

## **The Lady, or the Tiger?**

### **Frank R. Stockton**

The Lady, or the Tiger? is a famous short story written by Frank R. Stockton. It was published in The Century Magazine's November 1882 issue. This story has been widely anthologized due to its fascinating plot and ending.

The story is set in a semi-barbaric kingdom where justice is administered through a unique public trial system. The accused is brought to an arena where public is gathered. He should make a choice between two chambers with identical doors, one holding a hungry tiger and the other having a beautiful bride. The accused must choose a door, leaving his fate entirely to chance.

The king's daughter falls in love with a young courtier. The king imprisons the young man and schedules a trial in the arena, an event that captures the attention of the entire kingdom. The king subjects him to a trial of the doors. Despite the truth of the young man's love for the princess, the king remains steadfast in his decision to carry out the trial.

The princess goes through an intense emotional stress as she has found out the lady behind the door. She is one of the fairest ladies in the entire kingdom. She becomes jealous of the lady before the trial begins. She finds out which door conceals the tiger and which holds the lady. She grapples with the conflicting desires of her heart. The princess makes her decision after enduring agonizing days and nights of deliberation.

On the day of the trial, the accused stands before the two identical doors. Behind one door, a hungry tiger waits to pounce upon, and a young beautiful woman waits behind another door. He looks at the princess for guidance. She signals towards the right door. The courtier, attuned to the princess's silent communication, swiftly moves to open the door she has indicated.

However, the author does not reveal whether the princess guides her lover to the door of the lady or to the door of the tiger. Stockton leaves the question unanswered: Does the courtier meet the lady or the tiger behind the opened door? The princess's decision, driven by her complex emotions and inner turmoil, holds the fate of the man.

The Lady, or the Tiger? leaves readers pondering the complexities of human emotions, choices, and the ambiguity of justice. One of the central moral lessons it conveys is the unpredictable nature of love and jealousy. The story highlights how love and jealousy can coexist within an individual, leading to conflicting desires and decisions.