

## **Miscarriage of Justice**

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: An ECG MONITOR pulsing. A heartbeat slows, weakens.

WIDEN to reveal MONICA MICHAELS (32), exhausted but unbroken, lying in a hospital bed. Blood soaks through her gown near her abdomen.

DR. RANVEER PATEL (50s), compassionate but worried, studies the monitors while NURSE RIVERA checks IV bags. To Monica--

DR. PATEL  
The sepsis is advancing. Your  
kidneys are showing early signs of  
failure.

Monica's cell LIGHTS UP with a text from "KADY": "mom where are you?? grandma said ur in hospital???"

MONICA  
My daughter--

DR. PATEL  
I've submitted the emergency  
petition. But the ethics committee  
is--

MONICA  
How long?

DR. PATEL  
Without intervention? Hours. Maybe  
less.

Monica tries to reach for her cell but winces in pain.

MONICA  
I promised her I'd be home tonight.

DR. PATEL  
Monica, I need to be clear about  
what we're facing. The infection is  
spreading rapidly. We need to  
perform a D&C immediately.

MONICA  
Then do it.

DR. PATEL  
There's a complication. The  
ultrasound still shows cardiac  
activity.

MONICA  
And the committee?

DR. PATEL  
They're convening, but it could  
take hours. By then...

His silence speaks volumes.

INT. HOSPITAL ETHICS COMMITTEE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

FRANK COLLINS (60s), hospital administrator with an MBA's  
polish, studies medical charts with growing concern. TWO  
COMMITTEE DOCTORS and a HOSPITAL ATTORNEY review documents.

COLLINS  
Creatinine levels this elevated  
suggest impending renal failure.

HOSPITAL ATTORNEY  
The statute's medical emergency  
exemption requires "imminent danger  
of death" or "the irreversible  
impairment of major bodily  
functions."

COMMITTEE DOCTOR #1  
By any medical standard, she meets  
those criteria.

HOSPITAL ATTORNEY  
By legal standards, we're in a gray  
area. Three hospitals in the state  
are currently being sued for making  
the wrong call.

Dr. Patel enters, urgency in his movements.

DR. PATEL  
Her white count is climbing. We  
need to act NOW.

COLLINS  
Ranveer, we're trying to determine  
if--

DR. PATEL  
There's nothing to determine. She's  
in septic shock.

Through the glass wall, Dr. Patel notices WADE ELLIS (43),  
menacing and territorial, stalking the nurse's station.

DR. PATEL (CONT'D)  
What is Monica's ex doing here?  
He's the reason she's going through  
this in the first place.

COLLINS  
He has a right to be here under  
HIPAA. Claims he's a "personal  
representative."

HOSPITAL ATTORNEY  
Plus, he's already contacted the  
State Attorney's office, so there's  
that.

DR. PATEL  
And if Monica dies?

COLLINS  
(genuinely conflicted)  
I have a hospital to protect. Four  
hundred employees. Thousands of  
patients.

DR. PATEL  
And one of them is dying in Room  
four twelve.

Collins looks from the attorney to Dr. Patel, trapped between  
institutional responsibility and the Hippocratic oath.

COLLINS  
The committee needs time to review  
all the documentation.

Dr. Patel checks his watch. Makes a decision. He calls out to  
Nurse Rivera in the doorway--

DR. PATEL  
Prep OR three. STAT!

INT. TEXAS COURTROOM - DAY

Late sunlight slices through tall windows. The room is packed  
but hushed.

SUPER: "SIX MONTHS LATER"

Monica sits at the defense table in a simple navy dress. Her attorney AVERY JENKINS (45), rumpled suit but laser focus, reviews notes.

Behind them in the gallery, KADY MICHAELS (15), her mother's determination in younger eyes, nervously twirls her necklace.

District Attorney MAXWELL GOLD (50s), immaculate and smug, arranges file folders and papers into neat stacks.

JUDGE MACCIANO (70s), stern traditionalist, studies the court. On the wall behind him the TEXAS STATE SEAL looms.

In the jury box, SARAH BENNETT (40s) sits remarkably still. A small lapel pin with a woman's photo catches the light.

JUDGE MACCIANO  
You may proceed, Mr. Gold.

GOLD  
The State calls Monica Michaels.

