

An Eye For An Eye
By Clare Lauren Kelly

When the flat bladed chisel sinks deep into Omar's upper leg through the fabric of his pants, the ear piercing scream brings a slight smile to Jacob's face, then the hammer is pulled free smoothly and followed by a spurt of blood. Once the blade of the chisel is free of the new hole in Omar's leg, the hammer is then readied in the air for another blow.

"You tortured me...and my men...for days. It did not matter to you whether or not we would give up useful information. All you wanted was to hurt us because you, Omar, enjoy causing pain and watching people suffer. I might not have the time, or the experience to match the expertise you showed, but I am more than happy to try." The soft raspy voice is devoid of emotion just like Jacob's scarred face is, and the hammer is held aloft still, ready to be brought down chisel first once again. "No matter how loud you scream Omar, no one will come to help you. So please, don't hold back any sound. I want to hear you. Janik and Remmick would like to hear you scream as well, it's only fair after all you did to us."

The hammer is held in the air for a moment with blood dripping steadily off the chisel end, while Jacob watches the pain and fear prominently displayed on Omar's face, writhing in the sturdy chair he has been expertly lashed to. For a moment Jacob simply watches Omar who is staring back in terror, then the chisel is sinking into the flesh of Omar's other upper leg, causing another deafening scream to be ripped from Omar's lungs. The half smile on Jacob's face has grown slightly into a more full one as the hammer is again removed from Omar's leg, but instead of raising it once more it is held by Jacob's side instead as he turns towards where a small table is set up off to the side with a man standing next to it, watching with an unsettling grin stretching his lips wide, made even more unnerving by the way his teeth are bared showing the pronounced and slightly pointed canine teeth.

"Janik, simple bandages around the puncture wounds please, just enough to stop the bleeding. It would be rather unfortunate if Omar were to bleed out before I've had the chance to offer him the same hospitality he showed to us, and I know you would be disappointed as well if this ended sooner than planned." With that Jacob is walking away from the crying and gasping

Omar towards the small table Janik is standing next to and as he reaches it, Janik is moving towards the chair with a metal box held in one hand.

Jacob sets the brick hammer back on the crowded table with blood forming a small pool under the flat pointed side of it, and he takes a moment to look over the clean tools that neatly fill the table's surface. Behind him Janik is kneeling in front of the bound Omar, not very gently holding gauze against one of the puncture wounds while wrapping a clean bandage around the leg to hold the gauze firmly in place to stop the bleeding. As soon as one of the wounds is covered, Janik quickly begins wrapping the second puncture wound just as tightly while Omar whimpers quietly in pain from the pressure to his damaged legs.

Once Janik has finished bandaging the wounds he stands up and returns to his place next to the table while Jacob has picked a pair of pliers off the table before turning to walk back to where Omar sits. Holding the pliers where Omar can see, Jacob stops in front of the chair and stands still for a moment before tilting his head to one side, looking at Omar like he is trying to decide something while his empty hand taps a slow rhythm against his leg. The tapping gets faster for a moment before slowing back down, and once it has become even once more Jacob's voice breaks the silence.

"After the time my men and I spent being tortured by you each day, there is a lot that I learned from you on the techniques that work the best, the injuries that hurt the worst, and all the different types of pain someone can be put through. I remember you seemed particularly fond of removing toenails, fingernails, and teeth by ripping them out with pliers and collecting what you pulled out in your jars. Three of them, one for the fingernails, one for toenails, and one for teeth. I never understood why you collected them since there is no possible use for them unless they are to be used as proof of life or something similar, but you seemed to enjoy the screaming more than anything else." With that Jacob takes a step forward and immediately Omar is trying to move back away from him, but tight ropes keep him secured to the chair bolted to the floor and a quick signal with Jacob's free hand has Janik stepping forward quickly.

Once Janik reaches them he immediately grabs hold of Omar's head and starts to pry open his mouth with one hand and pinches Omar's nose shut to force his mouth open for air. As soon as Omar gasps for breath, Janik holds on tighter to keep Omar's head still and does not

remove the hand cutting off the possible airflow through the nose, forcing Omar to keep his mouth open in order to keep breathing. With Omar's mouth open and head held in place, Jacob moves closer with one hand resting on the side of the gasping mans face, while the other carefully works the pliers into the open mouth towards the molars of the lower jaw in the back. Taking hold of a tooth with pliers, Jacob stares blankly at the fear and pain in eyes for a moment before shifting to look back to the pliers he is holding steady clamped on a tooth.

