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Woman under investigation for selling dying puppies

Gail Benoit already facing cruelty charges
By CATHY VON KINTZEL Truro Bureau
Sat. Jul 26 - 12:06 PM



Gail Ruth Benoit on Dec. 10, 2007, outside Digby provincial court. (Brian Medel / Yarmouth Bureau)

A Digby-area woman already facing animal cruelty charges is now being investigated by the SPCA for selling dying puppies.

Roger Joyce, chief provincial inspector with the SPCA in Nova Scotia, said Friday that his agency, the RCMP and the SPCA in New Brunswick are investigating the sale of seven unhealthy puppies within the past two weeks.

Six of the puppies died and a seventh is "hanging on" in a veterinary clinic in Prince Edward Island, Mr. Joyce said.

Autopsies were being carried out in Truro on four of the dead puppies.

Four of the owners say they purchased the puppies from a woman they now know as Gail Benoit, who is already facing charges the SPCA laid in Digby provincial court last year.

Ms. Benoit said Friday she was "roped in" by a New Brunswick puppy seller from whom she purchased the dogs, and that she "had no indication" they were sick when she sold them.

"He had tons of dogs," she said when reached briefly by cellphone Friday. "He had a good deal on the computer. I've got nothing else to say."

In an interview with CTV News on Friday, Ms. Benoit told a reporter she would reimburse the families who lost their puppies but needed to get her money back from her New Brunswick supplier first.

"I feel bad for the people," she said. "I feel bad that they lost their money. But at the same time, I feel bad for myself. . . . I had to borrow that money."




Esther Smith of Earltown, Colchester County, said her husband and friend wanted to surprise her with a miniature dachshund, but it died 10 hours after she picked it up in a Windsor parking lot Wednesday morning.

"At first I was so sad," Ms. Smith said Friday. "But now, I'm so angry."

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She said Ms. Benoit, driving in a van with the promotional lettering Puppies R Us, handed her the dog wrapped in a curtain, saying she needed to be kept warm because she'd just had a bath. Ms. Smith paid \$500 and the woman left.

"I was devastated when I opened the curtain. There was nothing to her. She was thin and too docile for a puppy."

The animal lover cuddled the puppy during the three-hour drive home. Once home, the puppy wouldn't eat and only drank a little water.

Ms. Smith called a veterinarian and made an appointment for Thursday, but the puppy died Wednesday evening.

Three other owners reached Friday described similar situations of making contact with Ms. Benoit online and arranging to meet in public parking lots to purchase Yorkshire terriers and Pomeranians for \$500 to \$650.

All described the puppies they received as being tiny, frail and lethargic. Most received paperwork, including veterinary reports stating the dogs had been examined.

Della Despres of Shediac, N.B., purchased her Yorkshire terrier for \$550 last Saturday at 5:30 p.m. It died two days later.

Her husband, who picked the puppy up in a parking lot in Elmsdale, noticed it was lethargic but thought it was suffering from carsickness. It vomited a few times during the drive home. It wouldn't eat and had diarrhea throughout the night.

"When I got up in the morning, she was going downhill, so I took her to the veterinarian and they put her on IV fluids," Ms. Despres said.

That was Sunday. The dog died the next evening.

"It was so sad to see," Ms. Despres said.

Sandy Reed of Lantz, Hants County, got her Pomeranian puppy in an Elmsdale parking lot for \$650 on Monday.

Ms. Reed asked about the puppy's condition, in particular that its head seemed to be flopping around. She said Ms. Benoit told her the dog was carsick and that she had to give it something for motion sickness.

"When we got home, it wouldn't use the bathroom, it wouldn't eat."

The dog died the next day.

"I'm really upset, I'm still upset," said Ms. Reed, who said she had shed more than a few tears this week.

"I'm hurt."

Another owner from Halifax, who didn't want to be named, bought a Pomeranian for \$500 at 3 p.m. on July 18 in an Elmsdale parking lot.

It was dead by 10 a.m. the next morning.

She had planned to take the dog to a veterinarian, and was holding it on her chest when it started convulsing, foaming at the mouth and shaking.

"Oh, the dear little thing."

Mr. Joyce said the SPCA can't comment too much on the status of the investigation, but he said the complaints are being taken very seriously. Owners of the other two puppies live in Halifax and Yarmouth.

