

Justice- Or Is It?

“The Lady Or The Tiger” by Frank R. Stockton

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In “The Lady Or The Tiger” by Frank R. Stockton, the king proved criminal suspects guilty in a very strange and slightly barbaric way. They must choose one of two doors in an arena. Behind one door stands a beautiful lady, whom the guilty man will and must marry if he picks that door, and behind the other, a ferocious tiger that will tear him apart. The king’s daughter fell in love with a commoner, and they had kept their relationship hidden from the king. But this relationship could not last long before the king found out, and when he did, the man had to go on trial before the king and choose a door. The king’s daughter was left to decide which door she’d rather him open, for she knew the lady standing behind one of the doors. She was a lady who she had seen eyeing her loved one. When the day finally came for his trial, she knew which door she wished him to pick. Will she have her love live a happy life without her? Or will she lead him unknowingly to his death?

This story is very interesting because it takes an almost humorous thing, that these important decisions were made in a game of chance, and mixes it with parts that makes the reader really think about what they would do in such a situation. This king makes his decisions in an odd way that seems almost humorous, even though it is a matter of life or death. The story describes the amphitheatre in which this ceremony takes place as “an agent of poetic justice, in which crime was punished, or virtue rewarded, by the decrees of an impartial and incorruptible chance.” Later, the story says, “This was the king’s semi-barbaric method of administering justice. It’s perfect fairness is obvious. The criminal could not know out of which door would come the lady; he opened either he pleased, without having the slightest idea whether, in the next instant, he was to be devoured or married.” This concept seems silly to any reader, for this method of serving justice is random, as the door that the man on trial chooses has absolutely nothing to do with whether he is truly guilty or not. It is so different from the way we prove criminals guilty that it seems ridiculous. It is almost funny to think about. This story also really makes a reader think for themselves because the writer doesn’t always state the decisions characters make. The reader would have to make the decision for the character, and use what they know of the character already to make a guess, using their own opinions of the situation to decide what they think the character will do. This really adds to the story because it pulls the reader into the story even more,

and makes the reader want to read on. Another way the author draws the reader into the story is by adding a moral dilemma for a character. The king's daughter had to choose her lover's fate. Was he was to spend his life with a lady she strongly disliked and felt threatened by, or ripped apart by a tiger? As the text says, "How often in her waking hours and in her dreams, had she started in wild horror, and covered her face with her hands, as she thought of her lover opening the door on the other side of which waited the cruel fangs of a tiger! But how much oftener had she seen him at the other door! How in her grievous reveries had she gnashed her teeth, and torn her hair, when she saw his start of rapturous delight as he opened the door of the lady!" She must decide who will have him; the lady, or the tiger. It makes it really interesting because the reader must decide which they think the princess will choose, and so it sucks the reader into the story. It makes it interesting because the reader really has to know and understand what is happening, and they have to make a decision based on their own opinions of a situation and think for themselves.

I give this short story a five out of five stars because it is very interesting and it makes the reader think. Just like Cinderella, a daughter falls in love with someone that she isn't supposed to, and one of them is punished. In "The Lady Or The Tiger", however, the roles are switched. Instead of a mother that is doing the punishing, it is the father. Also, in Cinderella, the daughter is a commoner who falls in love with a prince, where in this story, the daughter is a princess who falls in love with a commoner. I like this one better because it is more dramatic and intriguing. I would absolutely recommend this book to anyone, although the difficult vocabulary can make it difficult to read. It is a very interesting story, and the plotline and characters that make any reader want to read on.