“I wonder if I should remove all of your teeth or only some of them, because while I would like to hear you cry out in pain at each tooth pulled from your jaw, there are many other things I want to try.” With that the grip on the pliers is tightened and with a firm pull the tooth is ripped from Omar's mouth along with a broken scream as blood begins to pool slowly in his mouth then drip from the corners.

Looking for a moment at the tooth held in the pliers jaws, Jacob then lets the tooth fall to the floor before moving the pliers back into Omar's open mouth to get a grip on a molar on the other side of the lower jaw. “It would be good to pull at least one more I would think, make sure it is even. Deep breath now Omar, I'll be sure to pull it quick.” The pliers jaws close around another molar and while Jacob is carefully watching the pliers and teeth, Janik is keeping his grip tight on Omar's head and nose with an unsettling grin, eyes lit up in joy. Then Jacob's grip on the pliers is tightening and a smooth jerk pulls the second tooth out of Omar's jaw, another small trickle of blood beginning to spill out the corner of his mouth.

One Year Ago

Jacob sits in a small room strapped to a chair with a dark cloth covering his eyes and another shoved in his mouth with a knot in the center to render Jacob unable to talk, while a man is busy at a messy table behind where Jacob is sitting. After some time the man moves into the light in front of Jacob, removing the blindfold and letting it fall on the floor, but leaving the gag in place and smiling unkindly as soon as Jacob stops blinking to adjust to the light. Jacob does nothing but stare at the man in front of him, resisting the urge to look around the room or try to break free from the ropes tying him down to the chair.

“You are a tough one aren’t you? Much tougher than most of your men for sure, one of the tougher ones I’ve worked with before, and I don’t think I’ll meet too many more like you, you are a rare leader. The kind that other men follow willingly, one who will be there in the dirt with his men taking the risks and the injuries that come with the job, it’s going to be fun getting to work you over and break you.” The man’s voice is unnervingly cheerful for the situation and Jacob does nothing but stare at the man while keeping all the emotion he can off his face to give nothing away at the taunts from the other man. When Jacob says and does nothing, the other man smiles widely and starts to laugh while shaking his head for some time before taking a few steps closer to where Jacob is sitting, still chucking slightly.

The man moves his free hand open flat towards Jacob’s face, but instead of slapping him the hand stops just shy of Jacob’s cheek, instead removing the cloth gag and letting it fall to the floor where the blindfold is. “My name is Omar, and now that you know my name it would only be polite for you to share your name with me as well.” While Omar looks expectantly at Jacob, all Jacob does is stare back at Omar with a disinterested look on his face and take in a few deeper breaths without the cloth blocking his airway.

Omar shakes his head while clicking his tongue with an overly dramatic disappointed look on his face, and this time when his hand moves it makes contact as a closed fist with the side of Jacob’s face, causing Jacob’s head to snap to one side from the force. Not letting out any sound or giving any response, Jacob simply shifts back to how he had been sitting before and goes back to staring Omar in the eyes. Omar lets out an angry huff before bringing his closed fist back up and lands another solid hit to the same spot snapping Jacob’s head to the side once more, but before Jacob can shift back to a neutral position the other hand is coming around the force of the blow forces Jacob’s head the other way and a small bit of red blood drips from the corner of his mouth onto his lap.

“Now that isn’t very polite, all I asked was your name and I even gave you mine. So let us try that again, your name.” Again Jacob does nothing but stare Omar in the eyes with no emotion readable on his face, but now there is a small line of red from the corner of his mouth down the face and dripping steadily into Jacob’s lap. At the lack of a response from Jacob, Omar huffs angrily again before his fist is smashing into Jacob’s stomach doubling him over as the air

is forced from his lungs, and before he can draw air back into his body a fist is connecting with his jaw. The impact sends Jacob's head snapping to one side and a cough is driven out of him as he is struggling to draw air back into his lungs, but two more hits to the face make him cough more and spit blood onto the floor.

