

The Last Leaf – Important Questions

Q. Why does Sue rush down to meet Mr. Behrman?

Ans. Sue rushes down to meet Mr. Behrman, an old painter to pour out her worries regarding Johnsy. She told him about Johnsy's strange fancy how she was convinced that she would die when the last leaf falls.

Q. What was Johnsy suffering from? Why wasn't Johnsy recovering even after the doctor treated her every day ?

Ans. Johnsy was suffering from Pneumonia. Johnsy wasn't recovering from her illness even after the doctor treated her every day because she had made up her mind that she wasn't going to get well. The medicines didn't help her because she didn't want to live.

Q. How did Johnsy associate herself with the falling of leaves?

Ans. Leaves on the other side of the window were falling one by one. Johnsy was feeling depressed. She had lost her will to get well. She thought that she would die when the last leaf fell from the creeper.

Q. How did Sue help Johnsy during her illness?

Ans. She tried her best to soothe her friend, talked about clothes and fashion, whistled while working to distract her mind, called the doctor and did her best to get her friend rid of the illness and encouraged her not to loose heart.

Q. What was Behrman's dream? How did it come true?

Ans. Mr. Behrman's dream was to create a masterpiece. The dream was realised when Johnsy fell ill. He painted a leaf on the other side of her window glass at night and it saved the life of the girl but cost him his own life.

Q. Who was Behrman? What was his masterpiece?

Ans. Behrman was a sixty year old painter who lived on the ground floor. His masterpiece was the 'Ivy Leaf' that he painted on the wall and which looked so real. It was a masterpiece because it saved someone's life though it cost him his own life.

Q. How did Sue react when she learnt about Johnsy's belief regarding the falling leaves of the ivy creeper?

Ans. Sue called Johnsy's belief nonsense because the falling of leaves was quite natural in autumn and had nothing to do with Johnsy's getting well. She was worried about Johnsy's pessimistic view of life.

Q. How could Johnsy's life be saved?

Ans. No medicines or care could make Johnsy healthy as she felt the last day of her life would be when the last leaf fell from the creeper. Behrman saved her life by painting the last leaf on the wall which never fell.

Q. 'She is a true and faithful friend.' Comment.

Ans. She loved Johnsy and looked after her like a mother in her state of illness. She helped her get out of depression and was happy at Johnsy's recovery.

Q. 'I can't draw the curtain for I need the light.' Who said this? What does 'light' symbolise ?

Ans. Sue said this. Light here symbolises hope and optimism. Light could keep her spirit to fight alive. She might also have thought that a dark room would have made Johnsy more hopeless. The will to fight would have completely finished in the absence of light.

Q. 'The last leaf is indeed Behrman's masterpiece. Justify this statement.

Ans. An art which is aesthetically supreme as well as begets the most miraculous change in human lives is a masterpiece. An art that defies being an art but also a reality because of its deceptively real nature is a masterpiece. Behrman's last leaf looked so real that Johnsy could hardly make out that it was a planted piece of art on the creeper, though she understood at the end that it was but a piece of art. Ironically, art is permanent or permanently captures the nature whereas nature is woven in the cycle of birth, growth and death. The last leaf did that which Johnsy and the doctor had failed to do : to stir an urge to live in Sue. The last leaf achieved this impossible thing miraculously. It also led Sue to realise that she had been uncooperative to Johnsy. She also realised that 'it is a sin to want to die'. It was Behrman's dream to draw a masterpiece before he died. What can be more appropriately defined as a masterpiece than that which dawned hope and an urge to live in a dying soul. The last leaf by Behrman is indeed a masterpiece as it gave new life to Sue.

Q. Johnsy could not get better despite the efforts made by the doctor and her friend Sue's ministrations. Discuss the negative feelings that keep one ailing and also discuss the values which remove such feelings and infuse a person with a desire to live.

Ans. Johnsy could not get better despite all efforts. The reason for it was that she had associated herself with the negative feelings. She looked at an ivy creeper outside on the wall shedding its leaves. She started counting backwards from twelve. Sue asked what it was all about. Johnsy said that she would die with the falling of the last leaf. Sue told her that was all nonsense. But it had no effect on Johnsy. She had established a bond of her life with the ivy leaves. She felt she would die when the last leaf fell from the creeper. It was raining heavily and wind was blowing. It seemed that last leaf would fall any minute Behrman painted the ivy leaf, putting his own life in danger. Next day when Johnsy saw

the leaf she felt elevated. She was so sorry for being depressing and gloomy. But Behrman had caught pneumonia and died two days later. But his masterpiece had saved the life of Johnsy. The sacrifice of Behrman shows that love, resolution of one's own conflicts, selfless service and realisation inspire one to live.

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