Jenkins catches Monica's arm as she rises, WHISPERS--

JENKINS  
Let me object when needed. Stay  
focused on the facts.

As Monica takes the stand, Sarah Bennett shifts forward in the jury box.

GOLD  
Ms. Michaels, when you were  
admitted to Austin Memorial on  
March fifteenth, were you aware of  
the Texas Heartbeat Act?

MONICA  
I was aware I was dying.

A RIPPLE through the jury. Gold's rhythm breaks momentarily.

GOLD  
That's not what I asked.

MONICA  
No, but it's what mattered.

Gold changes tactics, produces a document.

GOLD

Your internet search history shows you researched out-of-state clinics weeks before the incident.

JENKINS

Objection! This wasn't in discovery!

GOLD

Just obtained this morning, Your Honor. Shows premeditation.

JUDGE MACCIANO

Both of you, approach.

AT SIDEBAR:

GOLD

(hushed voice)

She contacted three clinics in New Mexico. This wasn't an emergency.

JENKINS

Because she was terrified after her ex broke in. The restraining order history--

JUDGE MACCIANO

Enough. Limited questions about timing only. And you'll provide that search history to defense immediately.

The two attorneys return to their positions.

GOLD

Was there a fetal heartbeat when Dr. Patel performed the procedure?

Monica meets his gaze directly.

MONICA

There were two heartbeats in that room. Both failing.

GOLD

Did you consult with Mr. Ellis before making your decision?

MONICA

You mean did I consult with the man who violated two restraining orders?

(MORE)

MONICA (CONT'D)

The one who sent texts saying he'd  
"make me pay" if I didn't do what  
he wanted?

Several jurors shift in their seats. Sarah Bennett watches intently, her expression professional and measured.

GOLD

So you made a unilateral decision  
about a life that wasn't just  
yours?

MONICA

I made a decision to live. For my  
daughter, Kady. And for myself.

Monica notices a juror's subtle nod - unexpected support.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Any medical professional knows  
there are moments when waiting for  
committee approval costs lives.

GOLD

But the law clearly states--

MONICA

The law didn't stop Wade Ellis from  
breaking into my house. The law  
didn't stop the infection from  
spreading through my body.

Monica leans forward; her voice is quiet, but it carries to every corner.

MONICA (CONT'D)

And it won't bring back the women  
who died waiting for permission to  
live.

In the gallery, Kady's thoughts turn to her own situation--

INT. KADY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

On her bed, Kady stares at a positive pregnancy test. She hears Monica approaching and quickly hides the test.

Monica enters with laundry, notices something's off.

MONICA

Everything okay?

KADY  
Just tired.

Monica sets down the laundry, studies her daughter.

MONICA  
I love you. You know that?

KADY  
I know.

MONICA  
Whatever's wrong, we can figure it  
out together. That's what we do.

KADY  
Mom, I--

Monica's phone BUZZES with a text. She reads it.

MONICA  
That's the hospital. I have to go  
in. Late shift.  
(beat)  
We'll talk tomorrow, okay?

Kady nods, watching her mother leave, the pregnancy test  
still hidden beneath her pillow.

INT. COURTROOM - BACK TO PRESENT

Kady snaps out of it, returns her attention to the trial.

GOLD  
The State calls Wade Ellis.

Wade enters on his best behavior wearing a modest suit,  
reading glasses, a small cross lapel pin. His eyes find Kady.

Kady turns her head away; her hand moves instinctively to her  
stomach. Sarah Bennett notices, making a small note.

Wade takes the stand with rehearsed humility.

GOLD (CONT'D)  
Mr. Ellis, when did you learn of  
Ms. Michaels' pregnancy?

Wade removes his glasses, a practiced gesture.

WADE  
She called me crying. Said we  
needed to talk.



He pauses dramatically to set up the next rehearsed line--

WADE (CONT'D)  
I was actually leading my recovery  
group at church. Teaching other men  
how to be better fathers.

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

CLOSE ON: Wade's phone. Monica's call illuminates the screen.

WIDEN to reveal Wade, unshaven and rough, showing the screen  
to sketchy FRIENDS at a dive bar. He makes a crude gesture to  
the phone and sends it to voice mail.

WADE  
The little whore can wait.

