

“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. Unfortunately for the youth, the princess’s barbaric nature and jealousy of the chosen bride prevent her from making the choice he assumes. **Ultimately, the princess chooses death for her lover.**

To begin, the princess’s personal character and values show that she is semi-barbaric and self-centered. The king’s daughter had “a soul as fervent and imperious as his own” (596). Raised by a semi-barbaric king, the princess is accustomed to the gruesome nature of trials within the arena. While she would not enjoy watching her lover die, these types of horrific deaths are not foreign to her experience. Furthermore, as the king’s only daughter, she is spoiled and used to getting her every desire. “How her soul had burned in agony when she had seen him rush to meet that woman” in her dreams (599). She has been forbidden to see the youth, but does she love him enough to let another woman have him? No, her self-love outweighs her love for the youth. In closing, the princess lets her own barbarism and uncivilized nature lead her to her choice—death.

Furthermore, the princess cannot bear the idea that the youth would marry and possibly love another woman. “It was one of the fairest and loveliest of the damsels of the court who had been selected as the reward of the accused youth should he be proved

innocent of the crime of aspiring to one so far above him, and the princess hated her” (597).

Indeed, her jealousy of this woman prevents her from saving her lover’s life. Additionally, the princess believes that her lover might have even returned some of the admiring glances of this beautiful woman, which further stokes the jealous rage that builds within her.

“With all the intensity of the savage blood transmitted through long lines of wholly barbaric ancestors, she hated the woman who blushed and trembled behind that silent door” (598). The princess would never allow her lover to marry the lady if she could prevent him, even if it means that he must die. **Therefore, the princess’s jealousy far outweighs her willingness to see the youth happy with another woman.**

To conclude, the princess believes that her lover will await her in the afterlife. Some readers may assume that the princess loves the youth too much to watch him die; however, this belief is not true because she knows that they will be together after her own death.

“Would it not be better for him to die at once and go to wait for her in the blessed regions of semi-barbaric futurity?” (599). While the youth will undoubtedly be surprised about her choice, the princess can only hope that his experience in the afterlife will allow his forgiveness so that when she arrives, they can spend eternity together. Knowing that her lover will be happy in the afterlife as he awaits their future gives the princess more motivation to choose the door of the tiger. **As a result, sending the youth to the afterlife is the princess’s only option.**

Given these facts, readers must believe that the semi-barbaric princess chooses the door of the tiger for the youth. While her love for him is strong, her hatred for his chosen bride is stronger. Jealousy can be such an influential factor in difficult choices, and due to the princess’s own character, it becomes the deciding factor. Her guilt is somewhat assuaged by the

fact that she is sending him to the afterlife, a place that offers happiness and comfort, to await her. By using this to rationalize her decision, she will not even consider the alternative choice for him. 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 surprise for him to find the awaiting tiger.