Dana Bailey, Ms. Benoit's common-law spouse, told CTV on Friday that he and Ms. Benoit did everything in their power to ensure the puppies were healthy.

"They were checked by a veterinarian, they were needled, what more can we do?" said Mr. Bailey.

The couple are already facing animal cruelty charges related to the SPCA seizure of 10 pups over two days from their Roxville home last fall. That case is still before the courts.

Ms. Smith wants to hear from other people who have purchased sick and dying puppies.

She can be e-mailed at loving_poohbear52@yahoo.com.

With Monique Muise

(cvonkintzel@herald.ca)

COMMENTS

POST YOUR COMMENT

NorthernLights wrote:

First of all, why are people buying puppies from parking lots? And paying all the money to do so. If you are going to pay hundreds of dollars, wouldn't it have been a good idea to get them from there home, somewhere where you could see them not wrapped in a curtain, eating and/or playing. C'mon, the woman selling you the puppies she knew they were sick.....how could she not. Seems like quite a coincidence that seven of the puppies died within no time. Shame on "Gail" for selling you the puppies!! Not sure what will happen with any charges, but man, she should never and I mean never be allowed to sell an animal to anyone again. We all need to be aware she is out there in the future if she is.....and remember, do not buy puppies from a vehicle in a parking lot!! And I do agree of course, that no matter where you do buy your puppy, no one has the right to sell you a very sick one. If I were that interested in buying a puppy, no matter where I lived, I would drive to the home of where the puppies are.....NOT IN A PARKING LOT. I would not even feel right handing over hundreds of dollars to some stranger in a parking lot.

grimm wrote:

The boom should come down hard on this woman....the misery she caused these people and tragedy of puppy mills that she is helping to perpetuate is unconscionable!

inot566 wrote:

It is way past time to strenghten animal abuse laws and really punish these disgusting creatures who call themselves human.Personally I would like to do to them what they do to the animal.

jscott wrote:

I feel bad for those puppies but come on people, anyone selling you a puppy that you collect in a parking lot????????? Nothing smells fishy here? I have a bridge to sell you since you are so gullible. Do you read the paper where people have been ripped off in the past for the very same thing. Are your memories that short. You can get a puppy from a breeder for pretty much the same price and you know what, it's worth it. Stop enabling these disgusting people who sell these sick puppies from the puppy mills. And Gail Beniot I don't think for one second that you didn't suspect the puppies were sick. You just wanted to make a quick buck. Shame on you.

seablue wrote:

This story should be enough for gov't and people to realize are laws are not strong enough to stop the cruelty and abuse meted out by the operators of puppy mills and non-regulated breeding. The history of Gail Benoit is LONG - an injunction should have been easily forthcoming to prevent her from owning animals let alone breeding them or procuring them from possible mills in NB. We need to be proactive and our gov't needs to show some backbone here. They need to crackdown and put appropriate laws in place to stop this kind of horrific capitalism. The parents of mill puppies are the real sufferers. Kept in unhealthy conditions, overbred, and then usually disposed of when they are no longer economically viable. Puppy Mill puppies are bred for quantity not quality. Often they have behavior issues from not being socialized and kept in cramped quarters. They often have genetic issues because research is not done into breed lines etc. This is a money making machine. So things like hip dysplasia etc are more common. In my heart I can not put into words the suffering of a dog kept for breeding in a puppy mill to provide "brokers" and some pet stores with animals. This is one of the worst kinds of cruelty there is. If you want a dog research what you should know to find a reputable breeder or contact the SPCA for information in this

regard or to rescue one of their animals. The SPCA is the only body able to act in cases of cruelty. They need to ACT NOW!