Wade and his bros have a good LAUGH and drain their beers.

INT. COURTROOM - BACK TO PRESENT

GOLD  
And what was your response to her  
news?

WADE  
I thanked God. Thought maybe this  
was His way of making us a real  
family again.

He turns to the jury, voice breaking slightly.

WADE (CONT'D)  
I offered her everything. To get  
remarried. Financial support. It  
was a chance for her to do the  
right thing for once.

GOLD  
Did she accept?

WADE  
No. Said she'd "take care of it."  
Like our baby was just some  
problem.

JENKINS  
Objection! Inflammatory.

JUDGE MACCIANO  
Sustained. Stick to facts, Mr.  
Ellis.

GOLD  
Did Ms. Michaels consult you before  
making her decision?

WADE  
No sir. Next I heard, she was at  
Austin Memorial. By then it was too  
late.

His voice cracks - just enough. A female juror dabs her eye.  
Sarah Bennett remains unmoved, watching Wade clinically.

Jenkins rises, approaches casually.

JENKINS  
Mr. Ellis, your daughter Kady, what  
is her middle name?

WADE  
I... what?

JENKINS  
Simple question. Your daughter's  
middle name?

WADE  
Marie... or maybe Madelaine--

JENKINS  
It's Elizabeth. After her  
grandmother on her mother's side.

Jenkins walks to the defense table, retrieves a document.

JENKINS (CONT'D)  
How about her blood type?

WADE  
I don't see how--

JENKINS  
Her school? Allergies? Her best  
friend's name?

WADE  
I'm trying to do better now--

JENKINS  
Interesting timing, your newfound  
fatherhood.

Jenkins places a document in front of Wade.

JENKINS (CONT'D)

This is your signature, correct? On  
this restraining order from 2021?

Wade's mask slips momentarily, eyes darting to the gallery  
where a REPORTER scribbles notes.

JENKINS (CONT'D)

And this one, from 2022?

Wade shifts, uncomfortable.

JENKINS (CONT'D)

When was the last time you paid  
child support?

WADE

That BITCH wouldn't let me--

He catches himself, but too late. Several jurors straighten.  
Gold winces.

JENKINS

I'm sorry, who wouldn't let you?  
The "bitch" you claim to love?

GOLD

Objection! Counsel is badgering--

JUDGE MACCIANO

Sustained. Move on, Mr. Jenkins.

JENKINS

Let's discuss March first. Two AM.

WADE

I was worried. She wasn't answering  
calls--

JENKINS

So you kicked in her back door?

WADE

I heard crying inside. Thought she  
might be hurt.

INT. MONICA'S HOME - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

The BACK DOOR SPLINTERS open. Wade, drunk and enraged,  
stumbles in. His shadow appears in the hallway.

WADE  
WHERE ARE YOU?

Monica SCREAMS from the stairs, phone in hand.

MONICA  
I'M CALLING THE POLICE--

Wade lunges, grabs Monica's wrist. Her phone CLATTERS down the stairs.

WADE  
You think you can hide from me?

He SLAMS her against the wall. She tries to break free. He grabs her throat.

WADE (CONT'D)  
You're carrying my kid!

Wade CHOKES her--

MONICA  
Let... go...

WADE  
YOU BELONG TO ME, BITCH!

Monica's knee comes up hard. Wade doubles over. She runs for the door. He recovers, TACKLES her. They CRASH into a table.

Monica's head HITS the floor. Blood appears beneath her.

INT. COURTROOM - BACK TO PRESENT

JENKINS  
Her place? You mean beneath your fists? Or just beneath your control?

Wade EXPLODES from his seat at the stand--

WADE  
You weren't there! None of you--

JENKINS  
No. But the rape kit was.

Silence falls like a blade. Even the judge seems to hold his breath.

Sarah Bennett's pen SNAPS in her hand, drawing surprised looks from other jurors.

Gold rises slowly.

GOLD  
Your Honor, I request a brief  
recess.

JUDGE MACCIANO  
Granted. Twenty minutes.

As the gallery buzzes, Sarah Bennett watches Wade's hands shaking as he leaves the stand. She writes something in her notebook, then glances at Kady, who looks away.

INT. COURTHOUSE HALLWAY - LATER

Monica leans against the wall, exhausted. Jenkins approaches with coffee.

