

I SEE SAID THE BLIND MAN
AS HE LOOKED AT HIS HAMMER AND SAW

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Of the over 2 million men, women and children incarcerated in the United States, 85% of those incarcerations are rooted in some sort of alcohol, drug or substance abuse.

The numbers you have just read are not fictional nor is the following story. What you have just read is sad, what you are about to read has broken more hardened criminals than any sentence a trial court could handout.

This is a familiar story to many substance abusers. There is always going to be one, a loved one usually, your "rock", "right hand", "hammer" whatever name you use it comes down to the same thing. He/she is the one person in your life who believes in you, believes in the man/woman you could be if only you quit using. The one person in your life who truly loves you for you, who is there for every court date, every visiting day and is waiting for your release date and unlike others, is happy you are coming home.

This person has been lied to on so many occasions, on so many levels. simply put "Are you using?" - "No baby, are you crazy?, I'm sober as a judge". Another scenario is "Why are you doing this to me? I love you, what is wrong? why are you using?" - The usual response is, "Hey I'm not hurting anybody but myself, it's not like I'm taking house money or pawning your jewelry"!

Addiction is a strange lover, when you are using you actually believe you are slick enough to deny using and that the people you are lying to believe you. The truth is either your perception is distorted or you don't really care if everyone knows you are lying. As an addict how many times have you seen sadness in the eyes of that one person? Too many to count? All the re-hab stints, all the arrests, all the disappearing acts when you said you would be there but couldn't because you were on the chase. How many phones have you thrown away or smashed because that one person was sitting home ringing you off the hook-worried with fear that you've been arrested, or laying on a slab O'D'ed?

Now go to prison again for a nice lick, how about a straight 10 years on top of the previous county and state bids you've already done. You know have some experiance. This is it!!! No more, no more alcohol/drugs, no more crime and no more time. You get into education, start working out, 3-5-7 years go by. You are in the best mental and physical shape of your life. But it is not easy, friends on the street are gone, family members are now dying-you're middle aged-in prison with a few years to go.

That one person is still there plugging away, working 2-3 jobs, getting old as well-not easy being on the outside all alone with your man/woman locked up. Still there every visiting day, tired, broke and lonely, but still there for you-your "hammer".

Have you ever noticed how perceptive an ex-smoker, ex-drinker or ex-substance abuser can be? Sit across an ex-smoker what you will get is "You stink like cigarettes, why do you smoke"? you could have last smoked a cigarette hours before but to an ex-smoker it is like you are blowing second hand smoke into his/her face. Yet when he/she smoked some one could be smoking a Cuban cigar in a crowded car and it would not be noticed, actually it would smell nice.

The alcoholic who has been sober for 20 years? You could no more fool an alcoholic in recovery with mouth wash and breath mints than a breathalyzer test given by a State Trooper. Before getting sober it would be "Oh it's just a few pops, no big deal".

Lastly a sober addict can tell in the space of one heart beat whether the person sitting across from them is high. There is no need for a scent, no need for a slurred word. It is second nature-an addict knows immediately without question. A sober addict could be blind and still see that the person across from them is high-FACT-

So again 3-5-7 years go by and you are at your best in years, sober and feeling good, the future is bright, your "hammer" is coming up, it's visiting day. Because you are an addict you know the person sitting across from you is high, but wait, that can't be, not my "hammer" all those years never got high, always on my case to stop using-Yeah I'm wrong, I must be imagining it.

You call on the phone, some days it's "Hi Baby, miss you, love you, talk dirty to me". Other days-"I can't talk right now, I've got to get to work, I'm tired, do you know how hard this is?", nothing but stress. You are an addict, a sober addict, on "talk dirty to me" days it sounds like your "hammer" is drunk?, tired?, high? on "I'm tired" days it sounds like someone with a habit who needs a fix. No! Not my "hammer" solid as "The Rock of Gibraltar", I must be imagining it.

Another visiting day, your "hammer" is high-no question about it, pinned eyes, slurred words, talking some nonsense that you can't even follow. So here it goes. "Hey Baby are you high?" "What? are you crazy? no I'm not high, just tired! but your eyes look funny are you high?"

In the space of that heartbeat your world implodes from the heart. Oh my God my "hammer", my best and only friend, this person who I love so much. The only person I love is not only high but lying to me about it. Oh snap! flashbacks of previous visits, rewinding telephone conversations. It's all there in your gut, you knew it all along and then the epiphany. The sudden realization that all those years-decades of thinking your using did not hurt anyone. You now see, when you were asked "why are you doing this to me?" and couldn't comprehend? now you see and the pain and broken heart of seeing your loved one in the grip of addiction? now you see.

So that day in the visiting room, for the first time in my life I said "I SEE" as I looked at my "hammer" and saw.