



Crime & Punishment

James Alan Fox on criminal behavior and the justice system

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Cupid's poisoned arrow

Posted by James Alan Fox, Crime and Punishment February 14, 2011 06:00 AM

Mysteriously rooted in ancient Roman mating rituals and named after a martyred priest granted sainthood, Valentine's Day has long been a holiday for lovers. It is also a special day for manipulative, controlling, narcissistic con men to turn up the charm and profess their love, superficial though it may be.

Ladies, you know the type. He's shallow, disappointing, selfish and self-centered for 364 days of the year. But come Feb. 14, he's a Prince Charming facsimile, saying all the right things and bearing all the right gifts to try and persuade you that his love is true. Then literally overnight, that same sociopathic shell of a man reappears the next day.

Fifty-year-old Jamie Stonier of Concord keenly remembers Valentine's Day, 2003 -- the last she shared with her ex-husband Harold, a handsome military man whom she had fallen for at first glimpse some five years earlier at their 20th high school reunion. It didn't take long after their marriage and the birth of their son for the relationship to sour. Jamie couldn't cope anymore with his rigid, arrogant, domineering personality, a change in him that emerged once the honeymoon was over.

Jamie saw no future with a man she no longer loved or respected. As soon as the school year ended, she would separate from Harold, taking away her two sons, the younger of whom she had had with him.

Harold pleaded for a chance to wipe the slate clean and start over, offering up Valentine's Day roses, perfume and Godiva chocolates. For Jamie, that was no longer an option. "There was too much damage," she recalls. "He had sucked everything out of me."

But for Harold, divorce was not an option either. Forever possessive of whatever (or whomever) was his, he wanted custody of his son at any cost, and tried to arrange for a his wife to be killed. Harold's contact, however, ratted him out to federal authorities. Caught on tape negotiating with an undercover agent, Harold explained the reason for the \$70,000 murder-for-hire, "This is, to me, actually a small price to have my son with me full-time."

Jamie is one of the lucky ones. Harold was arrested after the sting and prosecuted on three counts of using interstate commerce in a murder-for-hire plot. Out of arrogance, he represented himself at trial, was convicted by a jury that took only a couple of hours (including a break for lunch) to deliberate, and was

sentenced to a term of 10 years in federal prison. Were it not for his poor judgment in recruiting a hit-man, Jamie would have seen her last Valentine's Day, and her youngest son might be living with a killer.

Jamie's "near death" marriage has had a lasting impact. She is slow to trust others, especially men. Financially, she has been drained and lives in public housing, struggling with the \$30,000 debt that Harold had run up on their joint credit cards.

How could Jamie Stonier have been so blind not to see through her husband's egocentric veneer? Actually, one could ask the same question about Carol Stuart, Karen Sharpe, or Rachel Entwistle. Successful sociopaths are particularly skillful at playing the role of a loving spouse.

While the rate of homicide among married partners has dropped by about 50 percent over the past three decades, it is mostly men who have been spared an early "death do us part." Violence remains a pattern in far too many relationships, and ironically men have often been the undeserving beneficiary of intervention efforts on behalf of domestic abuse victims.

Restraining orders, shelters and other services have assisted women to escape turbulent relationships without having to use a loaded gun to shoot a loaded husband. Men, however, often see these interventions as just another challenge to their supremacy.

On one occasion, Jamie Stonier had called the police when Harold lost his temper during a quarrel. Like many other forgiving females before her and since, she took him back, hoping to salvage the relationship for the children's sake and believing his empty promise to change.

Over the past eight years, with Harold locked up far away, Jamie has struggled to recover from her failed marriage, her deep financial indebtedness, and especially the harm done to her self-esteem and self-confidence. She has been helped tremendously by the support of [Hagarâs Sisters](#), a local network of women recovering from physical or psychological abusive inflicted by husbands or parents.

Although still on the hook with creditors, Jamie has a good job selling high-tech software, lucky to be working for a compassionate and understanding employer. As a single mother, she continues to raise her two boys, the 11-year-old son she had with Harold and a 17-year-old from her first marriage. Restraining orders prohibit Harold from contacting her or their son, and will remain permanently in force, even following his scheduled release from prison this coming December.

It has taken years for Jamie to welcome romance back into her life. She now enjoys a healthy, supportive relationship with a kind and humble man, who is the antithesis of what she had found in Harold just beneath the surface. And so, this Valentine's Day will be a happy one for Jamie, the first she will have enjoyed for a very long time.