Lorella wrote:

What a sad story... I wish animal protection laws were as strict as those protecting vulnerable and innocent children. People should not be allowed to buy and sell living creatures in parking lots. I'm sure Benoit, given her unfavourable history in dealing with animals, will be dealt with... but I think people who purchase animals out of vans ought to know that in doing so they are perpetuating the tremendously cruel practices puppy mills and backyard breeders. Please get your pets from reputable breeders... or better yet from SHELTERS!!! There are thousands of needy and lonely animals looking for loving families.

blink wrote:

I believe that if people are willing to buy these dogs than they have to suffer the consequences. Mr. Bailey and Ms. Benoit are not doing anything illegal and should not be portrayed as such until proven so. These people wanted the dogs, they were not forced to make their purchases and therefore should accept what has happened. As mentioned in the article, the sellers are victims too as they borrowed money to purchase these dogs so, in fact, this has become a lose lose situation. I think that the medias portrayal of Bailey and Benoit is distorted and again they should not be made out to look as though they are criminals. Thank you!

dreamhorse wrote:

The court system has to change, why are these people allowed to even sell animals after this?? She's still selling and nobody is doing nothing. Just like when I bought some expensive Selkirk Rex kittens from a breeder in Hubbards. They were full of ringworm, fleas, earmites, and tested positive for feline leukemia, and were suppose to be registered in wich I've never received papers for. My family and friends and their families that were at our house before we figured out what we had faught with ringworm for 2 months of cleaning and washing the house everyday. It was a night mare. Long story short, we were over \$2000.00 in vet bills to treat the pets that she sold us and also our own pets that it spread to. I bought this lady to court and had no problem winning my case, but she moved out to Alberta and ran from us. I've never seen my money and have only put myself in the hole to try and get that back. The courts never made her pay me back, nor did they make another date to have her back in the future to make sure things were paid back to me. Please be careful when buying a pet, if something don't seem right DON'T buy. DON'T meet someone at a parking lot, go meet them and their pets at their home so you can see where they live. If another pet in that litter looks sick or is full of something don't buy anything. I was led to believe the other kitten in the litter had eczema, and I didn't check over my kitten to make sure it didn't have any spots, I trusted the breeder...

oakley wrote:

This just goes to show that people should buy their puppies from reputable breeders!! Research your breeder first, meet with the breeder and a good breeder will interview you before saying you can have one of their puppies. If a "breeder" sells more than one type of dog (usually), they are a puppy mill. If they have tons of puppies, they are a PUPPY MILL, do NOT buy a puppy from them. We need to put puppy mills out of business.

Pitabread04 wrote:

While I think that Ms. Benoit should have charges against her for doing this; especially, while already being under investigation; I also think that they should find this person from NB and do something about them. However, to the people who purchased puppies from her in a parking lot... what were you thinking? WHY would anyone meet someone in a parking lot to purchase anything, let alone a live puppy?? I just don't understand why you would buy a puppy without meeting their parents and seeing the puppies with their litter mates first..... to make sure they are healthy. If you are going to spend \$500.00 on a puppy from a backyard breeder; why not do some research and get one from a REPUTABLE BREEDER!!!! Reputable breeders don't charge much more than these people off the streets/backyard breeders and you are pretty much guaranteed a healthy, vet-checked puppy with needles, papers and usually a guarantee! While I feel bad for these puppies, I don't really feel sorry for these people who purchased the animals... if they had of used their common sense they would probably wouldn't be going through this sad time right now! Please do research before buying a puppy.....

WakeUpNS wrote:

I wish that instead of being worried about the people SPCA/gov, would have enough care to

publish on the website the people that are under investigation or have been charged, and not worry about the presumption of "innocent" until proven guilty. In today's society it takes ALOT to even be investigated and the bottom line is to protect the animals, that do not have a voice. If even one complaint is in the HRM, the Animal Services should be looking at charging them too, the more charges the better, maybe she and others like her will change their "easy profession". Post the names/addresses of all of these cowards!

gibfire wrote:

Buying animals in parking lots, is like buying smokes from the trunk of a car or like having sex behind a dumpster !!! What the heck are you thinking . One may also check to see some of the warnings that get posted in some of the local web forums , that issue warnings about purchasing live animals in mall parking lots (I have seen several caution notes of a female breeder from the South Shore) willing to meet half way . \$500 - \$650 is not a great deal (as obviously seen) for a puppy anyways . Find someone who is tried, trusted and true ; for the sake of the dog . I hope this lady gets a big punishment--- But hay we live in Canada, big BIG soft hearts ...

