

Choices
By
Daniel E. White May 25, 2026

There have been newly hatched quail in our yard.

Newly hatched quail are not rare here in the spring. Still, each spring we look for them for their entertainment value. Tennis ball-size puffs of feathers using tiny feet to dash behind MomQuail to whatever place she has in mind are fun to watch. Sometimes, we even giggle.

One afternoon, I watched the brood scurry back toward their barberry bush haven. One rebel decided to vary his route, choosing to climb a rock. It got only one step down the other side before tumbling down to the ground, about 12 inches. No harm. It righted itself and ran to catch up with its nest mates.

I had chores I was meaning to do. Eventually, I did them. After choosing to watch the quail show.

Later, we settled down to watch TV. On the screen, *The Devil Wears Prada* appeared. We had already decided to go see *The Devil Wears Prada 2* because we are Meryl Streep fans. So, instead of watching episode two of *The Forsytes* on PBS, we stayed with Miranda Priestly and the minions in her world who served her slavishly while abhorring how she treated them.

The storyline is simple. Anne Hathaway's character, Andy, an aspiring journalist, takes a job as Miranda's assistant. She has been hired in spite of not seeming to be the type to be lured into Miranda's vicious world. Nor does she dress appropriately for work at the premier fashion magazine in New York.

Andy's circle of friends, which includes a love interest, an aspiring chef, gather from time to time as the plot unfolds. They notice, at first with little comment, small changes in Andy. Gradually, her friends comment and then criticize, missing the old Andy, as she begins to dress fashionably and responds immediately to her phone whenever Miranda calls, circumstances notwithstanding.

The dissonance creates tension with her love interest, and they break off their relationship even though it seems evident that they still care about each other. At the same time, the assistant Miranda usually takes with her to Paris for a show, Emily, is injured in an accident. Miranda decides to take Andy instead, and Andy accepts.

Toward the end of the movie, Miranda and Andy are in a limo together when Miranda tells Andy that she reminds her of herself. Miranda continues and asserts that everyone wants what Miranda has and would choose her lifestyle and position in society. Andy protests that she could never have chosen to be like Miranda.

To which Miranda replied, "you already have when you stepped over Emily to go with me to Paris." Andy gets out of the limo. She tosses the cell phone tethering her to Miranda in a nearby fountain and goes back to pursuing her goal of becoming a journalist.

The film ends with Miranda spotting Andy in a crowd sometime later. They acknowledge each other. Miranda gets into her limo, and a small smile graces her face.

How many choices drove the plot? Is Miranda's smile a sign that she approves of Andy's choice to leave?

In *The New York Times* the next morning was an interview with Tucker Carlson, exploring the reasons he has publicly turned against Donald Trump. Carlson gave credible reasons. Most were grounded in his passion for the US, his religious beliefs, and opposition to foreign wars. Being skeptical when reading about such conversions is prudent, but I found the interview worth reading.

Especially provocative was Carlson's assertion that, when he talked about the war in Iran with Trump, Trump contended that "he had no choice." A President of the United States, a key figure in world affairs, the Commander-in-Chief of a major military power, believed that he "had no choice." Trump gave no reasons for his contention, but Carlson believes he knows the reasons. Read the interview to see if they make sense to you.

What stayed with me from these three examples, especially since they occurred so close to each other in time, was how much of what you and I do and say is, in fact, a matter of choice. Watching baby quail might seem frivolous, but I CHOSE to watch, even though I had other things I needed to be doing.

What started out for Andy to be something of a lark—survive a year working with a woman everybody loathed privately for her disregard for other people—became a gradual metamorphosis into a persona she did not like. She CHOSE a path. Then at a moment of epiphany, she CHOSE to leave that path.

How many choices were involved in delivering the President of the United States to a point where he claims "he had no CHOICE?" Has any one of us ever felt that way? My guess is yes. Are we really ever at a point where we have no choice? I wonder.

As I write, I hear teachers and parents and other figures of authority in a modern child's life urging "make good choices." Whether or not a choice is good is a matter of judgment. But being aware that choosing is a constant fact in life, one that is difficult to escape, is simple prudence. Even not choosing is choosing.

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