

Dead or Married
"The Lady or The Tiger?"
Frank R. Stockton
5 out of 5 stars
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In "The Lady or The Tiger?" by Frank R. Stockton, there is a cruel and uncivilized king. The king builds an amphitheater where subjects who are accused of a crime are sent. The accused subject has a choice of two doors. One of the doors contains a tiger, and if it is opened, the accused will be deemed guilty and devoured by the tiger. The other door contains a lady. If this door is opened, the accused is considered innocent and is immediately married to the lady. It didn't matter if he was already married or if he was in love with someone else. The king has a daughter who is just as primitive as he is. She has a very handsome lover, and he is found out. The king sends his daughter's lover to the arena. The princess is present at the arena, and knows who is in which door. She knows that the lady in one of the doors is lovely and admires the princess' lover. The princess desperately doesn't want her lover to marry someone else. But she doesn't want her lover to die! When her lover comes out, she gestures to a door. Her lover marches toward that door and opens it. Who comes out, the lady or the tiger?

I like "The Lady or The Tiger?" because I like the difficult decision the king's daughter has to make. The princess has to choose which door to tell her lover to open - the one with the lady, or the one with the tiger. Whatever choice she makes will be anguish for the both of them. The author intrigued me by helping me understand the gravity of the situation. He used descriptive words and helped me get into the mind of the princess. This quote is from the end of the story, when we reflect on the princess's situation. "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 the 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! How her soul had burned in agony... (pg. 238)" The author used relatable emotions and captured the horror of watching someone being torn to shreds by a tiger. However, he also gave me a sense into how the princess felt when she thought about her lover marrying someone else. Instead of simply telling me how the princess felt, he used concrete images so that I could understand her reactions and her desperation. Whatever she chooses, it will be against the princess' very nature: if she chooses the lady, she goes against her barbarism; if she chooses the tiger, she goes against her love for the man. Since the author used concrete images to convey emotions, I felt I could connect with the princess. It helped me place myself into the mindset of the princess and helped me think more creatively about what would influence her decision.

“The Lady or The Tiger?” by Frank R. Stockton gets five out five stars for its captivating conflict. It intrigued me by the title, and the options made me wonder which would be the lesser of the two evils. The demanding decision caused me to reflect about challenging decisions in my own life. This short story reminded me of Mark of the Thief by Jennifer Nielsen. One thing they have in common is that their settings both include an amphitheater. In Mark of Thief, part of the story happens in the Colosseum, and in “The Lady or The Tiger?”, part of the story takes place in the king’s arena. Another thing they have in common is the situation the characters are in. They both have the option of fighting predators in the arena. A difference they have is that the protagonist in Mark of the Thief has to make choices for himself. In “The Lady or The Tiger?”, the princess’ lover depends on her to guide him to the best door. I would absolutely recommend this short story for its descriptive writing and fascinating conflict. It helped me understand the lengths people would go to for love. I would recommend it to people willing to reflect and search their brain for what happened. This short story challenged me to think outside the box for why the princess would choose a certain door.