

### *The Wages of Revenge*

**T**HERE ARE ALL SORTS of revenge—revenge as an experiment, revenge for anger, revenge to get even, revenge to hurt; revenge on an individual basis, revenge at a group level, revenge by country and by race. People usually get pretty excited when they hear the word *revenge*. They get that itchy crawling under their skin. There is a contraction of consciousness. The blood pressure rises, the emotions run hot and heavy, and they start plotting. Who has not experienced revengefulness at some time in his life? But let me tell you a story—as old as man and as new as this morning. When one person hurts another, only a few people are *directly* affected. But when nations engage in revenge, call it what they will, it become far more serious, and history sets on writing itself.

There was time when revenge was expected of man—not wanted, but expected. Then he was taught the doctrine of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” His unchecked passions and primitive mentality could not respond to high ideals. He had to develop a sense of rightness through suffering day-to-day hurt and hardship. Now humans have accumulated the experience of many prior lives to guide them. And as they grow their religion evolves with them. Christ abolished the doctrine of revenge. He taught the turning of the other cheek, not acting on the retaliatory instinct. Revenge has become an impermissible resort for the practicing Christian. He is expected to live the doctrine of forgiveness. But the high teaching is not easily accepted, and is even harder to practice. There are still many believers in the Old Testament way of dealing with hurt and violation. The struggle between vengeance and peace, between revenge and forgiveness, seems as strong

today as it was 2000 years ago.

Revenge can bind people in interlocking karma that lasts thousands of years. Once begun, it is hard to stop the internecine violence. Today Muslims are killing Christians, but centuries ago it was the reverse. And it goes on and on. Revenge is sweet goes the saying. The truth is that revenge is unendurably bitter. How much more blood has to be shed before humanity finally learns that revenge is a tragedy and a travesty of divine justice?

There is an inviolable Cosmic Law that governs man’s actions—the law of Cause and Effect. No one escapes it. From the most virtuous to the most vicious—all are subject to its sovereign power. Consider Moses, when he led the Jews during the last part of their Egyptian captivity. You recall that he killed an Egyptian guard who was abusing a fellow Jew. When Moses was old he was blessed with a son. That son bore the Spirit of the man he killed. Moses had a debt to pay for taking a human life and raising this son could help balance the offense. But more, Moses was later born Elijah, and then, as Christ himself says, the Spirit of Elijah was embodied as John the Baptist. And what was the fate of the Forerunner? He was beheaded! Was one of his murderers the former Egyptian overseer killed by an angry Moses? No one but Christ escapes the Cosmic Law of Cause and Effect. He, the only sinless, Who had no debts to pay, took upon Himself humanity’s transgressions, including the sins of Solomon (later born Jesus), who as a king must have been responsible for, or at least been implicated in, the death of some people, including Hiram Abiff.

When the left wing of the chemical plant in M. blew up, Margaret was sitting at her desk. It felt

like an earthquake. She saw the huge flames erupting like a volcano, engulfing the cisterns and everything around. There was immediate panic. People were screaming and running about in mayhem. Then a new loud detonation concussed the entire area. Margaret was thrown into the air. Sharp pain sliced through her body...

She saw a tunnel and she made her way through it. As she advanced the light at the end grew stronger and brighter. At last she was in the open. It was bright. Millions of little twinkling lights glittered in the air. There were lovely colors, flowing colors, many of which she had never seen before. She felt light as a feather. As she looked around she saw thousands of people floating in the air like herself. She knew them. They all worked in the plant.

Below saw the plant, consumed by raging gigantic flames. Thick smoke billowed into the sky.

“What happened?” asked a secretary in horror, passing by in the air.

“I am not sure,” Margaret replied. “It looks like an accident.” As she viewed the scene, panic grabbed at her heart.

She saw fire engines approaching from all sides. People were running about in every direction. Chaos reigned.

Margaret remembered her children with a constricting chill. She flew as fast as she could to the school where she had left them that morning. They were sitting calmly, doing their lessons, unaware of the disaster that had just occurred. Soon the bell rang and they ran out into the school yard. She followed and called them, but they paid her no attention. They were busy with their friends. She hovers over them for a while.

“My husband!” she thought suddenly, and rushed toward his workplace. She saw him driving his car in the nearby street, heading towards the plant. She passed through the windshield, sat on the front seat, and began talking to him:

“Its okay dear. You won’t find me there. I am here—sitting next to you.”

But his face remained worried, pale, and nervous. He was listening to the radio that was giving non-stop reports on the inferno. “It looks like there are no survivors...estimated number of deaths

about 5000...” The voice of the announcer bordered on hysteria. The announcer’s voice was broken. Overcome by emotion he unable to continue. Then her husband broke into tears.

“So that is what happened,” Margaret thinks. “I am dead...”

