

The Choice

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A work of fiction, meant for adults. Read something else if you are not an adult, or are offended by stories with sexual content. Then again, if all you're looking for is in-out, in-out, in-out, you should probably read something else. I welcome constructive comments. Enjoy.

Ted trudged home from school. He couldn't believe it, the way things were happening. The last year and a half had been such a nightmare; his parents separating and fighting over the divorce, more fighting, being pulled out of high school in the middle of his junior year to move to this little town with his mother. The only thing his parents seemed to care about was hurting each other, using any weapon available -- including him. The way they'd set things up, fighting over him, finally agreeing it was "best" for him to stay with his mother during the week because of school and spend the weekends with his dad -- really sucked -- no time to make friends outside of school, go to parties. That and having to listen to his dad complain about having to take time off from his job to pick him up Friday, pumping him for what his mother had done, getting the same grilling when he got back to his mom's Sunday night -- what had "that man" done with him. He didn't have a home any more, shuttling between his mom's place and his dad's place, between two warring camps.

He shivered in his light jacket; he'd told them both he needed warmer clothes for the winter; it was starting to snow and all he had was a light jacket. At seventeen he was still growing; he'd grown a few inches in the last six months, now an inch taller than his dad. Clothes hadn't been a problem during the summer, but now he didn't have any warm clothes that fit. He shook his head as he walked along; he figured all their money was going to the same place as all their energy; fighting each other.

Then he smiled and looked up, wiping his nose on a sleeve. They couldn't take the books away; at least he had books. For such a small town they had a good library. The librarians were a big help; after they'd talked to his counselors at school, they let him read anything he wanted. Mister Johnson especially, he was great. Hell, Ted thought, he was more interested in how he was doing at school and coping with his parents than anyone else; he'd gotten him into the advanced program at school, gotten him in touch with a counselor, someone he could talk to about his problems, how he was feeling. Old Mister Johnson, with the bent nose and crumpled left ear, always smiling, he'd probably been with the library for a hundred years he was so old; he'd told Ted he'd had a lot of trouble growing up too, but he'd survived.

Ted shrugged and wiped his nose again; his dad was trying so hard to "do" things with him now, after ignoring him for so many years. Last weekend he'd felt sick, tired and sore. He'd just wanted to sit, read, and sleep, not go out and do things. He'd finally told dad he needed to rest. Then his dad went off on accusing his mom of putting him up to this. Ted finally lost his temper and told his dad it wasn't his mom's doing; if it were up to him he wouldn't live with *either* of them, he'd live with his Aunt Beth. That shut his dad up quick.

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The thought of Aunt Beth sent another shiver down him, a shiver of another kind, catching in his throat and his loins. Best not think about that now.

He'd found the book on the way home from school Monday. It was an old book, worn but cared for. It was funny; how had he missed the inscription in the front? He was sure he'd looked it over carefully when he picked it up, lying there off the edge of the sidewalk in some old weeds.

He took it home and after dinner started reading it. He'd never seen anything like it; it was as if it was written for him, to him. He stayed up too late reading that night. He left it home Tuesday, knowing he'd be too tempted if he had it with him at school. He finished it Tuesday night, reading through dinner, then reading it over again. It was only the next day, after finishing it again that he noticed the inscription in the front. "Miss Marie Lawrence, 223 Avon Lane." How had he missed it earlier, the gently flowing script? It looked as if it had been written with a fancy pen. Another funny thing; he knew where Avon Lane was, just a few blocks off the route he normally walked to and from school. It had a few old abandoned houses and some vacant lots.

Only one thing to do, he'd told himself. Even though he liked the book so much, it wasn't his; he'd try and return it. So today going home from school instead of going straight at the intersection, he turned right on Avon Lane. He had plenty of time; he was on his own for dinner; his mom had another meeting with her attorney. Yeah, right -- another "meeting" that would last until after ten. He bet his dad would love to hear about that, but he wasn't going to stoop to playing their games.

Ted walked up the Lane as it went uphill a bit, bent around to the right. He'd better find it soon he thought, it was getting cold and the wind was picking up. He didn't like the look of the clouds; it was probably going to snow like crazy, that had been the talk at school, the first big storm of the season.

