

Three paths. Three truths.
One killer.

Is it You



Celeste Yates

Preface

What is a 'Choose Your Own Adventure' book?

Originally, entertainment was playing with a deck of cards and maybe a board with a few markers. Then, the radio, a hundred years ago got invented, and everyone was sitting around, listening to tales from across the world and music to move to. But it was shortly after that that another medium, literally, hit the shelves, in the form of paperback books. The advances in technology (not digital - we're talking about steam engines) made literature affordable for the general public. Neat tricks, like printing on pages that could be conveniently chopped to eight pages, made reading the new trend.

But then, the TV hit the market, and soon after, computers. Ironically, the first games on the computer were not that dissimilar to decks of cards and board games, which originally reigned over the entertaining space. Publishing wasn't to be pushed down, though. There were those who wrote, who learned from the concept of games and decided to take linear reading into a new space. Well, that, and then also, in the 1970's, another board game (of sorts) hit the market. Yep, you guessed it. Dungeons and Dragons, or D&D. And so, Edward Packard and R.A. Montgomery decided to create a D&D, but for the solo adventurer, and set about to create almost 200 books of what

they called ‘game books’.

For ten years, they churned out classics like ‘*The Cave of Time*’ and ‘*The Mystery of Chimney Rock*.’ Books where readers could define their own journey, by making decisions, and turning to the specific chapter to find out where their quest took them. They are aimed at the middle-grader, probably because they knew that they would be the most open to the idea, and also because, well, adventure books are more fun to have with multiple endings than say a romance novel, or horror (can you imagine making choices for the ‘*Shining*’? They managed to create such large amounts of the book series by hiring other writers to expand on their books and also to explore other genres outside of *Adventure*. Later on, others grew on this idea by including character sheets within the books.

A whole generation, myself included, of humans grew up using our fingers as saved slots in cream-colored pages.

While the book craze slowly went out of fashion, as people turned more and more to computers to complete their quests, it has never really left many of us, who still hold the memory of the originals within us.

How do I use this Book?

Start with Chapter One. Read to the end of the chapter. You’ll then have a selection of options to choose from. Each one will direct you to the next chapter in your own personal journey.

There are several endings in this book, out of which three are considered ‘main ones,’ and then two more ‘hybrid’ ones. The three main ones are based on the type of choices you make, whether you are more logical, curious, or naive to how the world works. At any point, the story could end. You are welcome to

trace back your steps and try other options, as you would game.

Prefer digital?

If you do prefer a digital version, there is one available on Google Play. There are some pros with that, as there are fun badges if you get the endings, and you can easily flip through choices, without having to check page numbers.

But, there is something about being a purist and pursuing the journey as it was intended in the pages of a book. A book also smells nicer than a phone. Most of the time, anyway.

You are also welcome to try both. The link to the digital version can be found following the QR code below, or on the back of the book.

Chapter 1

Donkeys on a pogo stick... My head hurts. And why do my hands feel so heavy and sluggish? Something isn't right. There is blood on my fingers. Was it there before or after I touched my head? Where the hell am I? Why is everything so bright?

The room looks a little familiar. I think I might live here. Most of the stuff here is brown-colored, like I had seen a renovation show from the 80's and just made all my designer decisions based on their color choice of pants. Oddly, everything kind of feels baggy as well, probably like those pants did.

I had better clean up... The bathroom feels like it should be around the corner. But as I approach it, there is a weird crunching noise from under my sneakers. Glass. Oh, right. Probably from the glass coffee table that's smashed a few feet from me. Wait... is that blood on the glass? Is that from my head? Well, that explains why I can't seem to remember anything or why this all feels familiar, but I'm not sure if it is.

I look in the mirror on the wall. There is a serious gash just above my hairline. Blood is pouring out endlessly. It's dark and thick, like it's been oozing for a while. How long did I lie on the floor? I'm going to need to patch that up. There is also a heck of a lot of blood all over my shirt. In fact, a surprisingly large

amount of blood on my shirt. Enough to declare me dead almost. Too much. Is this all mine?

I've got to get to that bathroom. There are photos on the wall along the way. I can see my face in a lot of them, but I have no idea who the other people are. There is a woman in a lot of them, too... blonde, tall. She looks like she is way too good for me. And yet in a lot of them, she's really close to my face. Some of them, she is even kissing me. Is this my wife?

There are baby photos, too. A boy, by the looks of it. Dark hair. Darker than mine. Has his mother's facial features. Little facial features of mine. Very little, in fact. But these photos look old. There are some others, where the baby is a boy... and there are some of him as a teenager. We are always together. It's the three of us. This must be my family?

Ahhh... There goes my head again. I got to get this bandaged up fast... where is that stupid bathroom...

Woah.

What the hell happened here?

