

Leslie Stewart's S Revenge In Sidney Sheldon's *The Best Laid Plans*

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Abstract

This study investigates the portrayal of revenge through Leslie Stewart's character in Sidney Sheldon's *The Best Laid Plans*, with particular focus on the dimension of being driven by pride. Drawing on Böhm and Kaplan's theoretical framework of revenge, this qualitative research employs textual analysis to examine how Leslie's wounded pride becomes the central motivation behind her acts of retaliation. The findings reveal that Leslie's pride, rooted in her identity as a supportive partner and professional woman, is deeply injured by Oliver Russell's betrayal. Her sense of dignity and public image is further attacked through humiliation, slander, and rejection, which transforms her personal pain into a calculated quest for revenge. Leslie's actions illustrate that pride-driven revenge is not limited to emotional satisfaction but functions as a symbolic restoration of honor, particularly when enacted in the public sphere. Ultimately, the study concludes that Leslie Stewart's revenge exemplifies how betrayal and humiliation intertwine with pride to shape a complex narrative of vengeance, where reclaiming dignity becomes as important as punishing the offender.

Keywords: Revenge, Pride, Portrayal, Leslie Stewart, *The Best Laid Plans*

INTRODUCTION

Revenge has long been a recurring theme in literature, reflecting the complexity of human emotions and the deep consequences of betrayal and humiliation. From classical tragedies to modern novels, revenge is portrayed not simply as an act of retaliation but as a psychological and social process that reveals the struggles of identity, pride, and justice. Böhm and Kaplan (1988) argue that revenge is driven by core psychological characteristics, particularly pride, ego-syntonic justification, and symbolic communication. Pride, in particular, becomes a central motivator when an individual's dignity and self-worth are injured, prompting actions intended to restore a damaged sense of honor.

Sidney Sheldon's *The Best Laid Plans* offers a compelling example of this through the character of Leslie Stewart. Betrayed by Oliver Russell, whom she supported emotionally and professionally, Leslie transforms her personal pain into a calculated pursuit of vengeance. Her retaliation is not impulsive; it is a deliberate effort to reclaim pride in the face of public humiliation. As Kaplan suggests, revenge often functions symbolically, with actions intended not only to punish the offender but also to send a message to the wider social audience. Leslie's revenge thus reflects both the personal wound of betrayal and the broader struggle to restore dignity in the eyes of others.

The theme of revenge in Sheldon's novel is significant because it illustrates how personal experiences of betrayal intersect with larger questions of power, reputation, and gender dynamics. Leslie's character embodies the psychological toll of wounded pride and demonstrates how revenge becomes both a coping mechanism and a destructive force. Analyzing her revenge through the framework of Böhm and Kaplan allows for a deeper understanding of the ways pride shapes human responses to betrayal and transforms personal suffering into public action. This study, therefore, focuses on the portrayal of revenge as driven by pride in *The Best Laid Plans*, highlighting how Leslie Stewart's experiences illuminate the enduring relevance of revenge as a literary and psychological theme. Beyond personal expression, Bri's rap unites her community, voicing shared struggles and fostering solidarity. As a young Black woman in a male-

dominated industry, she also challenges gender norms, proving rap as a broader tool for empowerment. On the Come Up highlights rap's role in cultural resistance, allowing marginalized voices to reclaim their narratives and fight injustice. Bri's story exemplifies how hip-hop challenges power structures and drives social change, making her character a significant focus for analysis.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design (Neuman, 2014) to analyze Leslie Stewart's revenge in Sidney Sheldon's *The Best Laid Plans*. A qualitative approach is used to explore meanings, patterns, and social contexts without relying on numerical data. The primary data source is the novel *The Best Laid Plans* by Sidney Sheldon, focusing on the dialogues, and narrative descriptions. Secondary sources include books, journal articles, and academic discussions on revenge studies, Böhm and Kaplan's framework, driven by pride theory and psychological approaches to literature.

Data Collection

Data was collected through textual analysis (Krippendorff, 2013), focusing on Sidney Sheldon's *The Best Laid Plans*. The process involved.

