

## Choosing Alone.

When adults abuse the three-year-old they are entrusted with protecting, what is the child supposed to do?

When the same adults then threaten to kill or harm the child, if it tells anyone, what is the child supposed to do?

When the child is raped, beaten, and locked in a windowless room in a garage with only bread, a bowl of water, and a washcloth, what is the crying child to do? Does the child use the water to clean the blood from the rape and the beating, or does it drink it?

These are mighty and profound questions to ask of anyone, but they should never be asked of a child. In a better world, they should never be asked. These questions and so many more were asked of this child, and the child could never answer them.

The child tried to fight off the predators but was savagely beaten because of the assailants' superior size and strength. The child's attempts to stop the rapes became half-hearted because it grew weak from everything: from the repeated physical and sexual abuses, the lack of fresh water and food, and from living in constant fear.

The child, however, had a reason to survive, which was born when it was born. It was an instinct so deep and so strong it became the primary life force for survival.

The rapes and beatings stopped after several years. The child never told anyone because the child feared the perpetrators would find out and carry out their dire threats. His life became one of aggressive misconduct so pervasive that he was labeled a juvenile delinquent at fourteen, put

on probation for two years, and warned that if he appeared in Juvenile Court again, he would go to jail until eighteen. His father's reasoned beatings and attempts to control him had only one effect, and that was the young man tried to get smarter and not get caught. He was successful.

The child grew to adulthood, or as they call it in America, eighteen years old. He began a long and interesting life. He tried to be good at socializing but failed repeatedly, and because of the failures, he withdrew more and more. His failures made him believe he was the failure. As he withdrew, he became happier, and as his happiness grew, so did his choice to remain withdrawn.

He read that people are not meant to live alone. He watched movies where people suffered and died because of loneliness, but he didn't feel lonely. He watched happily married people and people socialize happily, and he knew he couldn't do that. He knew because he tried and failed.

For several decades, he has socialized and truly enjoyed his few friends. Still, the one person he constantly seeks out and in whose presence he is happy and at ease is himself.

Finally, as he ages and his life expectancy grows shorter, he wants a woman's company. It seems to him that most women want to spend what he considers too much time together. When he is honest with himself, he wants intimacy and intelligent conversation. (Of course, good jokes and pranks work just as well as the conversation.) Then, he wants to be alone again for a while, but he thinks if he asks that aloud, he will be ridiculed and demeaned.

Today, he heard himself say, "The only rules for me are the ones I make and enforce."