

Life Sentence

“Let the punishment fit the crime”, is a paradigm we humans have been clinging to for a long-ass time. It frustrates us, because it is, in worldly reality, utterly, awkwardly, unenforceable. Those that talk of “restorative justice”, are, maybe, only a little closer, but even if the emphasis is on compensation for the victim, and rehabilitation for the perpetrator, we're still left with a troublesome subject for measure.

Pain is not something that can be sized up, with meters. Distance, at first glance, seems so very simple, yet, when we go either too big, or too small, we suddenly lack the laws of science and math for accuracy. As time and gravity remain well beyond our ken, we desperately reach for an explanation of what life actually is. But life in prison? That's a phrase that gets tossed around all the time.

I say this, because right alongside the ugly, “why did you stay?”, it's a question I get a lot: “why didn't you just let the state hang him?”

Why?

Punishment and justice are uneasy allies, at best. His trials did not thrill me, nor did they seem fair, to me, and no fraction of it absolved him, from a single one of his sins against me. It was partisan, dishonest, pointless, reckless, and random, with an offensive glaze of faulty reason, just as his trials of me. His disorganized abuse degenerated my, I dunno, self? This witch hunt degenerated his.

Not that he didn't take the opportunity to learn. Jail, for example, is an incredibly rich, educational experience, to be sure...

When he first arrived, in the pre-trial, felon wing of South Central Regional Jail, in Charleston, West Virginia, it had only been a few hours since his first mug-shot appearance on the evening news, and he was faced with a rather intimidating expectation. These men were hating him as if he had done that newsworthy shit. Don't worry, by the end of his stay, it was well known that he was nothing more than a benevolent beater, a firm, but loving, husband, not that lunatic character the press had created. But, during the first week, as other inmates threatened him, against the vocal objection of my own attorney, I allowed his eager lawyer to release my statement of his innocence to the press. He was able to take control of the pod when my television appearances gave him just the dazzling little boost that he needed. His own dazzle accomplished the rest. And oh, he was a righteous leader, a skilled negotiator, defender of the weak, guardian of order. He refrained from victimizing anybody he was in with. Funny, that he treated his fellow inmates with more respect than he did me, whatever his reasons.

All that aside, could anyone really believe that I would enjoy seeing my husband lynched by a bunch of ignorant, xenophobic morons? As if that would be, in any way, the same as what he did to me? And how do you dare to even presume what I think 'fitting' would be? But that's right, it wasn't wife v husband, it was State v perp. It didn't gain the state any dignity, though. And it yielded nothing but grief for me and his children...and him, and the whole, fucking family. Although his imprisonment had a character of abuse, his experience did NOT increase his empathy for me, not one single bit. If anything, I *lost* the moral high-ground in the suggestion that I had something to gain from his suffering and/or humiliation. Thank you, Jackson County, with a nod to the Duluth Model PhD's, for destroying my attempts to communicate with this man and, in so doing, reconcile with this man, and convince him to set us all free from his hierarchy. I'm not suggesting that it would have worked, but regardless, you hindered me...you did not help, with your, how-to's, and FAQ's, and your, "hurting the semi-sentient woman, is a greater crime than hurting someone with a brain", bullshit. Thank you for lying that you

could peg me, or peg a “crime” against me, and in so doing, setting me up to expose you. Come on, you had already punished me for that, all those years ago. And now? What more do you intend to take from me? All that's left to take from me is my “life”, my real life, not the one you can put in detention. And, well, I keep that life on me, every second of every day, so, it's never without some protection.

I wish I could report, honestly, that there was never any hint of lover’s revenge to anything I ever did. I would also like to say that I am a perfect pacifist, and was never the least bit satisfied about anything unpleasant that he experienced...but I can’t. In my defense, though, lover’s revenge is supposed to be directed by the lover...but sometimes, things get out of hand. Nevertheless, the argument with him was mine, I didn’t want or even ask for their soldiers, it was not their battle, nor were they loyal to me, nor were they loyal to my cause.

I left him, years later, and on my own accord. I can assure you, that it does NOT mean that I decided you all were right. To this day, seeing him suffer is not my cherished outcome. I would like to see him live, and never do this again. He's not brainless, and although, perhaps, immoral, certainly not amoral. Why didn't you, and don't you, now, try to convince him? I tried and failed, and I don’t want to listen anymore, but how about you, society?! Convince, I said, not order, or punish. And yes, fuck you, there ARE ways to convince people without punishing them. And, as a matter of fact, used on wild-eyed animals like him, (and me) punishment only molds loathing....but, of course, I can't speak for everyone.

