

Vengeance, (A Moldy Appetite)

James Riva

James Riva w38533
OCCC
One Administration Rd.
Bridgewater, MA 02324
J.R.R.

Revenge is the engine that reliably propels a significant portion of the population thru a vacuum- like life. Without revenge, most great literature, most movies, rap songs, and tabloid newspapers would collapse with out a whimper. Revenge is ancient and new. The Bible is loaded with it. Ancient works by Homer bank on it. It is clearly not the only thing that keeps the world spinning, but it certainly has a sizeable market share. Hate sustaineth, when all else has withered away.

When some condemned prisoner meets his end on the cross-like lethal injection table, there is an observation room with a huge Plexiglas window to allow the victim's survivors to witness the spectacle. They invariably hurl curses, gesticulate, and they always complain when it is over, "He didn't suffer enough." Maybe some condemned prisoners didn't suffer enough. Only God can accurately gauge how much the fellow suffered ~~ad~~ if it measures up to his sins and omissions. But considering my standpoint in life, (in prison for 30 years straight) I'm guessing that the condemned prisoner, at least in most instances, did suffer enough.

Perhaps the way he died was not particularly painful, but I can assure you that all of the torment and torture that the state put upon him leading up to that lethal injection was indeed painful.

I'm not even ^{taking} ~~taken~~ the stance that capital punishment is wrong. I do believe it is often not judiciously applied, but I'm not making a blanket condemnation of the practice. It is a penalty that cannot be corrected if, after the fact, DNA or some other equally convincing evidence provides the fellow innocent. It is also statistically proven to be applied, (sometimes wrongly) on the basis of race and to a lesser extent, socio economic stratification. Its one saving grace is that it partially satiates the human appetite for revenge, so it has value.

Revenge is legitimate. It incorporates the emotions of sorrow, hate, anger, fear, and lost love- then magically converts that unpleasantness into an act of condoned violence. What better violence is there then socially condoned violence?

I think sometimes that revenge can be excessive and almost always, sublimation for the wronged party's other emotional damage- unrelated to loss or injury at the hands of the criminal.

It took me decades of in-prison psychotherapy to discover, that sadism is enjoyed by people other than those considered deviants. I am not sure what the origins are of such a seemingly unnatural desire, but I have witnessed, on more occasions than I would like, the gleeful indulgence of prisoners and prison staff in

sadism under the guise of dispensing justice, and I do not exclude myself, because I have participated in sadism on more occasions than I would like to admit.

Punishing rat's, pedophiles, thieves, murderers, or just wimpy young kids for the crime of being wimpy is often the bill of fare. Prison officials, although certainly not all of them, indulge luxuriantly in sadism.

One such torture, (and very effective) is to disrupt the mail. Have you any idea just how significant mail is to a prisoner? It is just about his only link to the world. Imagine having most of it- both incoming and outgoing- disappeared. Imagine complaining to postal authorities, only to be told it's not their responsibility. Imagine prison officials goading you in that they can do this with impunity until you die.

But there are other tortures. Perhaps you might not think that a little sand in your potatoes or in your beans is bad. Just don't eat it- you might say.

But what if there was a little sand in your food every day for ten years? How about twenty years? 30? Bear in mind that prison dentists often make "mistakes." Lots of snaggle toothed inmates, Ayup!

Surely you have heard of "the hole." You know, solitary confinement. The movies always portray it as a tiny room with a mattress and no light. But what if it was a room with twenty-four hour continuous bright light? What if the walls, floor and bed were crusted with blood, snot, and shit? What if there was no running water in the cell? (They shut it off) And of course, they might come in and rough you up for sport or vengeance?

You can justify a lot of depraved vengeful acts if you try. The fellow is a murderer, or a rapist or he spit at someone- whatever the excuse- the punisher often enjoys- with libidinous thrill, the act of punishing so much that he will seek out an excuse to do so.

Vengeance has its utility in a civilization. It can promote patriotism and fight for the common good. It can deter crime. It can galvanize the voting public to agree on some type of retribution. But vengeance can also become a cancer that infects large segments of the populace.

