi also adds, "Keep in mind Mr. Nolan is a forger - we're talking checks, credit cards, checking accounts, anything to do with either cash or duplication."

Watching the striped hyena prosecutor count the details on her fingers, both Kiyiya and Tyson exchange stares and they stare at the hyena, with the golden wolf later stating, "It's just like what Ms. Sumari said. It all boils down to greed. And that also plays a role in most crimes too."

"Nolan knew his goose was cooked when we turned on him." Tyson recalls the accusation that Bobo made when calling out the defense team, as well as Nolan's attempted flight from the court. The black panther only frowns in retrospect while nodding grimly. The gray wolf continues, "He likely assumed we were on him and that's when he fled."

"Speaking of that," Janus stares directly at Juan for impending emphasis, "I have never seen a judge, of all people, throw himself into a situation to stop a fleeing felon."

Juan only laughs and explains, "One thing I learned greatly from this community is this - you pick on one of us, you mess with everyone. That's what's kept me going."

"Well, you guys definitely deserve a raise for your bravery. You people are severely underestimated." It is out of guilt that Janus acknowledges how well-received and known these natives are. Yet Juan stands up to hug him. With his arms still on Janus' shoulders, the tribal white lion assures Janus, "We care more about the justice and safety of our people than some salary. Jobs are replaceable, lives aren't. That's what makes legal aides so important."

Janus hugs the white lion in return and straightens up, now smiling broadly. "You can expect to see me at any time! I'll even let you guys watch some of my clips!"

"Consider it a deal!" Juan rubs his head against Janus in a friendly manner. The legal teams present also voice their support in allowing Janus to enter their land. This could be a fortunate journalist, whose reports and stories may help brighten a more positive light on indigenous and tribal natives.