When he got to the top of the little rise and looked down the Lane he knew which house it had to be. Yet how could it be? He was sure he'd been over this street before; he'd walked all over the area after they'd moved in. He was sure he'd remember a house like that. Yet there it stood, flanked on both sides by vacant weed-filled lots. It was a very pretty house, well kept up. He remembered the architecture books he'd looked through at the library; it was Victorian. Contrasting paint colors, lots of detail. Someone must be home, there was smoke coming from one of the chimneys.

Small flakes started to fall as he headed down to the house. As he got close he saw the white painted numbers by the door; 223. Ted looked for the doorbell; there wasn't one. There was a large brass knocker on the door though. As he lifted it, the door swung open a bit. It was warm inside, and quite cold outside.

Ted stuck his head in cautiously. "Anybody home? Miss Lawrence? I've come to return your book."

Not getting any answer, Ted stepped in and closed the door behind him. "Hello? Anyone home?" he called out.

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From the entry way he could see a flight of stairs going up, a formal parlor to his right, and a dining room to his left. For some reason he decided to go down the hall by the stairs to the back of the house.

He went past the kitchen and a small bathroom. Everything was very tidy, very clean. The decorations were incredible, like some antique store. The lighting was modern though, and it blended in so well.

The kitchen was fairly modern as well. It definitely looked as if people lived here; the sight of a bowl of fruit on the table made his stomach growl. But where were the people?

He heard something in a room off the kitchen. As he stepped into the small room he smiled; a fire was burning in the fireplace, flooding the room with warmth and light.

He looked up and gasped. Above the old fireplace mantle was a huge portrait of the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen. She was seated in a chair, dressed in a high-collar Victorian-style dress. While the style of the dress with its long sleeves didn't leave much skin exposed, it showed off her curves spectacularly.

She looked to be in her late twenties, with blue eyes and a smile that caught his breath, she seemed to look into him. Her long brown hair descended partially over one shoulder, obscuring a bit of the high lace collar. The lines of the dress showed her shapely bosom and a narrow waist. In the long fingers of one hand she held a rose, the other held a book -- it looked like the book he had found! He looked at the book still in his hand; he'd had it out of his backpack for the last few blocks. There was the pattern on the binding, just as in the portrait.

He looked up again at the portrait. No, that couldn't be... Now the book was open with the rose across the pages. He sighed. It didn't matter, she was one very beautiful lady. As he looked up at the portrait, he could imagine himself adoring someone like that. She was attractive; She was beautiful -- but he didn't feel the way about Her that he did about some of the girls at school, parading around with their tight tops and tighter jeans. "Juvenile lust" Aunt Beth called it. And how was that different from the way he thought about Aunt Beth? He sighed as he remembered the last time she'd held him, feeling that strange combination of fire and uncertainty. When he looked at the portrait, his feelings were different somehow. It wasn't the lust he felt for the girls at school, such as Cindy, teasing him by brushing up against him in her fur coat. No, it was more than teasing; she'd looked at him yesterday with those big brown eyes and told him she'd keep him warm. Nor was it the passion he felt for Aunt Beth, that incredible relaxed and satisfied feeling he had resting in her arms after a steamy afternoon or evening together. No, the Lady in the portrait was one to be adored.

Ted sighed again and turned to look about the small room. There were two chairs in the room, the large one immediately recognizable as the one from the portrait. A thrill ran through him for a moment and he was tempted to go over and smell the seat.

Then he saw a large book sitting on a stand. It was quite large, maybe a foot and a half long and a foot wide, many inches thick, with a heavy cover. The stand was heavy and simple, fashioned from dark wood, four turned legs and an angled top. He glanced up; the book was

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illuminated by a single light set in the ceiling, casting a tight cone of light around the volume and its stand.

Ted moved to the book and opened the cover. Another surprise -- the first page was a reproduction of the portrait over the fireplace. Was it a painting? A photograph? Some kind of print? Ted couldn't tell. The page, if you could call it that, was thick -- more like heavy posterboard. Looking over at the chair, the wallpaper behind it, he could tell the portrait had been done here. She was beautiful.

He turned the page. The next page held another picture. This time She was standing, wearing the same simple dress. The look on Her face was so complex; a smile, but a smile with more. She was holding the same small book in one hand and a rose in the other. She must have been a tall Lady, Ted thought to himself, judging from the chair railing on the wall behind Her in the picture.