JENKINS  
Your ex destroyed himself. But  
Gold's still got one more witness.

MONICA  
Did the jury notice?

JENKINS  
Number four certainly did. Woman  
with the blue lapel pin. Never  
takes her eyes off you or Wade.

MONICA  
You think there's something there?

JENKINS  
The way she watches... it's  
personal.  
(beat)  
But we need to be careful. I've got  
a feeling about that one.

INT. COURTROOM - LATER

Collins takes the stand, confident until he sees Monica's steady gaze.

GOLD  
Please state your name and  
position.

COLLINS

Frank Collins, Chief Executive  
Officer for Austin Memorial  
Hospital.

GOLD

And what is the hospital's policy  
regarding the Texas Heartbeat Act?

COLLINS

Any detected fetal heartbeat  
precludes termination without  
committee approval. Patient safety  
exemptions require documentation of  
imminent organ failure.

Jenkins rises, approaches with unusual calm.

JENKINS

Mr. Collins, are you a doctor?

COLLINS

I have an MBA from Wharton--

JENKINS

That's a no. Ever performed  
surgery?

COLLINS

Of course not.

JENKINS

Ever had to tell a fifteen-year-old  
her mother might not make it  
through the night?

GOLD

Objection! Argumentative.

JUDGE MACCIANO

Sustained. Move it along counselor.

Jenkins pulls out a single piece of paper.

JENKINS

How many women have died at Austin  
Memorial while they waited for your  
committee approval in medical  
emergencies?

COLLINS

That's not a fair--

JENKINS

It's a number. How many?

Collins shifts, loosens his tie. A beat--

COLLINS

Three.

He pauses, glances at the jury box.

COLLINS (CONT'D)

Three this year.

MURMURS from the gallery. Sarah Bennett's expression doesn't change, but her knuckles whiten as she grips her pen.

JENKINS

The night Ms. Michaels was admitted, did Dr. Patel request emergency authorization?

COLLINS

He did. But hospital policy requires--

JENKINS

Yes, or no?

COLLINS

Yes.

JENKINS

And your committee denied it?

COLLINS

The statute establishes clear criteria--

JENKINS

Mr. Collins, would you approve emergency intervention for a patient with Monica's vital signs today?

Collins hesitates, answers softly--

COLLINS

Yes.

JENKINS

What's changed?

COLLINS  
We've revised our protocols based  
on... recent outcomes.

JENKINS  
No further questions.

GOLD  
The State rests, Your Honor.

JUDGE MACCIANO  
Defense?

JENKINS  
The defense recalls Monica  
Michaels.

Monica takes the stand again. The courtroom quiets.

JENKINS (CONT'D)  
Ms. Michaels, why did you make the  
decision you did that night?

MONICA  
Because I was caught between legal  
theories and medical reality.

She looks directly at the jury.

MONICA (CONT'D)  
In that hospital room, I had a  
systemic infection advancing toward  
organ failure. I had a daughter who  
needed her mother. And I had to  
face a system designed to protect  
institutions instead of patients.

Sarah Bennett watches with intensity, her professional  
demeanor masking deeper emotions.

MONICA (CONT'D)  
I chose to live. Not as a political  
statement. As a mother who had  
promised her daughter she'd always  
come home to her.

JENKINS  
No further questions.

JUDGE MACCIANO  
Mr. Gold?

Gold approaches slowly, measuring his words.



GOLD

Ms. Michaels, you work in  
reproductive healthcare, correct?

MONICA

I'm a patient advocate at Women's  
Health Services.

GOLD

So you're familiar with the Texas  
Heartbeat Act and its provisions?

MONICA

I'm familiar with the medical  
realities it creates.

GOLD

Did you consider waiting for the  
ethics committee to meet?

MONICA

Dr. Patel said I had hours. Maybe  
less.

Gold approaches the stand, sensing he's losing the jury.

GOLD

The law exists to protect life.

MONICA

Whose life, Mr. Gold?

She meets his gaze, unflinching.

GOLD

The law in Texas is clear. You had  
legal alternatives.

MONICA

While I was hemorrhaging?

GOLD

The statute provides a process--

MONICA

A process written by men who've  
never felt their own body betraying  
them. Never had to decide between  
their life and--

GOLD

The legislature determined--

MONICA

The legislature wasn't bleeding out  
on that hospital bed. I was.