JMW59 wrote:

Stop protecting people like Ms Benoit and start protecting the animals these people are exploiting for the sake of the almighty buck. The public who buy these animals from these puppy mills are just as much to blame for the horrendous conditions these dogs are born into. There is no such thing as an honest and kind hearted puppy mill breeder, in their eyes all they see it money on four legs. I hope Ms Benoit gets more than a slap on the wrist, she needs to be legally banned from ever owning an animal again, it is not her right to be abusing, neglecting and selling dogs.

apple wrote:

Very few people actually need to BUY a dog. Certainly hunters do and families with special needs children might, but anyone who buys a 'vanity' dog is creating a demand for puppy mills. Most claim to love dogs, which makes me laugh. Anyone who loves dogs would get one from the SPCA.

holysmokes wrote:

are they pups from celtic pets?

Lone Female wrote:

blinky are you a friend of Mr. Bailey and Ms Benoit? How you can defend them this time is beyond me. It's high time the people involved are hit with an immediate life time ban on owning/selling or even being within 500 ft of any animals. I also agree with some comments that buying a puppy or any animal/pet in a parking lot without doing a check on the seller is simply nuts. Ms. Benoit claiming she did not know that the animals were ill is a bit of a stretch. I hope she and Bailey are hit hard with the books on this one. The laws regarding animal abuse should be made tougher, and repeat offenders need to do time in a cage. A filthy dirty cage at that.

Skeena wrote:

Come on people, you've heard time and time over about Puppy Mills the discusting way they are operated but yet again you still go to parking lots or yard sales to get you're puppies & kitties. Shame on the operators of those puppy mills and shame on the buyers that keep them in business. There are lots of shelters that have wonderfull animals that are just waiting to be adopted. I got my duck toller/lab mix in a shelter in Digby. Great people to deal with and you know what... I got a great little girl for far less that what you would pay in a parking lot...When we got her she had been spayed and seen by a vet and we knew that she was physically healty. Please see your local SPCA or a shelter in your area. They are good, qualified and caring individuals who can help find the right pet for you. I hope that our laws will change soon cause we need to protect our pet population.

annamaesmith wrote:

Anyone who purchases a puppy from a parking lot is most assuradely getting a puppy mill puppy. The reason they do it is because it is less than half the price that a reputable breeder charges. Unfortunately, Ms. Smith you are as bad as Ms. Benoit because people like you enable her to do business. I have two wonderful dogs and both were rescues, one from Bide Awhile Animal Shelter and the other from the SPCA. People its time to stop enabling the Benois of the world and the Pets Unlimited -- its the only way to stop puppy mills.

Kiltedone wrote:

How many times have I read people's messages on Kijiji about Gail Benoit and her disgusting practices? The prices she charges are way over the top. The Canadian Kennel Club states that any dog, ANY dog without papers is worth \$100.00. We just adopted our first puppy from a shelter and he came to us in perfect health. We received his health records, the food he was eating, and a puppy-pack that contained a LOT of useful information. And he cost us \$75.00. The authorities must put Gail Benoit and all others like her in their place. And do so in a way that will discourage any other puppy mill operators.

Planet Mercury wrote:

Come on blinky, Beniot was going out of her way to cover up the sickness and saying one pup just had a bath, another she claimed was car sick. She knew they were sick. Wake up. Her responsibility at that point would have been to get those puppies to a vet not pond them off for others to absorb huge vet bills. If Ms Beniot is in the business then she should know proper practice is to put each puppy in quarantine for 10 days after they come into her care and separate from other litters to ensure her investment is healthy and safe. All these different breeds traveling in the same van within a few days is not proper practice and her failure to do this is causing great suffering to be inflicted on any puppy she has contact with. She is transferring disease across the Atlantic Provinces knowingly. Each Municipality and Town across the province could stop this tomorrow by adopting a vendor by-law prohibiting the sale of all dogs, puppies any animal on highways, roads public and private parking lots. It should be illegal with minimum penalties of \$10,000.00 to protect the innocent pups, protect the unsuspecting public, and stop the transmission of disease. The Digby couple are not the only brokers who practice this shuttle service. There are many others. Make the call to your MLA if you think this should have been prevented.

Heatherdee wrote:

Completely agree annamaesmith. Chain stores should sell supplies and little else.

