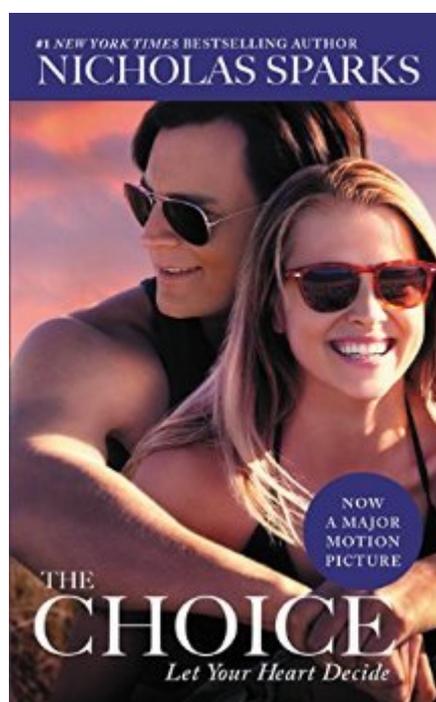


The book was found

The Choice



Synopsis

#1 New York Times bestseller Nicholas Sparks turns his unrivaled talents to a new tale about love found and lost, and the choices we hope we'll never have to make. Travis Parker has everything a man could want: a good job, loyal friends, even a waterfront home in small-town North Carolina. In full pursuit of the good life - boating, swimming, and regular barbecues with his good-natured buddies -- he holds the vague conviction that a serious relationship with a woman would only cramp his style. That is, until Gabby Holland moves in next door. Spanning the eventful years of young love, marriage and family, *THE CHOICE* ultimately confronts us with the most heartwrenching question of all: how far would you go to keep the hope of love alive?

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Customer Reviews

Reviewed by Christina Wantz Fixemeron 09/22/2007 In a small coastal town, Travis Parker has almost everything he could wish. He loves his job, he gets to hang with long-time friends, and he enjoys water sports, motorcycling, and travel. All in all, it's a good life. Everything he knows is thrown off-kilter when he meets his new neighbor, Gabby Holland, who happens to be in a relationship with another man. For her part, Gabby is excited, scared, and confused by the things she feels around

Travis. She's been dedicated to her golf-crazy boyfriend for a long while, but Travis makes her feel new things. At some point, she'll have to make a decision. Famous for his take on the sensitive hero and tender love, Nicholas Sparks latest offering is *THE CHOICE*, in which unexpected feelings lead to unexpected things. As the fun-loving guy with a big heart, Travis is easy to like from the beginning. Gabby, on the other hand, is a very mixed bag. On the surface, Gabby seems to be kind hearted, but she comes across as someone who is easily upset, has doormat tendencies, and can't quite control her emotions. Travis sees her as sweet and having a great sense of humor. Readers are likely to see her as lacking a sense of humor until later, and even then it's sketchy. Characters are supposed to grow throughout a story, and Gabby does, but her introduction makes it difficult to sympathize with her from the beginning, especially in regards to her relationship with family and, well, her steady boyfriend. A tragedy in the last hundred pages of the novel almost redeems all that went before. It's hinted at in the prologue, but Sparks elects to play a trick on the read, leading them to expect something quite different from what actually happens.

THE CHOICE by Nicholas Sparks is not a book I'd normally read. Not my favorite genre. My wife has read all of his books, and I've started reading them now too because they are easy to read and Sparks is a great writer. The summary on the inside cover tells you almost everything you need to know about the plot. Travis Parker is a 32-year old bachelor that loves having his married friends over for cookouts. Gabby is the new neighbor who is new to town, has few friends, and wonders when her boyfriend Kevin is going to ask her to marry him. Gabby at first doesn't like Travis. He seems like an insensitive neighbor. From the plot summary, you know they are going to marry, so the first two thirds of the book covers a couple of days that Gabby and Travis spend together while Kevin is out of town. They go parasailing with Travis's friends. They ride motorcycles. And they fall in love. Sparks writes in a way that keeps you turning the pages, but the first part of the book seemed overly long because you know they are going to get together. There really isn't any conflict except Gabby's doubts about her relationship with Kevin. Even that isn't as strong as it could have been. The boyfriend doesn't really stand a chance when it comes to the true love Gabby and Travis discover. As usual, Sparks creates a girl in Gabby that is, while not perfect, a girl you could imagine falling in love with. Travis has similar qualities. He is adventurous, a gentleman, and although a bachelor, is great with kids and hopes to have them someday. Part Two begins in the present, when Gabby and Travis have been married for ten years, and here, we find out what kind of "choice" Travis must face. Here, the plot thickens and the conflict increases.

I thought I had given up on Nicholas Sparks after the last two-part debacle of his that I read (At First Sight & True Believer). I skipped Dear John, the novel that came after those two. But I decided that I would give him one more chance with The Choice, which I listened to as an audio book while training for a marathon. Do not touch this book with a ten-foot pole. It is awful. However, it actually starts out promising. A young, handsome single guy named Travis is living in his small home town in North Carolina, enjoying the single life and his still close relationships with his high school buddies (who are all married with kids). Life is good for Travis. He dates around, hasn't found the right girl yet, but he's not in a terrible rush to settle down. But a new neighbor, Gabby, has moved next door. She's young, attractive, and has a longtime boyfriend who won't entertain the thought of marriage. She and Travis get off on the wrong foot because she accuses his dog of impregnating her dog. Well, it's obvious how this is going to go down, with the two of them falling in love and all, but Sparks makes it somewhat interesting, mostly because he actually seems to have carved out actual personalities for the characters that match up with the circumstances and histories of their lives. The narrator of the audio book was actually really good, particularly in his portrayal of Travis, and I actually don't think I would have enjoyed the first part of the book as much as I did if I had read it instead of listened to it. Despite their rough beginning, Travis and Gabby agree to start anew, since neither one wants to be at odds with their neighbor. Travis invites her out on his boat to spend the day with him and his friends, and they wind up spending the whole weekend together falling in love.

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