Omar is breathing heavily, anger clear on his face while Jacob is struggling to take in the air he needs, and after a few moments filled only by the sound Omar's heavy breathing and Jacob's struggle for air, Omar turns away from Jacob and moves towards a door in the wall. Once the door is open Omar is calling out to someone in a language Jacob doesn't understand and as soon as he finishes yelling through the open door, Omar turns back into the room and moves towards the messy table in the corner without closing the door. For several minutes Jacob sits breathing heavily in the chair with blood dripping onto his lap and the floor while Omar is looking through the things on top of the table. Finally there are footsteps approaching the room along with the sound of something being dragged along before two men enter through the door dragging a third man wearing a hood between them.

The third man is thrown the floor in front of Jacob then pulled upright onto his knees, his hands are tied firmly behind his back and Omar is walking around the men to stand behind him. He stands still in the quiet room looking at Jacob for a moment with a cruel smile on his face before pulling off the hood and dropping it to the floor. With the hood gone the man blinks trying to adjust to the sudden light before looking around the room and focusing on Jacob sitting in front of him after a moment while Omar is standing behind the kneeling man watching Jacob with a smile still spread across his face. Jacob and the man make eye contact and a look of recognition passes through the mans eyes as he shifts a little to test the ropes holding his arms behind his back then stops fidgeting with one shoulder raised slightly.

“Now Remmick here was polite enough to give me his name when I asked and offered my own, and as one of your men I am assuming he learned much from you on how to act. Your man here gave me his name, so why won't you give me yours? I did ask you nicely the first time after all.” Omar has a hand in one of the front pockets of his pants while the other is resting on the top of Remmick's head with a loose grip on the somewhat long brown hair, and the two men that brought Remmick in have moved back out of the way.

For a moment no one says or does anything until Jacob spits some blood onto the floor, gives Remmick a small almost imperceptible nod and looks up to meet Omar's eyes. "You know his name, not because you asked him nicely and offered your own, but because you whipped him across the back until he would answer you, just to make the whipping stop. The way he holds himself makes it clear where his new injuries are along with the darker patches on the back of his shirt where the blood dried, there are not too many things that would cause those injuries and no serious problems. Whip me all you want, I will not tell you my name." Anger flashes in Omar's eyes as his nostrils flair and he steps forwards with his fist slamming into Jacob's stomach making the man double over slightly and gasp for air.

"Well it is a good thing that you are not the only one that could tell me your name, and I know that if I whip Remmick some more then he will tell me your name, and even after giving me your name I might not stop whipping him right away because you decided to be stubborn. So your men will suffer for it, which I think is only fair. The choice you have is to tell me your name, or watch while I whip Remmick right in front of you and maybe worse until he tells me your name. And since you have refused to give it, if Remmick is loyal to you then he will try and hold out as long as he can until the pain is too much for him to take any longer and he has no other choice. So it is up to you, tell me your name or watch me whip your men one at a time in front of you until they either pass out from the pain or give your name." As if to show he is serious, Omar nearly rips Remmick's shirt off and throws it to the floor, then pulls a whip from where it was tucked into his belt and strikes out three lashes onto Remmick's bare back, pulling screams muffled by the gag from the kneeling man.

After the three lashes Omar stops and looks to Jacob who is watching near emotionlessly, but once he is able to look up to meet Jacob's eyes, Remmick can see the barely restrained anger in the eyes and extra stiff posture of his leader. Shaking his head slightly at his boss, Remmick straightens his posture while raising his head defiantly and trying to steady his breathing as each movement pulls at the open lines across his back. When Jacob says nothing, Omar starts to huff angrily and brings up the whip to lash out harder at Remmick's bleeding back again and again, until the only reason Remmick is still somewhat upright is because of the two other men who had stepped forward and are holding him in the kneeling position.