By evening the President had appeared on TV and declared the event an act of sabotage perpetrated by a separatist group known as the “Movement for Liberation,” comprised of the Fenkushy people, which had been responsible for many other terrorist attacks, though none approached this magnitude.

Calls for war were heard from many respectable citizens. “We have to revenge the death of those innocent people,” urged the Secretary of State with strong conviction....

Despite her state of near panic, Margaret was fascinated by her ability to fly, to defy gravity. It was a new sensation. And she found she could be anywhere almost instantly simply by thinking herself there. Her colleagues also flew around. Some exchanged words, but most of them were distraught and disoriented.

“Why don’t they hear us?...Can’t they see us?”

After a while a procession of fair Beings on what appeared ethereal chariots appeared from on high. Everything around them shone in strong light. In front of the first chariot stood a youth with a trumpet and began to play a solemn fanfare. The chariots encircled the distracted people from the plant. The Being from the first chariot, embellished with golden ornaments, rose to address them:

“Brothers and Sisters, welcome to the Beyond. We have come to take you to our Ceremonial Field. Please, follow us.”

His chariot took the lead, the people from the plant following. Some gathered in groups, holding hands, afraid of what they couldn’t understand. The most adventurous were in the front rank. Some of them attempted to converse with the leaders. The procession passed through the clouds and rose further and further. Everywhere there was a lovely play of glittering lights and colors flowing in myriad directions.

After a while they came to a great vistas of gardens planted with thousands of beautiful, vividly-

colored flowers. Their many scents were delightful and invigorating. Strangely, they had faces, kind and smiling. Stranger yet, all the flowers could talk.

“Welcome, dear brothers”...“Welcome”...“Welcome,” was heard from all directions.

When all the people had arrived, they were seated on comfortable and ornate chairs with arm, head and foot supports. The chairs were in a clearing facing a huge stage. An upright gigantic Book with a golden glittering cover occupied most of the stage. Its upper margin was lost in the sky. Margaret heard whispering: The Records of Nature...

Again the boy who sounded the fanfare appeared and played a ceremonial passage.

Then the leader of the procession came to the front. He was an old man with a wise face. His robe seemed to be woven with living light, adding to the brightness of his person. He solemnly declared:

“Let the reading begin.”

The Book opens slowly to the accompaniment of deeply affecting music. An enormous panoramic screen appears before the gathered people. The wispy glistening clouds of Time descend from everywhere. The people are transported on a fast journey through Time, back through the centuries. Among the roiling clouds the contours of a fortress gradually begin to appear—nebulous at first, then more and more clearly. Its stone walls are strong and high. There are guards on every post. The interior contains a city with prospering features. There are beautiful houses, estates, and government buildings. There are four grand gates on each side of the city. It is a warm summer night and most of the people are asleep. Only a few are wandering in the streets. They are wearing light clothes and robes. The sky is clear and the stars are twinkling, though their light is beginning to fade. The year is 978.

The city is under siege. Around the fortress there is a huge camp of enemy soldiers—about 5000. Most of them are sleeping around fires that have been reduced to glowing embers.

Somehow Margaret identifies herself with one of the soldiers. He is awake, thinking about the coming battle. A huge blanket covers his friend

and him. He is not afraid. He has been through so many battles.

“That’s me!”—her colleague from the plant, sitting on her right, exclaims.

“There I am!”—Margaret hears from the left.

“That’s me!”...“That’s me!” in chorus people shout from everywhere. Soon everybody from the plant recognizes his former self among the soldiers.

Suddenly a signal is given. The soldiers awake and soon they are ready for the forthcoming attack. In the receding dark the first faint signs of the breaking light are visible on the eastern horizon.

Traitors are opening the gate on the North side of the fortress. What happens next is hard to bear. Brutal killing, horror, screams of terrified people fill the entire area. Pools of blood, bodies of soldiers, maimed and mutilated women and children everywhere.

Margaret sees herself killing people... So do her viewing companions. A few hours later when the fortress is taken, there is silence—only terrified cats and dogs are running around, until they too are killed.

The soldiers gathering in the center begin a frenzied celebration....

The clouds slowly gather over the scene and engulf the ruins of the fortress, the victims, and the conquerors. When they disappear, the Giant Book also is nowhere to be seen.

Grave silence falls on the people of the plant. Now they know that they are not innocent. They understand why they died in the inferno. All of them were involved in the killing centuries ago, all of them are now together in death. For a brief moment they saw the faces of the people of the “Movement for Liberation.” They were the same people who were in the fortress, who were killed by the soldiers, by Margaret and her associates in their earlier life. The situation is now reversed—but in another era, in another land. The victims had become the executioners.

No one is able to say a word. No one can look in the face of the others. They stand accused. They are dumbfounded. They all sit in silence, for hours, brooding over the event, all to themselves. □

—Marcia Malinova-Anthony