But speaking of myself? Nevermind the time I spent in jail. As wild-eyed as I am, the hundreds of hours that I was forced to spend in Court were an exquisite sentence, all by themselves. The whole process of being called to, preparing for, and going to Court, feels like rape, on a good day, but I was #metoo'd, hard, publicly and repeatedly. How was it sexual harassment? Well, it climaxed, in the

kidnapping of my children, for “life”, on weird, wild grounds that, well, for lack of a finer point to put on it, I Have Sex Wrong.

I have sex without deodorant, I have sex without razors, I have sex while prohibited from so doing by standing court order. I have sex with, so, oh so, very much the wrong people, when I do. I have sex without doctors, before or after. And, is not, after all, giving birth, the most important act of sexual joy that The Man, wants to steal from Woman? He guards it, dearly, but I stole it back, well, almost, well, at least a good portion. And during all of my sordid communions, I was promoting the wrong economy, with the wrong political system. And, at the peak of my orgasm, I cried out...to the glory of the wrong god. There was no room, no corner of my life, in which I was not leered at and molested by my enemies...all of them. And they shared their intel, believe me.

Still not convinced that it was sexual humiliation? Do you know how many times I got to look at 45 Color Photographs of my injured body? Oh, so you really think that the story would have been so titilating if it weren't for the naked picture of my left breast? (The same one that I would end conversations with lawyers by saying, “...and as long as we're still talking about it, go ahead and tell Judge TCE3 that he can fucking suck it!”)

Shall I continue? OK.

Whilst in state custody (thanks, Dad, and your attorney, I mean, attorneys...ahem...) I was finally taken to the doctor they claimed I wouldn't see. In the waiting room at Women's and Children's, I was made to sit, with Mom's and children, in full orange and gravid, hands cuffed with a cave-woman-like guard, chewing her gum, and acting like it was necessary. When the hapless intern said they'd normally do a pap, I stated that, No, no way in hell I was gonna put my feet in stirrups with my hands in cuffs. And, contrary to belief, I was not accostomed to it. And the only, “birth in chains” would have been the one I

would have suffered if I'd gotten out just a few weeks later than I did.

More? Oh yeah, there's more.

For thirteen months, they held on to every scrap of mine and the husband's stored data - on phones, computers, cameras, cds, and photographs, and a "two page, hand written note". They listened to our phone calls, and had our lawyers read our mail. No journals, though. I really couldn't afford, at that time, to "speak" so freely. They made copies of it all...oh, yes, and a naked home-birth photo of me and my son, somehow made its way on to Pinterest, during its time in their custody. That's only one of the #cyber-bullyingsucks, that I know about, not the extent of what I suspect. The second time I gave birth at home, I did so with a dress, so that footage could be shared with the Court, if necessary.

Enough, already?

I speak of my punishment, this one, at the hands of state-run authority, to highlight the irony of The State of X v person. The gravity of one atonement, measured against another, cannot be quantified. I would suffer any pain to have my children by my side. I'm not suggesting that he, their father, couldn't or wouldn't, have taken them from me, all by himself. What I'm saying is, that in the end, he didn't take them from me, you did. How much are you, reader, a part of that "you"? Well, I guess it depends on how much you identify yourself with the state. Technically, they have it worked out well, so that we are, all of us, "you".

It has no soul, it has no life, so, I can't feel sorry for the dignity of the state. I objected to the Court's imposition of discipline, on the grounds that it was unjust, yes. That same injustice was glaring in my lover's judgment of me, as well. But, even more profound than the lack of justice, was the lack of jurisdiction. And if my living, breathing, feeling husband, did not have it, then how could I yield, in

mind or spirit, to a thing? Why must I yield, at all?

And what about the living? As previously established, we don't even know what life is. So, mankind invented God. We try to use its (intelligent?) design as the variable place-holder for our complicated equations. But the trouble with a variable, is that it is, inevitably, variable. And, equation? It is reason, as we know it, but maybe the trouble is an, in-the-box, assumption that there is an, "equal" sign in there, at all. Perhaps, the equality already exists in all things, and the calculation necessary, is something entirely different. Yet, we stubbornly, cling to the belief that there must be a scale...for everything, and if we can't judge it, God will.

But the jury of gods is still out. Worse yet, a self-declared, stand-in has usurped its alleged (and probably, even, imaginary) place, in the Court of good and evil.

I, myself, don't want to mark the greatness of victory for human progress, by the number of months that some asshole spends in the pen. I daresay, that it's no progress at all, even if the sentence is, "life".

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