GOLD

Texas law exists to prevent exactly  
this kind of individual override  
of--

MONICA

Texas law exists to control women's  
bodies without understanding what  
we endure.

GOLD

Your feelings don't invalidate the  
law.

MONICA

And the law doesn't invalidate my  
right to survive.

Gold stares at her, then at the jury. He turns to leave, then  
pivots back for one final Hail Mary--

GOLD

The law may be imperfect, Ms.  
Michaels. But it's still the law.

He returns to his table.

GOLD (CONT'D)

Nothing further, Your Honor.

JUDGE MACCIANO

The jury will now retire to  
deliberate.

INT. JURY DELIBERATION ROOM - LATER

Twelve jurors sit around a table. Sarah Bennett stands by the  
window, silent as others debate.

FOREPERSON

The law's clear. She knowingly  
violated--

OLDER JUROR

The law provides exceptions for  
life-threatening conditions.

MALE JUROR

Which weren't documented properly.

Sarah Bennett finally speaks, her voice quiet but commanding.

SARAH

My sister was a patient at Austin Memorial three months ago. Same condition. Same committee.

She removes the pin from her lapel - a tiny photo ID badge.

SARAH (CONT'D)

She followed every protocol. Waited for committee approval. By the time they decided, sepsis had reached her organs... and now she's dead.

The room falls silent.

FOREPERSON

I'm sorry for your loss, but we still have to follow the law.

SARAH

The necessity defense is part of that law. When there's no legal alternative that arrives in time, necessity becomes a valid defense.

She looks around the room.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Don't make this about politics. It's about a mother trying to survive for her daughter.

INT. COURTROOM - EVENING

The jury files in. Sarah Bennett's eyes meet Monica's briefly.

Monica grips Jenkins' hand. In the gallery, Dr. Patel watches intently, palms pressed together as if praying.

JUDGE MACCIANO

Has the jury reached a verdict?

FOREPERSON

We have, Your Honor.

A palpable tension fills the air. Wade shifts in his seat, his cross pin glinting in the fluorescent light.

FOREPERSON (CONT'D)  
On the count of violating the Texas  
Heartbeat Act, we find the  
defendant, Monica Michaels...

The clock TICKS. Monica closes her eyes.

FOREPERSON (CONT'D)  
Not guilty.

The gallery ERUPTS. Gold stares at his hands.

Through tears, Monica turns to Kady in the gallery - but her  
daughter's seat is empty.

INT. COURTHOUSE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Monica finds Kady standing by a window, the warm sunset light  
filtering through behind her.

MONICA  
Honey?

KADY  
I couldn't tell you before. I  
was... I am...

She doesn't need to finish. Monica sees the truth in her  
eyes, in the way her hand rests on her stomach.

MONICA  
When?

KADY  
Last month. I was scared to--

Monica pulls her daughter close.

MONICA  
Whatever you choose... it's your  
choice. Your life.

KADY  
That's what I learned from you.

INT. COURTHOUSE LOBBY - SUNSET

Hand in hand, Monica and Kady prepare to leave as Sarah  
Bennett approaches them.

SARAH  
Ms. Michaels?

Monica turns, recognizes her.

MONICA  
Juror number four.

SARAH  
Dr. Sarah Bennett. I just wanted to  
say... thank you.

MONICA  
For what?

Sarah touches her lapel pin.

SARAH  
For reminding me why my sister  
became a doctor. Why I did too.

Monica takes her hand briefly. A moment of understanding  
passes between them.

EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS - CONTINUOUS

The three women emerge into golden evening light. As they  
descend the steps, a YOUNG PREGNANT WOMAN approaches  
hesitantly.

YOUNG WOMAN  
Excuse me... are you Monica? From  
the clinic? They said I should ask  
for you.

Monica nods.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)  
I need help. I don't know what to  
do.

Monica exchanges glances with Sarah and Kady. Then she turns  
to the young woman.

MONICA  
Let's talk. Whatever you decide,  
it's your choice.

The four women walk together as the sun finally sets behind  
them, their shadows stretching and then disappearing, but  
their faces are illuminated by the moonlight above.

FADE OUT.

THE END