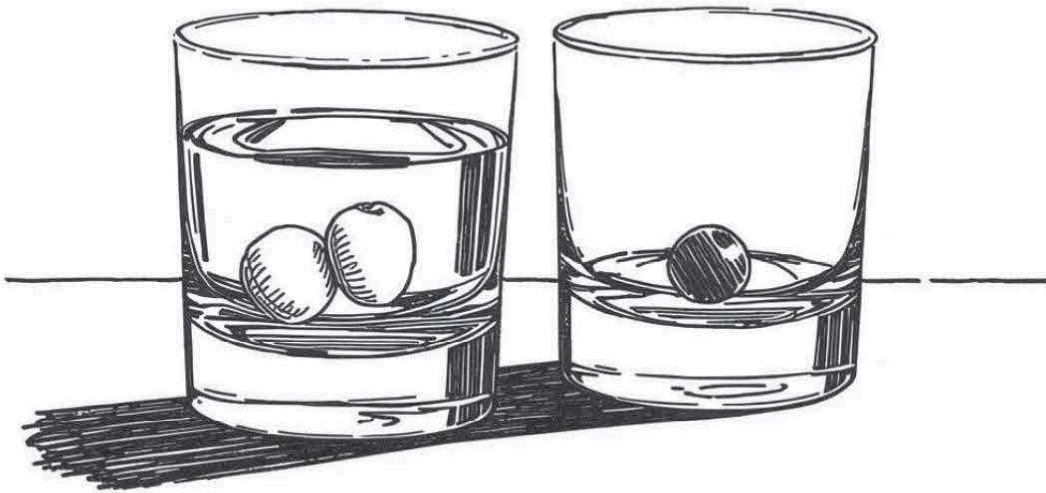
The lounge is a mess. Which concerns me, sure. But the dead body on the floor really concerns me.

My free hand clutches my stomach. I think I am going to be sick. Surely, I should be sick? Wait... Why doesn't this make me sick? There is so much blood on the rug that the body has fallen on. But I don't feel sick. In fact, all I can think about is how nice the leather shoes are. They are really shiny. This person must have had a really nice job. I look down at my own shoes. Sneakers. Grey and white, generic. No brand. This corpse makes a hell of a lot more money than I do, it would seem.

I take a few steps closer. My hand is still on my head, trying to hold it together, I guess. It helps. There is a horrible ringing in my ear as well. I'm not sure if it's from the fall or maybe

something else.

I can't really see who the dead person is. It's a man, but he is face-planting into the carpet. He is definitely bleeding, but I can't see how. Seems to be coming off his head somehow. All I can see is the wet, red blood that is congealing on his dark hair. He has that crazy superhero character haircut, with the silver streaks above his ears. I wish I had silver streaks above my ears. Really nice suit too. Still can't get over the shoes. I want to have a closer look, but then sirens in the distance alert me. I turn to the window. I can hear them, but they are not close to my house.



I take a few steps back, automatically. My shoes feel sticky. When I look down, I can see I have stepped in blood, and my footprints are now clearly marked on the rug.

Bugger.

Looking around, I see that there are other footprints as well. Looking at him and then the other prints, they look the same. I've obviously already stood in the blood before, which means that I had, at some point, taken a closer look at this guy's dead body. But something is weird. The other prints are sharper than

the ones I just made. They seem cleaner, almost.

The sirens are getting louder. Are they going to come here? Why would they come here? They would only come here if there had been noise before or something, and a neighbor would phone. Surely?

I still don't know if I know this man. Did he break into my house? I look around to see if I can figure out what the hell happened. My head still hurts, and it's difficult to concentrate.

There... On the side table. There are two glasses. One with two olives and the other with one. Clear liquid is in them. Vodka? One of them looks a little murky. Maybe something else. Or maybe cheap vodka, like my shoes. Were we having a drink? Obviously, I did know this person. I don't think you would have a drink with someone if you didn't.

I stumbled away and into the bathroom. My hands are shaking. The truth is, my breathing is going out of whack, and I am freaking out. I have no idea what is happening. I look up at the mirror, and my face is pale white.

I turn on the taps and splash water on my hands and on my face. The water turns red, and I watch it swirl around and around the basin until it disappears down the drain. The red leaves a thin film behind. It occurs to me that I am leaving more and more of myself in this place. My blood was by the smashed coffee table, footprints in the blood, and now my DNA all over the basin.

I look up at the mirror and stare hard at my blue eyes.

What am I going to do?

The sirens are getting louder.

There only seems to be one solution.

What do you do?

CHAPTER 1

- I have to make a run for it. Get rid of what evidence I can and then go out the back. Find a safe space, clean up, and just think through things rationally. (*Continue at Chapter 2*)
- I need to wait for the police. Surely they'll see I'm just as much a victim here. If I stay, I can explain... or they can explain to me what happened. (*Continue at Chapter 24*)
- I should hide. If I were really involved, the last thing anyone would expect is for the person to stay. I could hear what the police were talking about and then figure out my next move once they all leave. Through the window, I can see that my neighbor has a small shed. I could probably hide in there till it gets dark. No one would think to look there. (*Continue at Chapter 3*)
- I'm pretty sure this is my house. After all, there are photos of me all over the place. I should roll the body up in the rug and hide it. Get rid of as much as I can. I'll tell him about the coffee table. Hell, I could even show them. Be honest about the fall. They might even help me get to the hospital. Then later, I'll come back and figure out what to do with the body. (*Continue at Chapter 11*)

Chapter 2

My pants caught on the wooden fence as I jumped over it to the next yard. I hoped my neighbors weren't home. I also hoped that they didn't have a dog. I was lucky on both counts. I managed to make it to the front of their yard, and since this was a good neighborhood in good old America, there was no lock on the front gate. Because the houses here are also all generic and box-like, on box suburbs with box streets, I was now a block over, walking freely, even though I could hear the sirens whizzing down the road next to me.

I didn't really recognize any of the houses. The whole street looked new to me. Each house had perfect green grass and a front door with frosty glass embedded in it. Did I really live here? This whole suburb must be a homeowner's association dream destination. As I wandered through, staring at the neatly trimmed hedges and red mailboxes, I could hear the sirens getting quieter and quieter.

I was essentially, for now, in the free zone. But just in case they did decide to do a perimeter check around the neighborhood, I went into a light jog to get myself out. Even though moments earlier, I was envious of the dead guy in the lounge with his fancy shoes, I was thankful I was in sneakers.

Once I was close to the main road, finding a gas station was