Less than five minutes later and Remmick is no longer conscious and Omar has stopped whipping the unconscious man, gesturing for the two men to drag Remmick's limp body out of the room. As soon as Jacob and Omar are the only two left in the room, Omar moves towards Jacob breathing heavily dropping the whip to the floor and pulling a knife from his pocket, before roughly cutting the shirt off and pulling the torn fabric away and to the floor. The knife is returned to the pocket and Omar bends down to retrieve the whip then immediately begins to lash out with the whip and land hit after hit on Jacob's bare torso. Soon there are lines of bright red blood crossing Jacob's torso and Omar does not stop, landing hit after hit and Jacob is no longer able to hold back the pained grunts at each strike. Despite the pain and his inability to keep the pain off his face and the noises in, Jacob says nothing and Omar continues to land hit after hit on Jacob's bare and bloody torso. Around seven minutes pass and there is a growing puddle of blood on the floor under Jacob's chair, before he finally gives in after three particularly hard strikes with the whip.

"Jacob. My name is Jacob." He manages to get out between gasping for air and grunts of pain and the whip lands three more times before Omar stops and lets the whip fall to the blood spotted floor while smiling at Jacob. The coppery scent of blood fills the small room almost making Jacob choke on it while his torso is shaking, the ripped up skin covering muscles and bone twitching and quivering, covered in deep crisscrossing lines of blood across Jacob's tattered and torn flesh.

"See, now that wasn't so hard was it? Now we can really get started Jacob, seeing how we are no longer strangers, and I will only say this once. If you decide it is better to be stubborn, I might just have to bring in your men one at a time and make you watch while I take my time until they pass out and the next one is brought in." Omar smiles condescendingly at Jacob and moves towards the table and looking things over for quick moment. As soon as he has decided on what to grab, Omar turns back around and returns with a large glass of a very pale blue liquid that he immediately starts to pour over all of the sluggishly bleeding but deep wounds covering Jacob's front.

As the hydrogen peroxide runs down his chest and into all of the cuts from the whip, Jacob's breathing speeds up as he shifts in the chair trying to keep himself from screaming or

reacting too much to the new pain shooting through him while Omar still watches, smiling unpleasantly. “I have nothing to say to you.” It comes out nearly as a whisper, but it is clear that Omar heard him as the self satisfied smirk fades away to rage. Breathing strained Jacob looks up at Omar with hate in his eyes before he tries to sit up straight in the chair, wincing and twitching as each movement causes the hydrogen peroxide mixed with blood to move further down his chest through the mess of wounds. “Do whatever you want, I have nothing to say to you, and neither do my men.”

Present Day

Jacob is standing shirtless in front of the small table that is no longer clean or organized, blood covered tools laying in a heap, a nearly empty bottle of hydrogen peroxide laying on its side with a small puddle of pale blue liquid under it. The smell of burned flesh filling the room and smoke hanging in the air near the ceiling almost thick enough to choke on, Janik standing next to the little table still grinning unsettlingly, eyes fixed on the chair in the center of the room. Omar is sitting still lashed to the chair that has blood, puddles of various liquids, puss, burned bits of skin, chunk of hair, then some teeth and fingernails scattered around the chair.

Omar has chunks of hair missing from his head, the visible scalp looks raw and bloody, hair sticking up strange or flat in some places from the blood and other liquid while his head hangs low against his chest that is still rising and falling with each breath. His mouth can't close properly and there is heavy bruising on the right side of Omar's face and dried blood going down his chin and neck. His shirt is gone and there are burns concentrated on the left side of Omar's torso with shallow cuts spread out on the right side, while there is heavy damage to the fingers of his right hand and missing fingernails from the left hand. More blood is dried and pooled in Omar's lap covering the mostly intact pants that are stained beyond repair, and on the shoeless feet the right toes are missing their nails and the left foot is mangled and broken. The bandages covering the puncture wounds on the upper portion of each leg are now dark red from dried blood, most of which isn't from the wounds they are tightly wrapped around.

Jacob stands in front of the table still and his back is covered in burn melted skin long turned to strangely colored scars, a few scars made of straight lines across the shoulder blades the only thing breaking up the mass of burned skin. Hands resting by his side the fingers of the left hand are not quite straight and there are knots on the knuckles from where they had been broken and not allowed to be set properly to heal right. There are healed burns of melted red skin covering the entire right hand that is holding onto a small butane torch lighter with bits of blood splattered on Jacob's hands. After a moment and a deep steady breath, Jacob puts the torch lighter down near the pile of used tools covered in blood and other bodily fluids before taking another steady breath through his nose. Turning around with his right hand resting on the grip of the Heckler and Koch P2000 secured in a hip holster, Jacob looks at Omar in a detached way and stands still after he has turned to face the silently crying Omar.