Another page, another picture. This one was a side view of two people, Marie? should he think of the Lady in the picture as Marie, the name in the book, or just the Lady? She was turned to the side, and facing Her, looking up at Her from his knees was a young man or boy, about Ted's age. He was dressed in old fashioned clothes, the kind he'd seen in books about the Civil War. He was kneeling before Her, looking up at Her with such adoration on his face, holding a cap in his hands, his hands almost folded in prayer.

The picture on the next page took his breath away. It was the same two, but this time naked in a bed. She was on the bottom, hair spread around Her, a beautiful breast exposed, the rest of Her body covered by his, their legs entwined. Both their heads were back in ecstasy; his hands were on Her shoulders, one of Hers was on his waist, the other around his neck. The detail was astounding. Even more astounding to Ted was the feeling that he got from the picture, a feeling of ecstasy, of love, of passion. He'd seen pornographic pictures before, that's what the Internet was all about as far as some of his friends were concerned, but this picture was about passion and love.

He was getting warm; he took off his jacket and placed it on the other chair in the room, then returned to the book on its stand. He turned the page, feeling the warmth of the fire on his back, hearing the crackling of the flames.

This picture was of Her, standing in a much simpler dress, sort of daily wear he presumed. Its simple cut still showed Her figure very well. In the next page She was standing, again a side view, with another boy/man kneeling before Her. He was dressed in workman's clothing. She looked down on him with the same glow and love he'd seen in the other picture, but his look while it had some awe and adoration was pained, strained.

He held his breath as he turned the page. There was another picture of Her, alone. This time She was in a simple white dress. He turned the page to see Her and a young girl/woman kneeling before Her. The girl had the same look of adoration he'd seen on the first boy. She was reaching out with a hand to touch Her; Ted could feel what she must have felt, that adoration, just to be in Her presence, to reach out and touch Her.

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The next page shocked him again. It was another bed scene. She was on her back, head back again in unmistakable sexual ecstasy, the naked form of the girl partially covering Her, the girl suckling at one of Her magnificent breasts. She too had the look of ecstasy on her face.

Ted didn't know what to expect as he turned the page. This time She stood in formal English riding attire, complete with polished boots, a riding crop in one hand replacing the rose. She'd be beautiful in a burlap sack, Ted thought as he turned the page.

This time kneeling before Her was a young man wearing worn boots and rough clothing. He had the look of adoration. The next page showed the two of them in bed. But this time he was on the bottom, head arched back, mouth open, hands on Her waist as She rode him, riding crop still in Her hand, eyes closed, head back, Her mouth open, Her beautiful breasts caught in mid-bounce. Ted could almost hear their cries as he looked at the page.

Ted continued to turn the pages slowly, looking with wonder. It was always different and always the same; either two or three pictures in a series. First Her in some form of dress, then Her with another kneeling before Her. Always She had the same expression; one of love, of offering, of kindness. The others were always kneeling before Her, either with that look of adoration and joy, or that look of pain. He knew after a few pages if there would be a third picture in a series. If he saw that look of adoration and joy, the next picture would be of the two of them making love, capturing a moment of passion. If he saw that pained, strained look, that would be the end.

Finally he turned to a blank page. He sighed again. What a book, what a house. He thought of the pictures he'd seen, the people. The one with the riding crop came to mind; then the one with the twin girls; that one had been a tangle of limbs and hair, bodies and hands, all writhing in passion. Then there was the dark skinned boy; She was on all fours on the bed, head up, Ted could almost hear Her cry out as the young man entered Her from behind, his hands on Her waist. Or the oriental woman, head buried between Her legs.

The other pictures haunted him; those looks of torment, sometimes tears. He knew there would be no third picture for those. One of the last ones, a few back, looked like old Mister Johnson from the library; that same funny ear, that same nose, only much younger, bruises visible on his face. What could She do to cause such pain? Somehow Ted knew She could never harm anyone, she was not responsible for the beating that boy had received.

He startled and turned. Had someone called his name? Did he hear something? He sniffed the air. Was that a taste of perfume of some kind? His back and legs felt stiff from being in the same position.

"Hello? Is anyone there? Miss Lawrence? Is that you?"

Ted stepped out of the room, leaving his jacket. He went to the front door. Looking through the side window he saw it was snowing heavily. No sense in leaving now.

Another noise from upstairs? Ted looked up the stairs. "Hello?"

He started up the stairs slowly.

