

“She had possessed herself of the secret of the doors. She knew in which of the two rooms that lay behind those doors stood the cage of the tiger, with its open front, and in which waited the lady” (597). Which door was her choice? In Frank Stockton’s short story “The Lady or the Tiger?” the princess holds the fate of her lover in her hands. Forbidden to be with the princess due to his lower social class, the youth must face his destiny in the king’s arena—either opening the door to the fearsome tiger to await death or the door of the beautiful lady that he will immediately marry. However, the choice has been made for him by the woman he loves, and since he trusts her, he has no doubt that she will save his life. As the crowd holds its breath, the youth walks toward the door. **Due to her great love for the youth, the princess ultimately chooses to save him and send him to the door of the lady.**

**To begin, the princess puts passionate love above jealousy and saves the young man’s life, even though it means he will marry another. “This royal maiden was well satisfied with her lover, for he was handsome and brave to a degree unsurpassed in all this kingdom, and she loved him with an ardor that had enough of barbarism in it to make it exceedingly warm and strong” (596). Her passion for the youth prevents her from committing murder by sending him to the tiger’s door. Her love for him outweighs her jealousy of the lady behind the door, and she chooses to live with her own disappointment rather than commit such a deadly crime through his death. In closing, she puts his safety and happiness above her own jealousy and allows him to live.**

**Furthermore, while it is difficult for the princess to bear the idea that the youth would marry another woman, she knows that she cannot live with the guilt of his murder. “How often, in her waking hours and in her dreams, had she started in wild horror . . . as she thought of her lover opening the door on the other side of which waited the cruel fangs**

**of the tiger!” (599).** To awaken every day with the knowledge that she had caused the death of her one true love would cause too much pain. Had she been able to live with his death, the princess never would have gone to the trouble to discover the secret of the doors; she would truly have let destiny control the situation. However, the princess cannot allow the youth to die just because he loves her. **As stated, she takes the initiative to discover the secret just to prevent his death.**

To conclude, the princess cannot watch the death of her lover. While some critics may claim that her barbaric nature has made her accustomed to the horrific violence of the arena, this belief is not true in this case because she has not had to witness that violence enacted on someone she loves. **“And yet, that awful tiger, those shrieks, that blood!” (599).** The princess knows that the youth trusts her, and she could not tolerate the look in the youth’s eyes once he discovers her betrayal. Furthermore, she would not be able to rid her mind of the images of her lover’s body being torn and devoured by the ferocious tiger. While the princess is angry that she cannot have the youth for herself, she still cannot allow him to die simply because her father forbids their love. **As a result, she refuses to send him to his death.**

**Given these facts, readers must believe that the semi-barbaric princess chooses the door of the lady for the youth.** The princess’s love is too strong for the youth to allow her to murder him by sending him to the tiger’s door. Jealousy can be such an influential factor in difficult choices, but the guilt she would feel for the rest of her life outweighs her jealousy and allows her to put her lover’s best interest first. Subsequently, the princess knows that she will not be able to watch her lover’s death. As he stands in the arena and waits for her signal, the

youth is completely trusting. “Without the slightest hesitation, he went to the door on the right and opened it” (598). What a relief for him to find the awaiting lady.