



Regrets, I Have a Few...Thousand

We were just kids, my sister and I. We were in a store and she suddenly leaned into me and uttered one of our grandmother's famous phrases: "That'll learn 'er, dern 'er." Confused, I looked up and into the face of a woman with a big bandage over one of her eyes. The surprise of it caused me to burst out laughing.

I will never, ever, forget the look of hurt on that woman's face.

I know I was a child, but I have always regretted that moment. It was one of many, I'm afraid. But it was her face, you see. It was the look she gave me. I think if my sister and I had shared that "joke" privately, I may have felt guilty later, but I wouldn't have felt it so deeply. That look made it personal.

That story came back to my memory recently as I was following a conversation thread on Twitter. I sometimes enjoy chasing the responses and counter-responses. These continued conversations can get quite rowdy, which can be fun. Unfortunately, they can also turn nasty.

In this recent thread, a Christian writer I follow had posted her opinion on a hot-button topic which ignited a firestorm of responses – pro and con. Some of the contrary responses raised my eyebrows, but there was one in particular that stopped me. The language was terrible. And personal. Name calling on a low, gutter level. After reporting the Tweet and writing a response supporting the original writer, I sat back and thought.

We live in a digital age of anonymity. It's easy – tempting even – to voice things I think but often don't get to say. Not crude and cruel as that writer, but I did major in sarcasm in college and am always looking for an outlet. There's safety in privately popping out a biting response, releasing it into the internet cloud while I remain hidden, anonymous.

Where I don't have to see the eyes of the ones I hurt.

And that, of course, stops it. Because whether I can see it or not, those hurt eyes are there. I am not to hide under a bushel and let my inner snark shine. *"Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."* (Matthew 5:15-16)

Always. Spoken, written, typed. All my words are to give glory to my Father who is in Heaven. May my regrets be few(er). Let me not condemn, chastise, cajole, or even persuade if the flame for that light is not being passed from His hand to mine.

Always In His Love,

Linda Smith