

Death vs. Love

By Grace G. Bostwick

Death was jealous of Love, for though he got his people in the end, the thought that Love had his way with them first, tormented him. So he said to Love one fine day when they met in the City Park under the great Catalpa tree that was languid with blossoming, "Let's change places for a bit—just for fun," he added at the surprised look of his companion. "I get very sick of the same old tiresome job with the same old flowers and crape and people always snivelling about. What do you say?"

"Oh, I'm not tired of mine," declared Love, "only—" he hesitated and frowned in a preoccupied way.

"Only what?" asked Death curiously. "I don't have as much to do as I'd like just now," he admitted. "I fly on the wings of the wind to a prospective case, only to find so often that it's pretence after all. And, of course, I don't have anything to do with the counterfeit."

"Who has?" Death was deeply interested.

"Oh, Ambition and Greed and Lust and that crowd," he sighed. "Of course," he brightened at the thought, "they're bound to need me sooner or later."

Death chuckled. "Now's your time," he declared. "I've been rushed to the wall with the war and the thousands starving across the way. But right here in America there are cities where I brushed them off the map like flies. Got scared of me, you know, and couldn't see anything else. It was really funny the way they fell for me!"

"All right," agreed Love suddenly, with a queer look at Death. "I'll change."

So Death and Love changed places for a week. And at the end of the week, they met under the great Catalpa tree that mourned continually as her blossoms fell to the earth beneath.

Death was restless and uneasy. He looked old and haggard as he leaned against the grieving Catalpa, to glance questioning at Love.

The latter was sadly changed. Though he still wore his shining look of exaltation, its radiance had given way to a sorrow that dimmed his beauty like a fog.

Death laughed recklessly. "A cross-eyed preacher and an old maid from the country—and a few like that," he mocked. "Can you beat it? Talk about idleness—I've had enough to last a century!"

Love shook his head in sadness. "You didn't like my job very well, I take it," Death bantered in his grim way.

Love looked at him gravely. "I never envied you," he said, "but now I—I pity you."

Death straightened. "Pity me?" he asked astounded. "Why, I am greater than Life itself! Thousands kneel to me hourly! I am—I—" He paused at Love's staying hand.

"You think you end life?" Love smiled and his smile was infinitely sad for the dreadful fear that he had witnessed throughout the week, "but there is no life without love. Love is life! And I, Love, am immortal! Your work is a mockery!" he declared sternly.

And Death, who, for the first time, faced his conqueror, shrank back into the shadows and disappeared.

The Wishing Tree

By R. E. Wilkin

Cont'd from page 51

the moon splashed her with silver spray. Once more she shut her eyes and remembered. The odor of baking gingerbread tickled her nose. She could hardly keep her eyes closed. She was wishing, "Dennis, come play with me," three times. The sun was so bright, it was too good a morning to waste. There was that new kite to fly, or they might try out the fishing lines Uncle John had left. One couldn't do those things alone. No, one couldn't ever have much fun without someone to share it. She drew a long breath and held it.

"Pardon me!"

The girl jumped to her feet at the sound of the man's voice. A tall figure

in white was standing near the twisted trunk of the old tree.

"I didn't know any one was here," the voice continued. "I'm sorry I disturbed you."

Maizie's heart was pounding. It was rather confusing to be so suddenly transferred from childhood to the grown-up state—and especially when this adult world was lonely and somewhat unhappy.

"You did startle me a little—I didn't know there was anyone else here this evening except Mrs. O'Flannigan."

The man stepped back into a pool of moonlight. He seemed a bit embarrassed. Maizie noticed that he was very dark and—yes, he surely was young. Maizie gathered up her scarf and started toward the porch.

"Wait just a moment—please."

Maizie didn't answer, but she waited. "Let me explain. I used to live over that side of the hedge. I haven't been

back since I was a lad—until yesterday. The man who owns the old place kindly permitted me to wander about my old playgrounds all I pleased—and then I—trespassed."

Maizie caught her breath—suppose—but no, it couldn't be.

"You see I used to be on this side a good deal—especially under this tree."

An April breeze pushed back the tree's branches and let in a shower of light; also plucked a handful of peach blossoms from the nearby garden and gently dropped them on their heads. The man was looking out across the hedge.

"I've never learned what became of the family who lived here. There was a little girl—we called this the magic tree and," he chuckled merrily to himself, "wishes made under the magic tree came true."

Maizie sat down abruptly. She was still in the shadow. The man turned quickly.

"I am O'Hara, the new rector of St. Andrew's."

Maizie stood.

"I am Miss Eliot—school teacher—and—I must be going."

The moon's beams fell full on her face. "Maizie!" Dennis triumphantly seized her hands and drew her back to the wishing seat.

"Do you believe in fairies yet?" she questioned.

"Who wouldn't!" he exclaimed.

"Didn't I try out our old wishing game under this tree yesterday evening?"

Maizie was silent, but she smiled happily to herself.

Someone down the street was whistling Annie Laurie.

The ache feeling had gone from her throat.

You should stop criticizing others the moment it gives you pleasure.



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