

Mr. Dominguez

The Last Leaf

Two artists, Sue and Joana (nicknamed "Johnsy") worked and lived in a single and very cheap studio. Sue came from Maine and her friend from California.

In November, pneumonia spread like an epidemic in the artist colony. One after another, the inhabitants were coming under the spell of this disease. This virulent pneumonia quickly made Johnsy to go to bed so seriously ill. With a pallid face, she lay helplessly on her iron bed looking at the outside sky through the open window. Johnsy's condition deteriorated fast. Seeing that her friend was sleeping dangerously, Sue called the doctor to see her friend Johnsy lying down hopelessly sick.

The doctor made a strict observation as he measured Johnsy's temperature with the thermometer. He declared that the girl was so unwell, and had only a 10 % chance of surviving. He also said that Johnsy had lost all her will to recover. She could overcome that situation only if she had a strong enough desire to fight off the affliction. Saying this, he asked Sue if the patient had any unfulfilled desire.

Sue, being Johnsy's best friend, told the doctor that Johnsy had the dream of painting the Bay of Naples someday. The doctor was somewhat unconvinced at this. He asked if Johnsy had any young man in mind. Sue quickly replied in the negative. The doctor concluded that the patient was too weak to survive.

Nevertheless, he assured that he would give the best medicine possible to help her, but the medication lost its efficacy by half, if the patient lost her will power to win her battle against the disease.

After the doctor left, Sue cried miserably shedding many tears. Then pulling herself up, she brushed her hair and went to Johnsy's bedside just to lift her friend's gloomy mood. Johnsy lay in her bed motionless, like deadwood.

Sue went to the kitchen to prepare some broth for her friend, but while she was preparing it, she heard a low sound which appeared to be a countdown exercise. Quite perplexed, Sue rushed to her friend's bedside. Johnsy lay there motionless but staring at something outside and counting backwards. In her faint voice, she counted 12, 11, 10, and so on.

Looking outside through the window, Sue wanted to figure out what her friend was doing. A withering old vine was visible. The autumn cold win had stripped the vine of its leaves laying bare its skeleton branch. Sue asked Johnsy what had engaged her attention. Johnsy said there were 100 leaves three days ago. Their number was diminishing fast as they fell faster then. It was getting easier to count. Only five left.

Sue still could not get any clue, then Johnsy told her that the fall of the last leaf would bring her death. She was seeing death knocking at her door. She was waiting for the last leaf to fall so that she could depart.

Sue went to see their neighbor Behrman. He was a painter living in the ground floor. He was past sixty and had a typical beard. As a painter he had struggled for nearly forty years to accomplish his dream, it was the huge desire to paint a masterpiece, but never had been able to start the job in right earnest.

Sue saw Behrman in his dimly lit studio in the ground floor. A black canvass mounted on an easel had stood there for twenty years without receiving Behrman's touch. Sue narrated how Johnsy had been lying so sick in her bed with her obsession with the last leaf that stood between her and her death.

Johnsy had fallen asleep, Sue accompanied by her bedside. The next morning Sue got up from her one hour sleep to find Johnsy staring at the window. But what a surprise! Despite the strong winds and lashing rain that battered the place the whole night, a lone leaf had managed to survive. It was still alive in that vine creeper's skeleton.

Johnsy was astonished to see the way the lone leaf had withstood the lashing of the rain and the wind. She imagined that the leaf would fall that day. The day dragged on monotonously. The night fell bringing

with it another spell of heavy rain and strong wind. The leaf appeared to defy the fury of the weather because it stayed attached to its stem. The leaf was still there.

Johnsy kept her gaze fixed on that unbeatable leaf. Then she called Sue out of the kitchen. There appeared to be a complete turned around in Johnsy's mood. She seemed to have realized her folly in giving up on her life when the single leaf stubbornly stayed put in its place. She was clearly expressing her repentance. She asked for a little broth and the mirror to see her face. She even wanted to sit up so she could see Sue working at the kitchen.

An hour passed. Johnsy recalled her desire to paint the Bay of Naples.

The doctor came in the afternoon and told Sue that the patient had a much better chance of living than before. Then he said that he had to go downstairs to see another patient. That was Behrman. He was seriously sick with pneumonia, and his condition was really hopeless. He was shifted to the hospital to wait out his last hours.

The next day the doctor came back to visit Johnsy again and told her she had improved significantly. The doctor also announced them the terrible sad news of Behrman's death. Some days before, he had been found in his room in great pain. His shoes and clothes were completely drenched and cold. No one could know where Behrman had been in that wet night. A lantern and a ladder that had been dragged from its place, some scattered brushes, and a palette with green and yellow colors mixed on it. Saying this, Sue asked her friend to look out of the window, at the last ivy leaf on the wall. She asked Johnsy to think why the last leaf remained static unmoved by the winds. It was Behrman's masterpiece, the one he painted the night that the last leaf fell.

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Name: _____ **Date:** _____

The Last Leaf.

1- What disease does Johnsy have?

- A. _____ Flu
- B. _____ Cancer
- C. _____ Pneumonia
- D. _____ Cold

2- What is the difference between Johnsy and Sue?

- A. _____ Johnsy is a dreamer while Sue is a workaholic
- B. _____ Johnsy is a workaholic while Sue is a dreamer
- C. _____ Johnsy is ugly while Sue is pretty
- D. _____ Johnsy is a boy while Sue is a girl

3. Mr.Berhman's dream is to paint a masterpiece

- A. _____ True
- B. _____ False

4. Where does the story take place?

- A. _____ Study room
- B. _____ Studio
- C. _____ Cheap studio
- D. _____ Expensive studio

5. Mr. Behrman died because of coronavirus

- A. _____ True
- B. _____ False

6. Johnsy has no will power to face life.

- A. _____ True
- B. _____ False

7. They live in _____

- A. _____ different houses
- B. _____ the same house.
- C. _____ Village of Miami
- D. _____ The New York village

8. Mr. Behrman loves Sue & Johnsy..

- A.____ True
- B.____ False

9. The story's theme is sacrifice.

- A.____ True
- B.____ False

10. Johnsy and Sue are enemies.

- A.____ True
- B.____ False