1. Identifying dialogues and narrative passages that portray Leslie Stewart's revenge.
2. Categorizing the data based on Böhm and Kaplan's (1988) theoretical framework of revenge, which includes driven by pride, ego-syntonic justification, and symbolic/communicative actions.
3. Cross-referencing findings with secondary sources such as books, journal articles, and scholarly discussions on revenge, betrayal, pride, and psychological approaches in literature.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) model of qualitative analysis, consisting of:

1. Data Reduction Selecting and coding passages that illustrate Leslie's motivations for revenge (betrayal, injustice, powerlessness) and her pride-driven responses.
2. Data Display Organizing findings into thematic categories (characteristics, causes, and effects of revenge) according to Böhm and Kaplan's framework.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Findings

This chapter analyzes Leslie Stewart's revenge in *The Best Laid Plans* by Sidney Sheldon, focusing on the characteristics of revenge through the framework of Böhm and Kaplan (1988). One of the central characteristics is that revenge is driven by pride, where humiliation and loss of dignity become the key motives behind retaliatory actions. Leslie Stewart exemplifies this through her transformation from a supportive fiancée into a calculating avenger whose every move is rooted in her wounded pride.

a. Driven by Pride

Data 1

"She was not only beautiful, she was intelligent and sympathetic and believed in him" (Sheldon, 1997: 38)

This quotation shows how Leslie's devotion to Oliver was not only emotional but also intellectual. She invested her self-worth and pride into supporting him, believing deeply in his potential. When Oliver betrayed her, the wound was not only romantic but also an attack on her dignity as a woman who had given loyalty, trust, and belief. According to Böhm and Kaplan, when pride is injured, individuals often turn to revenge as a psychological mechanism to restore their sense of value. Leslie's pride—anchored in her intelligence and unwavering support—becomes the very foundation of her later retaliation.

Data 2

"From time to time, Oliver thought about what he had lost." (Sheldon, 1997: 39)

Here, Oliver's reflection ironically confirms Leslie's worth. He acknowledges her importance, but too late, after betraying her. For Leslie, this recognition is bittersweet: she was valuable enough to be remembered, but not valued enough to be chosen. This paradox heightens the humiliation and further damages her pride. Kaplan emphasizes that revenge is often motivated by the need to reclaim lost dignity.

in the eyes of both the betrayer and society. Leslie's revenge, then, is not just personal retaliation but an attempt to restore her identity as someone indispensable rather than expendable.

Data 3

"To find a way to have more money and more power, Leslie thought. But how? How? She had made Oliver Russell. He owed everything to her. She had shaped his political future, given him the platform. And now he had married someone else. Just like that. And now he was president." (Sheldon, 1997: 54)

This passage illustrates the depth of Leslie's wounded pride. She had devoted her resources, intellect, and social influence to Oliver's career, effectively "making" him into a political figure. His sudden abandonment invalidates her sacrifices, mocking the pride she took in her role as his partner and strategist. For Böhm and Kaplan, pride-driven revenge emerges from this exact dynamic: when the avenger's contributions are disregarded and their identity devalued. Leslie's retaliation is thus not fueled by blind anger but by a determination to reassert control and restore the pride stripped from her.

Data 4

"Dana glanced at Marianne Gorman, then looked Sime Lombardo square in the eye. 'Peter Tager is behind the murder of Carl Gorman, isn't he?' 'We're on the air, live. There are two million people watching us.'" (Sheldon, 1997: 351)

This quotation reflects the performative nature of Leslie's pride-driven revenge. By ensuring that Oliver's humiliation unfolds live before millions, she transforms her personal retaliation into a public spectacle. Böhm and Kaplan argue that pride-related revenge often requires visibility—the avenger seeks not only private satisfaction but also public recognition of their restored dignity. Leslie's pride, wounded in front of society, can only be healed through equally public revenge. Broadcasting Oliver's downfall symbolically restores her honor and communicates her power to a mass audience.

Data 5

"I just figured out what this urgency is all about. Miss Stewart has discovered that she's pregnant with Oliver's baby and she's going to need a little financial help. It's the oldest con game in the world." (Sheldon, 1997: 50)

This statement highlights the attacks against Leslie's pride through mockery and slander. The accusation reduces her to a manipulative stereotype, undermining her achievements and portraying her as desperate. Such ridicule deepens her humiliation, intensifying her drive for revenge. According to Kaplan, revenge becomes necessary when betrayal evolves into public degradation. For Leslie, retaliation is a way to reject the narrative of weakness imposed on her and to reassert her strength as an independent woman and media figure.

