

## The State Vs. Thomas Light

The Protomen

Thomas Light was picked up three days later in a beggars' cemetery. Emily Stanton had been buried there an hour earlier. She had no family. Her few acquaintances from the factory were busy covering the hole she'd left in their workforce. A few unmoving passages were read by a disaffected priest as her body was slowly lowered into the cold ground. No one but the men paid to cover her pine casket with earth heard his words. Even those were drowned out by the more urgent ones booming from the large television. An hour after the ceremony, Light stepped out of the tree line just beyond the grave. He staggered to the mound of freshly moved earth and fell to his knees, tears pouring from his eyes onto her grave. The police, too, had been waiting. He didn't resist. The trial began within the week. The media circus was phenomenal. The city saw a demon portrayed on the screen. Every shred of evidence was dissected and rebuilt to incriminate him. Constant news, facts, and rumors were forced upon and absorbed by the masses

Emily, the crowd has gathered here  
But it is not because of you  
Emily, the taste of blood in their mouths  
I can't imagine what they'll do  
But it doesn't matter what they'll do to me

Emily, they've forgotten you  
When they set their sights on me  
They will hang me from the rope tonight  
Will you be waiting there for me?

Will our souls remember where we said we'd meet  
On the way out of this town?  
I'm leaving one way or the other, Emily  
There's nothing left here for me now

Emily, it's so quiet now  
It's like the calm before a storm  
They will punish me for what he did to you  
But either way it's all my fault  
Cause I made the man who laid his hands on you  
And I would tear him down, but I feel like a dead man  
And what can a dead man do?

(This is not your fault)  
I'm leaving one way or the other, Emily  
(This is not your fault)  
There's nothing left here for me now

Turning his attention to the proceedings...

Here comes the blow  
We find the only man who loved her  
We find the only man who'd give his life to see her once again  
We find this man-  
(Not) Guilty...  
I am (Not) guilty...  
I am (Not) guilty!

The judge entered his chambers. The lawyers and jury filed out of the courtroom, leaving Light, a free man, sitting silently behind the defendant's table. The sound of the mob outside was deafening. Even from within the thickly marbled walls of the courthouse, their rage - their sense of injustice - were palpable.

Throughout the trial, the telescreen had told them that their judicial system would ultimately fail them, that the laws of the city were flawed, skewed to shelter monsters like Light, powerless to protect the people. Impotent. Weak. Dangerously out of touch with the times. Obviously, the screen had been telling the truth. Now, it was telling the masses that they would have to take matters into their own hands if justice was to be served