Like I said, and I do not want to disclose my own acts of vengeance, I am not exempt from the illness. You would be hard pressed to find a long-term prisoner who does not harbor hatred and a desire for revenge on his tormentors. But unlike most vengeful people, I am keenly aware that it is a cancer. By luck or circumstance I am one of those people that God has decreed will never have any power. I do not have the luxury of gratifying desires for revenge. Conversely, virtually anyone who so desires revenge on me can actually get his wish. In my religion, we can only fight to please God- not to gratify desires of revenge or to enjoy a sadistic moment. Altruistic as that might seem, it is not an impossible personality trait to adopt.

Even vengeful pranks can have disastrous consequences. There was once a correction officer, (he passed away many years ago) that, ^{was} in my opinion, loved the misery of others a little too much and he was strong- and he sometimes did a little beat down on someone's head. He liked me, so I was never his victim.

One day around the fourth of July I discovered a few intact firecrackers in the prison yard. Some officers had been reveling the night before and dropped a few in the dark. I put them in my pocket.

I wondered what I could do with this really cool acquisition. The officer, who has since passed away, was in the control booth, feet up, reading the Sunday paper. A low intelligence prisoner was begging that officer- face pressed against the cage, for a donut and some coffee, (he had about ten donuts in a box). The officer ignored him and read the paper. With out thinking things thru I placed a firecracker thru the cage and touched a little cigarette to the fuse and tiptoed into another room. I watched thru the window. BANG! The officer-leaped up- patted himself all over his chest to see if he'd been shot, and charged out of the control booth to the low intelligence prisoner who was sill begging for a donut and coffee as if nothing happened. He beat him unconscious and kept beating his face which looked like ground chuck at this point. I watched, wringing my hands, too scared to own up to my stupid prank. I yelled, (his name) STOP! You're fucking going to kill him!" He let him drop to the floor. A vengeful prank that cost some poor guy three teeth.

Even if you know that you're justified in exacting revenge, and it feels right, how do you know how to measure out what you are doing? What if the guy you think lit the firecracker didn't do it, and now he's got no front teeth?

What if the guy who lit the firecracker owned up to it? How much pain should be exacted in order to gratify the aggrieved party? Again, I say that when it come to vengeance, only God has the accurate yardstick to measure who gets what and how much and how long.

I'm not saying that there should be no retributions for crimes and misdeeds. Certainly civilization would disintegrate without punishment for crimes and with out penalties for misdeeds. What I am saying is that sometimes there is too much libidinous thrill in meting out punishment, (as God's vicegerents) and when it becomes a pleasurable activity, people might be inclined to make excuses in order to enjoy punishing again.

More over a lot of these criminals on the receiving end of these punishments were themselves victims at some stage in their development and grew up with skewed reference points.

I Have seen so very many mentally ill prisoners who have killed because of mental illness and not some criminal motive- whether it was to protect themselves or even the country from some imaginary danger that seemed real at the time- receive so much hatred for decades that I know that hate sustaineth.

I know of a man that deliberately amputated his right arm on a train track- got acquitted by reason of insanity for murder- became rendered harmless after all violent impulses were conditioned out of him- stay locked away for 30 years for a murder he committed in that state of insanity- no chance for release- his violence has been conditioned out of him- pure hatred from the victim's family for what he did. They know he wasn't in his right mind, yet more that 30 years later, they insist he stay locked away until he dies. Vengeance, fueled by intense hatred.

24

^{There}
They are countless examples where men and women have been thrust into complex situations where fear, anger, desperation have caused them to branch into extreme deviance. ~~have caused them to branch into extreme deviance.~~ I'm not condoning murder. What I'm saying is that before you condemn that criminal to death or life without parole- perhaps you could investigate if the deviance has a human etiology. What's wrong with the guy who killed his wife getting 20 years instead of life (or death)? Maybe with divorce pending, and the custody battle, and her new boyfriend the poor guy was just overwhelmed. That's a common crime seen in human etiology. Why do we have to completely destroy someone who lost control under those types of circumstances? That's just an example and ~~certainly~~ ^{certainly} the formula doesn't plug into every case.

But all you who hunger for vengeance, the mechanism already exists. These prisons do punish. These prisons do hurt. Whether the prisoners waited 10 years before being executed or 20; most likely he did suffer enough; it was just done outside the public scrutiny. I will tell you this- torture does not make good rehabilitation when the punisher is quite obviously gleeful about his task. Revenge is perhaps a dish served less often and with less relish.

^{best}

James Riva W38533
0000
One Administration Rd.
Bridgewater, MA 02324