

CHANCES & CHOICES

The cinderblocks breath and sweat, spin and jump, like they have a life of their own. The weight piles on as the volume raises. The screams of ignorance and suffering cannot drown out the noise in my head. The burns, bruises, and cuts do not cover the pain.

The ringing of keys, a clink and bang; new sounds in the ocean of noise. Chows here. Preceded by the nauseating smell of rotten food adding to the constant wet smell of mildew.

On the edge of a cliff I stare into the abyss of insanity. As waves of emotion threaten to drown me, slowly eroding the banks of my sanity. A 9 x 6 cave fully surrounded by man made rock and metal, but for a narrow slot window to be peered in on from time to time.

Nine months locked away; I shuffle to court it's September 11th, 2001 0900 hours. People rushing here and there whispering just below the clink of the chains I bear, so angry, so fearful.

A choice to be made trial or deal, the chance of no time to a lifetime. I just want it over, is there really any choice? Weeks later whispers come under the door.

A plane crash in New York?
War on American soil?
Is that for real?

At the age of 23 I've already accumulated years isolated in the hole. At 21, with a quarter century's sentence, I faced more time locked up than I'd been alive. What is life anyway? Did I ever have a choice? When abuse starts before memory, was there ever any chance?

You're dead, but still in control!

I hear the same and worse stories screaming and ringing all around me. Did any of us have a choice? What's the point? We never had a chance, but here we sit locked in cinderblock boxes. When prison is your best chance in life, actually saves your life, what chance did you ever have?

Woman kills her abusive husband after he sets her on fire while she sleeps; Permanently disfiguring and handicapping her. Sentenced to life in prison. What was her choice?

"You dumb cracker bitch, don'tcha even know how to sweep?!"

No, no she does not. Sold to her mother's crack dealer at the age of 9. Ran away at 10 living under a bridge for the next decade.... What chance did she have?

Used on the streets as a drug mule for her uncles since age 5, the only life style she ever knew. What choice did she have? What chance?

"Beat that bitch's face in she won't be look'in around no more! She makes me so fuck'in angry, but I love her to death!"

What the hell about that is love? But the only "love" any of them have ever experienced. Did they ever have a chance, a choice to be other than what they are? Like a merry-go-round from hell we repeat the only things we ever knew.

He put a gun in a child's hand and told me I am the only one that can take care of all our problems. A decade later that gun goes off into his head. Was there ever a chance, a choice? It only ever click, click, clicked on my head.

"He should have been the one locked up!"

"Right, I can't believe they gave her so much time."

"I know she should have gotten a medal."

Whispers, whispers slid under the door like ants marching along.

I watch as so many slide over the cliff's edge.

Thunk, thunk, thunk is the sound a forehead makes against a metal door as blood drips down her face, eye so blank and empty. Thunk, thunk, thunk. Fully SWATed up they rush the cell to hold her down for a shot.

Tied to the metal slab screaming with blood dripping from gapping wounds along her forearms. She's actually bitten chunks out of her own arms.

Are those my paths, my choices? Is that how, where I will end when I slip over the edge? Did I ever have a chance?

The waves are pulling me under I can't breath, I can't see or hear. What choice do I have?

I let go instead of thrashing out, just floating. I feel, I watch, I listen, and "do" nothing.....

Like quicksand, the less you struggle to escape the less you're sucked down. Days, months, years, decades march by and I just feel, watch, listen, and "do" nothing.

I start to recognize where life experiences push us to act and react. I see where another path or way is more effective. The longer I float the less power the waves have. The more life slows down and I can see the choices. I feel the emotional and experiential urges pushing me to do this, but now have the ability to choose to do that.

I've stepped off the merry-go-round and away from conditioned habitual reactions. We may not control our chances, but we always have a choice. Many are just harder and more confined than others.

What do you see when you look at me?
The demon, The Monster, The Angel, The Innocent?
The smiling mask or the ocean of tears?
A victim, or a criminal?
A person, or a number?
What do you see when you look at me?
Loneliness like thirst surrounded by water to poisonous to drink.
Tears fill the ocean over my head, grief and anger the salt of poison.
A shattered mirror thousands of pieces, the whole too hard to see.
What do YOU see when you look at me?

A tree and a desk

Air flashes the colors together greens and yellows, lights and shadows. Swinging up, down, back and forth.
Connected to seeming solidness that feels the vibrations of steps, the passage of time as seasons flow and change.

Circles and waves of time gone by. So solid and strong made thin and brittle. Abuse, murder for the pleasure of the eye. Life cut short and made eternal, its wrinkles of age laid bare to all.
