

## My Choice

By A. C. Zito

“How much did you say it was?” I looked at the clerk, confused. She smiled back at me, pressing her hand firmly on the front of its cover. It looked old.

“Give it to him, and he’ll return it to me, thank you very much.” I looked at the book and then back at her again.

“Give it to whom? And you didn’t answer my question!” She handed me the book and smiled. It was a hard cover and looked as if it would fall apart any minute.

“Who are you?” She looked at me, strange, as I held the book in my hands. “Where’d you get that?” She asked, looking at the book. “It looks like you got it out of a *museum!*” She paused to look at her watch and then began helping a customer who approached the counter.

“You gave me this...” I whispered. She wasn’t listening. The long line had now formed and now another clerk was standing at the cash register in front of me.

“Get out of the way, kid! Some people want to check out!” An older gentleman budged me out of the way as I found myself standing awkwardly between both of the lines.

“Thank you... for the recommendation... I guess I’ll just borrow it and bring it back to you then?” I told her, slowly edging myself away and out of the line. I walked outside, holding the book in hand.

*Pick an Author* it said on the cover. There was no name by which it was by. It just said those three words, nothing else. And it was written in the most elaborate cursive I had ever seen in all my life.

“Get out of the way, kid.” Someone shoved me out into the street where a car stopped abruptly, blaring its horn so loud that it hurt my eardrums. But he got me to do what he wanted me to do so I got out of the way. I moved to the side and let them pass. I stood awkwardly in the middle of the walkway holding the big hunky book feeling blessed that I was able to just borrow it and not spend any money. But, at the same time, it looked like it was about to turn to dust in a matter of seconds.

“I better get to the library so I can start reading this.” I whispered to myself, feeling giddy. I knew that I sounded nerdy just saying those couple of words out loud, but I didn’t care. I was going to be brought on an adventure by whoever wrote this hefty book I was holding.

It took me half an hour on the subway to get to the downtown library but here I was. The library’s big, gigantic doors swung open. I looked at the library and felt the dark wooden benches that sat to the side of the main foyer. The room opened up to where two sets of ornate stairs led up, on either side of the foyer, to the second floor where bookshelves could be seen sticking up and rising high towards the stain-glassed ceiling. The glass ceiling was shaped in a sort of half-globe. Rain began to pick up; I already knew it was coming from how cloudy it was outside. The raindrops began pounding down on the glass ceiling, and I felt in heaven knowing that I barely made it out of the rain even though I kind

of felt like getting soaked. It was a good feeling to me, walking in rain for just a little bit, but it does get annoying after a while. So I did it anyway: I walked outside and let the rain fall down on my dry clothes and then walked back inside knowing that now I could actually feel refreshed and not stale from the hot, humid air that was contained like a vacuum inside the library's walls.

"What did I just do?" I said to myself. I looked down at the old, wrought book. I let it get soaked and now there was no uncertainty that it would fall apart at any minute. "I've got to start reading you, buddy." I said to the book, feeling nerdy again. Of course I'm a nerd. But I've always tried not to be. In school I've always done my best to try to blend in with my surroundings. Like I knew society was a puzzle, and I had no other choice but to fit into its grooves otherwise I'd get discarded like an old, used-up toilette.

"You should let yourself be free." I looked around. The voice sounded so worn and frail. But, at the same time, sturdy and strong; like the voice had with it thousands or maybe even millions of years of experience to go along with it.

"Who said that?" But I felt stupid just saying it out loud. For, for some reason I felt like I already knew who said it. But it was still stupid just thinking about it. I looked down at the book.

I found a space in the library hidden from the rest of the world. It was my own little hiding place. I knew people could probably find me there, but it was still so grouped away from the rest of the library in the tiniest, little nook and cranny that it felt like no one really could find it. I found it one day by accidentally bumping into a bookshelf while I was in one of the rooms that no one ever goes into. It moved over a little bit and behind it, to my surprise, was another whole room. I remember moving the bookshelf back into place as I found myself in the tiny, little room. It had a golden-stained railing with two sets of mini stairs on either side of it leading into what looking to be a tiny, rectangular parlor room. I sat in the one of the cushion chairs, and I've been there ever since.

I looked at the other empty cushion chair as I sat down with the big, hefty book in my lap and thought about bringing a girlfriend here one day. There was this girl that sat behind in *calc'*. I think her name was Meghan or something. I wonder if she'd get bratwursts with me one day.

"Open me up," I heard the whisper again. I looked down at the book. And I knew this couldn't be happening. The creepy crawlies were running all up and down my back as I felt certain that maybe I should just go pick up one of the *Charlie Bone* book or *Septimus Heap* books; anything but the *Harry Potter* books. Something didn't feel right about those books; almost like they were put together with some sort of dark magic and even though they were grouped together in a group of seven, I still felt like that book series was a disgrace to the number seven.

"But I have to open you up, anyway." I said to it. Even though curiosity killed the cat, I knew that I was strong enough to withhold whatever secrets came to me from its spiny web of mysteries.

“HELLO,” a voice boomed out as I looked at a man in an all-black suit and tie. He was standing to two cars: a red and a pink one. The red was souped-up with the engine blaring as loud and as noisy as possible. The pink one was plain; simple yet elegant.

“Where am I?” It looked like I was in no space at all. Everything was all-white, like I was in an empty vacuum. And the fact that the scary, creepy-looking man wanted me to drive away in one of these cars was beyond me.

“Don’t think about it. All I ask of you is to choose this red car I have in front of you today. I designed it for you personally myself. Hand-crafted to go at however fast you want it to go and slow enough so you can cruise with whatever fine honey you choose...” Then he looked at the pink car. “And this car... well, I don’t know who made this car... probably some loser! They probably don’t even exist! So choose the red car. The pink car won’t get you anywhere! You know it! You know we only have one life, and you should be able to go as fast as humanly possible! So get in it! Get in it now! The man began trying to shove me into the car!

“HELP!” I screamed, “HELP! GET THIS SCARY MAN AWAY FROM ME!” Someone listened to my call. Because suddenly the man was gone; for the most part, anyway; but I knew that the pink was gone too. I was in an empty vacuum by myself now. And the all-white background began fading away ever so slowly. But where I’d end up next, I had no idea. All I knew that I would never get into that red car. And I must’ve screamed too loudly so the pink disappeared too. But that was fine by me. Because all that mattered as I didn’t get into the red car. And I was happy with just knowing that.