Jacob's front is almost entirely covered in a crisscross of scars from being whipped repeatedly, cuts that had healed only to be opened again and skin that was damaged beyond repair by the hydrogen peroxide that had been poured over it. There is no portion of skin on the front of Jacob's torso that is smooth, every part is scarred in some way and the scars get worse the closer to his neck it goes, and where his nipples would be there is only scars from mangled flesh. Jacob is looking at Omar in a calculating way, but there is still nearly no emotion visible on his face, and then Jacob is taking a few steps forward to be directly in front of Omar who jerks his head up to meet the chilling stare from Jacob's dead eyes.

"Luckily for you, I do not have the time to keep you locked away here for the weeks to come, and so things will have to end here. The real question that must be answered now, is what to do with you now. Should I kill you? Would it be a kindness? Do I let you leave? Hand you over to some government or group that has been looking for you for their own reasons? To settle their own scores that have been sitting in the back of their minds ever since they first had the misfortune of meeting you. So many choices I have." Jacob's raspy voice and the emotionless monotone fill the room, the only sound breaking the silence that had been filling the small room since Jacob had stopped burning patches of Omar's skin.

Janik shifts his weight from his place near the small table and takes a couple of steps forward towards Jacob and Omar, the unexpected movement making Omar jerk his head to

watch the approaching man. Stopping next to Jacob, Janik leans down slightly to be more on height with his boss and speaks quietly into his ear, careful to not let Omar hear him.

“There are many who might be interested in getting a piece of him that is true boss, but you don't owe them anything and I know Remmick agrees with me, that you have every right to be the one to kill him. We got everything ready beforehand to properly dispose of his body once you were finished, and no one is going to connect this to us if they do somehow find what is left of his body.” The excitement and encouragement in Janik’s voice is clear, and Jacob can't help the small smile that tugs at the corner of his mouth while his dark eyes never leave the terrified Omar. After a moment Jacob glances at Janik and gives him a nod.

Almost as is he is speaking to himself Jacob speaks quietly, barely loud enough for Omar and Janik to hear despite how close they are in the small quiet room. “It is funny is it not? You enjoyed making us scream, you found joy in the use of these tools, but now they are used on you and that joy is no longer there. Comedy for one man, tragedy for another.”

Janik smiles even more and lets out a little laugh before responding just as quietly while making sure Omar can hear him. “And all the talk from Omar about pain being a necessary part of life, that without pain you can't know you're alive. Nonsense repeated does not become truth, no matter how much the idiot repeating it believes it to be true.”

Looking at Omar, Jacob takes a step forward while smoothly drawing his pistol, raising it to point at Omars head and keeps it there steady and still, never wavering in its aim. “Every time we say goodbye, you die a little, but there are no living parts of me left to die at this goodbye thanks to you. And now you will not have to worry about that either, not worry about pain, I'll end that suffering quickly. End your suffering happily, with a smile on my face.”

And with that Omar starts to thrash weakly against the rope that bind him to the chair to no avail, there is no breaking free, there is no escape, and the knowledge of this and what is to come has tears running endlessly down Omar’s cheeks as he cries and pleads for life in his broken voice. This all falls on deaf ears as Jacob stands still with the pistol aimed unwaveringly at Omar’s head while Janik stands behind his boss, disconcerting grin spread wide across his face and eyes wild. The door to the room is open and standing just inside the room blocking the way in or out arms across his chest is Remmick, eyes fixed unwaveringly on where Omar sits sobbing

with Jacob standing in front of him, right arm raised and hand gripping the pistol with the pointer finger resting lightly on the trigger.

“You should have killed me Omar. I don't make that same mistake, I ensure my enemies are dead. This is where it ends for you, and the blood may be on my hands, but I'll wear it forever happily.” And with that Jacob smiles, really smiles, and pulls the trigger.