Data 6

"This is all the news I need... You couldn't stay away, could you, Matt? You'll always need me." (Sheldon, 1997: 344)

This quotation underscores Leslie's determination to assert her lasting influence. By manipulating media narratives, she ensures that Oliver remains tied to her, symbolically proving that he cannot escape her presence. Her pride demands not just vengeance but continuous affirmation of her dominance. As Böhm and Kaplan note, pride-driven revenge is not satisfied with momentary retaliation; it seeks to reshape perceptions and reaffirm the avenger's identity. Leslie's use of the press is both an act of control and a declaration that her pride has not been extinguished.

B. Discussion

The findings indicate that Leslie Stewart's revenge in *The Best Laid Plans* is primarily driven by wounded pride, which is consistent with Böhm and Kaplan's (1988) theory of revenge. Her transformation from a devoted supporter to a vengeful media figure reflects how betrayal and humiliation can wound a person's dignity so deeply that retaliation becomes a means of psychological restoration.

a. Revenge as Restoration of Pride

Leslie's pride was rooted not only in her beauty and intelligence but also in the crucial role she played in shaping Oliver Russell's political career. Quotations such as "She was not only beautiful, she was intelligent and sympathetic and believed in him" (p. 38) and "From time to time, Oliver thought about what

he had lost” (p. 39) reveal the depth of her emotional and intellectual investment. Oliver’s betrayal, therefore, was not just personal abandonment but a public denial of her worth, reducing her from a respected partner to a humiliated outsider.

According to Böhm and Kaplan, revenge arises when pride is undermined, as the injured individual seeks to reclaim dignity and control. Leslie’s retaliation reflects this mechanism: rather than grieving privately, she deliberately stages Oliver’s downfall before millions of viewers, as in “We’re on the air, live. There are two million people watching us” (p. 351). By transforming her pain into a public spectacle, she restores the pride that had been stripped away from her. Her revenge thus functions as a symbolic declaration that she is not weak or disposable but powerful and indispensable.

b. The Impact of Pride-Driven Revenge

The impact of Leslie’s revenge extends beyond her personal satisfaction. Her actions reveal how pride-driven retaliation can reshape both identity and public perception. The slander that mocked her as manipulative—“Miss Stewart has discovered that she’s pregnant with Oliver’s baby... It’s the oldest con game in the world” (p. 50)—threatened her social standing and professional credibility. In response, her revenge becomes not only a punishment for Oliver but also a corrective act against narratives that sought to belittle her.

Böhm and Kaplan emphasize that pride-driven revenge is often aimed at restoring how one is perceived by others. Leslie’s decision to orchestrate Oliver’s humiliation in the public eye fulfills this purpose: it forces the same society that witnessed her betrayal to also witness her triumph. In this way, revenge transcends the private realm and becomes a communicative act of defiance, reaffirming her identity as a woman of influence and control.

Ultimately, Leslie Stewart’s story illustrates that revenge rooted in pride does not merely seek to cause harm—it functions as a powerful process of reclaiming dignity. The restoration of pride and the lasting impact of such acts demonstrate how revenge can become both a personal necessity and a social performance.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that Leslie Stewart’s revenge in Sidney Sheldon’s *The Best Laid Plans* is primarily driven by wounded pride resulting from Oliver Russell’s betrayal. Leslie’s pride, rooted in her intelligence, loyalty, and role in shaping Oliver’s political career, becomes the central motivation behind her calculated acts of revenge. The humiliation, slander, and public rejection she experiences not only inflict personal pain but also threaten her social and professional image, prompting her to restore her dignity through strategic, visible retaliation.

Leslie’s revenge is not merely an emotional reaction; it is a deliberate effort to reclaim her honor and assert her power and control in the public sphere. By using media and orchestrating events that unfold before a wide audience, she punishes Oliver while simultaneously reaffirming her identity and influence. This study demonstrates that pride-driven revenge encompasses both psychological restoration and social communication, where restoring dignity and reputation is as significant as punishing the offender.

In conclusion, Leslie Stewart’s story illustrates how betrayal and humiliation intertwine with pride to shape a complex narrative of revenge, where acts of retaliation serve as a means to reclaim self-worth, assert identity, and demonstrate power publicly.

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