DogLover wrote:

Someone needs to write an article on how to purchase a puppy and not end up getting one from a BYB or puppy mill. It's so infuriating to see things like this over and over again in the newspaper but with no "good side of the story". I feel like these people who have been screwed over by Gail Benoit are just going to turn to a pet store and end up with the same problem (an unhealthy dog from a puppy mill). It wouldn't even be a hard article to write, I keep writing letters to the editor about it, but it doesn't reach nearly as many people as a properly written (and longer) article would be. So please, I beseech you, the article writing gods of the Chronicle Herald, find someone to write the article! I can even provide some good sources if you need them.

halinative wrote:

Why aren't these people suing her in civil court??

time to act wrote:

As many of you have said we need legislation to stop this. There needs to be some way to ensure if dogs are purchased they come from a facility where the conditions are healthy for mom and pups, and there is no suffering or abuse. Maybe a licensing process, just like needing a license to sell used cars. In order to get a license premises are inspected (like restaurants) and when you purchase a pet the seller must be able to supply this license for you to see. The fee for the license could help support the program....just ideas. Does anyone know of a group that is lobbying in Nova Scotia for appropriate legislation? If you do please post because I'd like to join it. Enough is enough. We could all at least start by taking the time it took to write our posts here and write a letter to our MLA's, here is a link to find yours:

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/members/index.html> Maybe cc a copy to Premier MacDonald, see bottom of link: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/premier/> And while you're at it tell your MP in Ottawa how you feel on the subject, I am sure this is a Canada wide problem. Find your MP here <http://webinfo.parl.gc.ca/MembersOfParliament/MainMPsCompleteList.aspx?TimePeriod=Current&Language=E> We do have the power to make a difference.

Vivvie wrote:

I understand why people are willing to buy puppies from a van. You hopefully get a purebreed without the c--- and big expense that goes with purchasing one from a breeder. I bought my last dog from a fantastic breeder. It took hours to obtain our dog. One hour interview on phone, at least a one hour family interview at breeders', and then we had to sign 4 pages of legal papers. This dog is the best animal we have ever had. After our last 2 dogs very aggressive and territorial

(even one bit my middle child)...both purchased from the SPCA.

KELLEIGH wrote:

I have heard the name of the accused for about 15 years now from charges being laid in Annapolis Kings and Digby Counties. If the charges are proven, I don't think a cell would be too harsh and a lifetime ban on owning animals.

volux wrote:

just go to you tube and do a search.... its not the media that is making her look bad, its her actions....

Fatty wrote:

First of all, the people that bought these pups its your own fault, not very smart. Second of all something need to be done with woman (GAIL), the worst thing is she will be doing this again next week. I feel so bad for these pups, i cant understand how someone could even sleep after doing this for a quick buck...The gov. spends our tax \$\$ on all kind of other c--, i would love to see some of mind used to put people like this in JAIL...

C.GAUDET wrote:

BLINKY; LOL..WHAT CAVE DID YOU JUST CRAWL OUT OF? LONE FEMALE..RIGHT ON!

pattishea wrote:

I am a firm believer in adopting rescue pets, but realize that's not for everyone. There are plenty of reputable breeders with healthy animals available. No one needs to buy a pet in a parking lot, or from a shady pet store. A pet is not disposable, it is an addition to your family who should live, depending on breed, between 7 and 15 years. I am sorry for the people whose new puppies have died, and would encourage anyone considering a pet to check out Petfinder.org, which links shelters across North America, and the Canadian Kennel Club.

MRBSmith wrote:

loving_poohear... Nice professional business name you have there. This woman took these peoples money and sold them sick puppies. Now she is scamming them saying she has to get the money back from the people she bought the puppies from. What a load of BS. What did you do with the money you received from the people who bought the sick puppies anyway? This woman should be giving the cash back to these people that have dead puppies. It's not their problem that she bought sick dogs in a parking lot. If she loses her money too damn bad.

Jill wrote:

Nova Scotia needs better laws to protect these poor animals that human try to profit from. I say a jail cell with no food and water and only a curtain for five years might get the point across that it is NEVER okay to treat animals in such a horrible way.

Dutch alien wrote:

People never learn. There is no more to say.

OhMyGod wrote:

"Blinky" and anyone else that don't see this for what it is need a reality check....I feel for the people who bought these puppies but they should have been suspicious of the mobile sales unit....you'd be suspicious if they were selling jewelry or TV's out the back of a truck so why would selling puppies this way not raise your suspicions?...I say these people need some jail time to set them straight so that no more puppies are killed and no one profits from this type of fraud....and yes we need stronger worded and enforced animal protection laws here in NS....but do you see it happening anytime soon?