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He gasped when he got to the top step. There at the top of the stairs was an even larger portrait of Her. In this life-sized one She was covered in the softest full length fur coat he had ever seen in his life. Her arms were extended, inviting him to Her, the rose in one hand, the book in the other. Ted fell to his knees in tears.

It isn't fair, he thought. His parents didn't give a damn about him, unless he could be used to inflict pain or suffering. Why couldn't he find someone like Her? A place where he could be free of the turmoil, of the pain, the torment?

He heard another sound, to the left. He looked; there was an open door along the hallway, a hallway full of doors. There was a closed set of double doors on his right. He got up and went into the open room on the left, wiping his eyes as he went.

It wasn't so much a room as a very large closet with windows, lined with clothing. Not just any clothing, but all the outfits he'd seen in the large Book downstairs. The first dress, the second one, the white dress. He laughed when he found the riding outfit, the boots sitting on the floor beneath it, shining and polished.

He whirled around. Where was the fur coat? How wonderful it would be to just lose himself in it for a while, then resume looking through the house for its occupants. He looked but didn't find it.

"Ted?"

He stopped at the clear sound of a female voice. He knew instantly it was Her. He went back into the hall; one of the double doors across was now open. He walked slowly into the room.

And fell to his knees before Her, as She stood before him, radiant in Her fur coat.

Ted knew he was crying again, but this time they were tears of joy.

She extended a hand, caressing his cheek. The combination of Her touch and the caress of the fur sent shivers through him.

"Don't cry, Ted. You found my small book, and you brought it back, didn't you?"

He looked up, adoring Her, longing to fall into Her eyes, into Her arms.

"Yes, my Lady."

She smiled and he thought he was going to collapse as the warmth of Her smile enveloped him.

"And you have looked at my Book downstairs?"

"Yes, my Lady," he sighed.

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She reached out with Her other hand to hold his face. The coat parted slightly; he was almost overcome with the scent of Her perfume, warmth radiating from Her, and the sight of Her bare skin underneath the coat.

“Theodore William,” she said softly, “You have a choice to make. I will only ask you once, and you must choose now. Will you leave me now, or will you stay here with me, forever?”

Ted looked up at Her in awe; he understood now the strained and pained looks in the pictures. As Her hands held his head he laughed, letting his head fall back, held so gently by Her. Ted understood. He raised his head, looking again at his Lady; he had nothing to lose.

“Please let me stay, my Lady,” he sighed.

“Then come with me, Theodore William,” She said softly, lifting him.

Ted felt his clothes fall away as she led him to the bed, the bed he’d seen in so many pictures. He lay back on the bed and was engulfed in the softness of Her coat, the sweetness of Her perfume, the heat of Her body on top of his.

He felt Her impale Herself on him, rocking on him, caressing him, holding him to Her breasts, suckling him as he ran his hands and arms over Her, over the softness of Her body, over the softness of that incredible coat.

He looked into Her eyes as she moved faster, stronger. He heard the cry build in Her as he felt the pressure build in him. She wrapped a fur-clad arm around his head and pulled him to Her breast.

As ecstasy engulfed them and their cries filled the house, three more pages appeared in the Book downstairs. Outside amongst the swirling whiteness of the storm, the house faded from view.

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Sergeant Dellaney couldn’t believe what he was hearing from two supposed adults, the “loving” parents; no wonder the kid ran off! Here in the aftermath of the worst snowstorm in thirty years, the kid’s parents were more interested in attacking each other than in providing information for the missing person report.

Dellaney picked up his papers and stepped out of the small office, closing the door behind him. Maybe they’d start actually beating each other and he could jail them both. God, even after all these years on the police he couldn’t believe the things they yelled at each other.

He’d talked to the people at Ted’s school; they hadn’t been all that much help; good student, very bright, seemed stable, not much else. Johnson at the library had been more help than anyone, the one person in this mess that had actually tried to help the kid. He remembered the look on Johnson’s face when he told him that Ted had last been seen walking along Avon

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Lane with a book in his hand, just before the storm started. Nothing out there but vacant lots and abandoned houses; they'd checked them all, with dogs, and would check again after the storm cleared, and again when the snow cleared in the spring. The one other relative Ted had mentioned had been contacted, but hadn't heard from him.

Dellaney listened to the screaming still coming from the small office. Wherever the kid was now, it had to be better than the hell it must have been with that pair.

FIN
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