

The Chambermaid's Choice

Maria had hoped that her second marriage would make for a better future. Though born the daughter of a cook, she had dreams of being in high society. But at sixteen, she fell madly in love with a nobleman's valet. When they married, she consigned herself to be dismissed as one of the serving class. After Maria gave birth to a son, her valet husband died. At age eighteen she was a grieving widow and a single mother. Not long after, her little boy died too.

Then she got a second chance at love. But when her young musician took her home to meet his prominent family, they looked down their haughty noses at this girl from the serving class. His father would ever after refer to her as "the chambermaid." Her husband's family would always view her as an inferior interloper. It was no wonder that Maria's second marriage soon soured.

She later referred to her life as "a chain of sorrows." The couple's first child died six days after he was born. The "chambermaid" would bury five of her eight children. But her worst heartache was watching the decline of a husband who enjoyed the tavern more than practicing his music. If he wasn't in a drunken stupor, he was with other women. Then the beatings began. After he took advantage of her in one of his brutal rages, Maria discovered she was pregnant. She determined that she wasn't about to bring a child conceived by rape into her miserable world.

She found her way to a woman who traded in concoctions that induced miscarriage. Three drops of that deadly liquid would kill her baby. Any more might end her life too. She dumped it all into a cup of tea. But before she was able to drink it, the cup was accidentally knocked off the table. At first she was hysterical. Then she resigned herself to the fact that God must have a purpose for her unwanted child.

He turned out to be a strange little boy, often reclusive and unresponsive. But he did have his family's love for music. When a local teacher took him on as a piano student, no one imagined that she was gaining a prodigy. Maria was forty years old when Wolfgang Mozart allegedly declared that her son was destined for greatness. Two months later, the teenage prodigy rushed home to be at her deathbed. She told her son that giving birth to him was the best thing she ever did in her unhappy life.

We should all be grateful that Maria van Beethoven did not abort little Ludwig, a child of rape who would grow up to write the world's greatest symphonies. Maybe you, too, were unplanned or unwanted. But God conceived you as his masterpiece. Perhaps you are facing a tough choice or difficult circumstances. Answers never come easily in times like these. Hopefully Maria's story and that of her unwanted child, Ludwig van Beethoven, might give you courage to do this:

Trust God. He knows who belongs in your life and who doesn't.

I was thrust into your arms at my birth. You have been my God from the moment I was born.
Psalm 22:10

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