Budelo wrote:

JUST KEEP THE PUPPY MILLS AND PET STORES IN BUSINESS. THERE IS A MILLION DOGS ACROSS THIS COUNTRY IN SHELTERS WHO NEED GOOD HOMES AND CAN BE HAD FOR A REASONABLE PRICE.FOR EVERY DOG BOUGHT FROM ONE OF THESE SHADY PEOPLE ANOTHER

PERFECTLY GOOD DOG MUST DIE IN A SHELTER FOR WANT OF A LOVING HOME. SO WAKE UP PEOPLE AND DO THE RIGHT THING HERE.

Here wrote:

Planet Mercury and MBR Smith have good points. This was a business transaction, the goods were known faulty, the seller is refusing to refund the money and getting the heck out of Dodge before someone figures out they have a trunk full of money and dead pups. There are laws on the books for that. The second issue is the health of the pups, and their treatment. There are laws about that as well. The third issue is the one that makes it all possible, us. People sat on their butts, decided to buy an item sight unseen, ran to a parking lot, waited excitedly, refused to believe their eyes, forked over their money, and ran off with a sick puppy. There is no law on the books that can help in this case. People don't want to hear it but sometimes we make bad decisions. Saying that only reputable breeders should sell dogs, or that shelters are the way to go, or that government should regulate this or that does nothing to eliminate the bottom line problem. Us.

admiralBS wrote:

Sure, we all keep reading about puppy mills for years. And we know the only purpose of them is to make money one way or another, without proper facilities of animal care. There's more if you investigate certain apartment buildings that grow dope and met as well. The one thing that surprises me more about the buyers are their sensibility. Everyone reported that they noticed something was wrong with the animals, yet they bought them . At from someone they met at a parking lot. Does this sound wise to you? If you buy underground, what else do you expect? You encourage the illegal selling , you should not expect the law to protect you. That would be like someone buying dope from a pusher and then got poisoned. Then go to court to charge the pusher for selling bad dope. If we make it that anything you bought illegally does not come with any protection of redress. These puppy mills and pushers will be out of business, or go elsewhere. Don't look for a bandaid, cut it off. The cancer is worse than the bleed.

clubzero wrote:

Anyone who lives near a puppy mill should be on the phone reporting it--there are people out there that have no conscience like the Celtic Pet owners and those that run these puppy mills and everyone of them should be strung up for what they do.It is so sad that these innocent animals pay such a price because they fall under the "lack of care" of these idiots.Another heartbreaking story for the animals.Makes me sick.

holysmokes wrote:

the people who buy in a parking lot, are as guilty as the sellers..both buyer and seller should be charged..

Sam Muggins wrote:

The previous matter is before the courts, but until that case is heard would it not be prudent to place a restriction on her activities with animals. Such a restriction could have prevented this tragedy.

CCRking wrote:

Your first commentor sums it all up wisely. FROM A PARKING LOT? Hey, you wanna buy anything... brand new, with papers, warranty card? Wedding ring, sports car, computer, stereo,etc... I can get it for you. Meet me at the parking lot. Bring money. All cash. Can you meet me at my house? NO NO NO, it has to be in a parking lot. Any warning signs coming up your little brain? No? Shame! It's people like these that contribute to prolongate why we maritimers are the butt of so many canadian jokes. Wake up! Eat more fish!

giglegal wrote:

Why would anyone still purchase puppies from these people knowing who they are and their past dealing with others. They are under investigation with the SPCA.. they deny there guilt but, others know different. If a person is paying that much for a puppy wouldn't you want papers for the dog... My heart goes out to those unfortunate people who have been ripped off once again by these individuals. They never should be allowed to sell puppies in the first place. Try taking them to civil court but, it won't work can't get blood from a lemon!! Next time buy your puppies from either a pet shop or someone who comes with recommendations!! Buying BEWARE of these people!

apple wrote:

holysmokes wrote: the people who buy in a parking lot, are as guilty as the sellers..both buyer and seller should be charged.. I agree with this. They at least need to participate in an awareness program. Either their ignorance allowed them to be taken in by this woman, or their callous vanity did.

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