

Tenzin,

First, my condolences for the loss of someone you liked and appreciated. If I erred too much toward my negative views of Whispers (William Goehler), well, I should also say I found many things to like and appreciate in him as well. For prison acquaintanceships, he was about as close to a "friend" as most can get, at least for me. As my post showed, I had mixed feelings, for a number of reasons, but my choosing to post that at all (and hopefully to draw some attention to his posts from people who may see mine) should say something in itself. So far as I knew him, which wasn't tremendously far, I liked him certainly more than I like most others here, and a number of people I like quite a lot also really liked him. I don't believe they post to BTR so I won't say their names. Point is, he certainly had friends, even among some he didn't always treat with total kindness... and he and I got along. We had some quite interesting, long conversations, even. I think you might be surprised at some of what he told me.

Second, I apologize for linking you with him as having "troll tendencies". It was unkind, but you know very well (I'd hope) why I've occasionally shot a barb or two your way. For the most part I think they've not been undeserved, but they also make me feel small and petty, because personal attacks/insults almost always are (I'm no Mark Twain or Ambrose Bierce or Oscar Wilde, people who, if anything, ~~had~~ honored those they insulted, simply by the quality of their ~~to~~ jibes and jeers). I now feel the need to clarify a bit about why I said Whispers had a touch of the "troll" in him. I honestly believe he'd readily, even proudly, agree with me. Whispers took some pleasure in baiting people. Not always, just sometimes. I'm thinking of one person in particular, one of maybe 2 or 3 total I'd call an actual friend. This friend is, well... gosh, how to put it? Eminently baitable? Something like that. Whispers knew how to push his buttons, and frequently did so. I once asked him, privately, why on earth he was so mean to this guy, our mutual friend (and make no mistake, this guy absolutely considered Whispers a friend, which to me made the trolling/instigating all the more galling). Whispers told me, with no hint of irony, that he did it because our friend "needs to get angry". Whispers believed he did the guy a favor by pushing him too far then a bit farther... he literally wanted our friend to snap at him. ~~To~~ To get loud, to curse him, whatever. Of course, Whispers had no fear of being hurt by the other guy, physically there was just no comparison and besides, the guy, even if he did get mad, just isn't the sort to, say, grab a rock and smash someone. Not yet,

anyway. The thing is, I don't totally disagree with Whispers' assessment. I think he may have had a point. Some ppl may need to be needled and pushed for their own good, not that EVERYONE must be a fighter, but there's something to be said for a willingness to at least speak up for oneself rather than just absorbing abuse. Whispers' way isn't the way I'd choose, but I get his goal, assuming he was being sincere. That's where I fear the troll tendency may have come in... did he really care about "toughening up" our friend, or helping him "get in touch with his emotions" (this is how Whispers put it to me), or was he just taking ~~advantage~~ ^{advantage} of an opportunity to verbally smack around someone he was sure would never strike back? To this day, I really don't know.

He baited in other ways too, and these I generally do not hold against him. Toward ppl he deemed too "prudish", or too self-righteous (no shortage of these in prisons), he could be outrageously and often hilariously provocative, in both common senses of the word. I don't know what he shared here so I'll be respectful of his privacy and his right to control his image, but he certainly knew how to make others uncomfortable. Come to think of it, that may be part of why he and I got along... perhaps he liked that I wasn't easily offended nor intimidated? What I mean is, he and I talked on a level that neither of us interacted on with others very often. Radically different ppl, he and I, for sure, but we could appreciate aspects of one another, I think, that many others never even perceived, much less ~~understood~~ ^{understood} or appreciated. This is why I have some guilt now over my failures ^{to fully} perceive what should have been an obvious ocean of greater complexity behind the cartoonish ~~facade~~ ^{facade} he cultivated in these fucking forsaken gulags.

I admit I did not ever see the side of him you describe him revealing on this site, e.g. the deep changes and blossoming trust in humanity. The Whispers I spoke with had a lot of cynicism and rage, outlooks I can certainly relate to, but between the two of us, I think he'd deem me the naive optimist and himself the more calculating realist. But as they say, we all contain multitudes, don't we? Whispers perhaps more than most.

The barb toward you, I wish you'd understand, was an expression of the frustration, even anger, I feel from being so harshly judged by people — you, in this case — who do not know me at all, and even less the people and circumstances involved in my life and this condition. I resent your entitled sense of right to relegate others you don't know at all — my closest friends, in some cases — to a victim status they neither claim nor want but which indulges your worldview. In the context of the history of your ~~posts~~ ^{comments} on my posts, I simply wish you'd either mind your own business **OR** bother to try learning something ^{about} the specific business in which you involve yourself. I generally do not care whether you respond to my posts or not, and if you only intend to be hurtful or misleading; strongly prefer that you don't. That said, I appreciate your contributions here. From you, I learned a bit more about Mr. Guehler myself, and ^{they are things} ~~things that~~ may make me a bit better going forward as well. Thanks for that. — Dmitri