

Accountability

written by Holly

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By Holly Lisle

“With great power comes great responsibility.” Stan Lee wrote that in **Spider-Man**, but the fact that it’s a quote from a comic book doesn’t make it any less true.

Let’s say that your basic hospital RN has a negligent day. Really, really negligent. Let’s say that she does something that kills 17 patients and injures more than 100 others. (I can’t, in fact, think of any realistic way that even the busiest RN could do this much damage, but let’s be creative and say she didn’t read the labels on the drugs, and somehow managed to give every single person on three floors not just someone else’s medicine, but also medicine to which he or she was allergic – sometimes fatally.)

Anyway. What will happen to that RN?

First, she’ll be fired. Immediately.

Second, following a board review, she’ll lose her license. Permanently.

Third, she’ll be crucified in the press.

Fourth, she’ll face charges of negligent homicide, and very likely go to jail.

And this is well and good. She fucks up like that, she SHOULD NEVER work as a nurse again, and she should do time.

Say some E-3 Army enlistee stationed in Iraq, through negligence, does something that causes the deaths of 17 Iraqis, and injuries to more than a hundred others, and sparks anti-American riots around the Muslim world. What is going to

happen to that guy?

He's going to be suspended.

He, along with his troop, his officers, and his branch of service, are going to be crucified by the press.

He's going to face a court martial.

He's almost certainly going to do time.

And this is well and good. If he was truly guilty of negligence and the deaths and injuries of so many people are on his hands, he deserves to be held accountable.

Right.

Now. Say one writer and one editor for one of the biggest, most widely-read, powerful magazines in the world put together and publish an article that is negligently-written, not fact-checked, and untrue, and publish it as truth in this hugely-circulated, powerful magazine, and the contents of this false article cause 17 people to die and more than a hundred to be injured, and spark anti-American riots throughout the world.

What should happen to that writer and that editor?

They should be fired. Immediately.

They should be made unhirable in any journalistic job anywhere in the US. Permanently.

They should be crucified by the press.

They should face charges of negligent homicide, plus anything else that can be thrown at them that is relevant. They should be tried and if found guilty, should both do time.

What do you think is **going to happen** to that writer and that editor? Not a fucking thing? That's what I think.

And if the writer and the editor – whose work killed 17 people and injured more than one hundred others, and is sparking violence that is going to blow back on our troops stationed overseas, as well as on Americans traveling abroad – are not held responsible for the people their actions killed, that fact is going to result in more hatred and distrust from the American people toward its press. Deservedly so. These two people have blood on their hands, and if it isn't American blood or Christian blood or blood of our personal religion or race or creed, it is still human blood, and these two are still directly, and immediately, responsible for the fact that it was shed. We should not look aside because the people who are dead or injured are not our own.

With great power comes great responsibility. To be a free nation, we MUST have a free press – but a free press will only remain free if it uses its power responsibly. These two people need to be held accountable for their actions, to the fullest extent possible by law.

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