

Chapter 6. The Last Leaf

Passage 1

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

In November a cold, unseen stranger, whom the doctors called Pneumonia, stalked about the colony, touching one here and there with his icy fingers. Over on the east side this ravager strode boldly, smiting his victims by scores, but his feet trod slowly through the maze of the narrow and moss-grown "places."

Mr. Pneumonia was not what you would call a chivalric old gentleman. A mite of a little woman with blood thinned by California zephyrs was hardly fair game for the red-fisted, short-breathed old duffer. But Johnsy he smote; and she lay, scarcely moving, on her painted iron bedstead, looking through the small Dutch window-panes at the blank side of the next brick house.

One morning the busy doctor invited Sue into the hallway with a shaggy, grey eyebrow.

"She has one chance in – let us say, ten," he said, as he shook down the mercury in his clinical thermometer. "And that chance is for her to want to live. This way people have of lining-u on the side of the undertaker makes the entire pharmacopoeia look silly. Your little lady has made up her mind that she's not going to get well. Has she anything on her mind?"

Who visited the colony in November?

Answer:

In November, the colony was stalked by Pneumonia, whom the author calls an unseen stranger visiting the places and touching here and there with his icy fingers.

Question 2.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

In November a cold, unseen stranger, whom the doctors called Pneumonia, stalked about the colony, touching one here and there with his icy fingers. Over on the east side this ravager strode boldly, smiting his victims by scores, but his feet trod slowly through the maze of the narrow and moss-grown "places."

Mr. Pneumonia was not what you would call a chivalric old gentleman. A mite of a little woman with blood thinned by California zephyrs was hardly fair game for the red-fisted, short-breathed old duffer. But Johnsy he smote; and she lay, scarcely moving, on her painted iron bedstead, looking through the small Dutch window-panes at the blank side of the next brick house.

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How did the disease affect Johnsy?

Answer:

Johnsy was psychologically affected by Pneumonia more than being physically affected. She deeply believed that she would never get well and her doctor told Sue that she was trying hard to not get better.

Question 3.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

In November a cold, unseen stranger, whom the doctors called Pneumonia, stalked about the colony, touching one here and there with his icy fingers. Over on the east side this ravager strode boldly, smiting his victims by scores, but his feet trod slowly through the maze of the narrow and moss-grown "places."

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What according to the doctor could help Johnsy recover from her illness?

Answer:

According to the doctor if Johnsy set her mind on something or someone which could give her hope to live for example a man, then there would be a chance of her recovering soon from the illness.

Passage 2

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

"Well, it is the weakness, then," said the doctor. "I will do all that science, so far as it may filter through my efforts, can accomplish. But whenever my patient begins to count the carriages in

her funeral procession I subtract 50 per cent from the curative power of medicines. If you will get her to ask one question about the new winter styles in cloak sleeves I will promise you a one-in-five chance for her, instead of one in ten."

After the doctor had gone Sue went into the workroom and cried a Japanese napkin to a pulp. Then she swaggered into Johnsy's room with her drawing board, whistling ragtime.

Who are the speakers in the extract? What are they talking about?

Answer:

The speakers in the extract are Sue and the doctor who is treating Johnsy. The two are discussing Johnsy's health condition.

Question 2.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

"Well, it is the weakness, then," said the doctor. "I will do all that science, so far as it may filter through my efforts, can accomplish. But whenever my patient begins to count the carriages in her funeral procession I subtract 50 per cent from the curative power of medicines. If you will get her to ask one question about the new winter styles in cloak sleeves I will promise you a one-in-five chance for her, instead of one in ten."

After the doctor had gone Sue went into the workroom and cried a Japanese napkin to a pulp. Then she swaggered into Johnsy's room with her drawing board, whistling ragtime.

Explain the line 'I subtract 50 per cent from the curative power of medicines'.

Answer:

The above words are uttered by Johnsy's doctor on realising that Johnsy is not willingly trying to recover from her illness. The doctor says that if Johnsy sets her mind to dying instead of recovering from her illness, he will subtract 50 percent from the curative power of his medicine. This means that not only medication but the patient's willpower to recover is equally important.

Question 3.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

"Well, it is the weakness, then," said the doctor. "I will do all that science, so far as it may filter through my efforts, can accomplish. But whenever my patient begins to count the carriages in her funeral procession I subtract 50 per cent from the curative power of medicines. If you will get her to ask one question about the new winter styles in cloak sleeves I will promise you a one-in-five chance for her, instead of one in ten."

After the doctor had gone Sue went into the workroom and cried a Japanese napkin to a pulp. Then she swaggered into Johnsy's room with her drawing board, whistling ragtime.

When did the doctor promise a one-in-five chance of Johnsy recovering?

Answer:

The doctor said that if Sue could make Johnsy discuss the latest winter fashion in cloak sleeves, he would promise a one-in-five chance of her survival.

Question 4.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

"Well, it is the weakness, then," said the doctor. "I will do all that science, so far as it may filter through my efforts, can accomplish. But whenever my patient begins to count the carriages in her funeral procession I subtract 50 per cent from the curative power of medicines. If you will get her to ask one question about the new winter styles in cloak sleeves I will promise you a one-in-five chance for her, instead of one in ten."

After the doctor had gone Sue went into the workroom and cried a Japanese napkin to a pulp. Then she swaggered into Johnsy's room with her drawing board, whistling ragtime.

What did Sue do after the doctor left?

Answer:

After the doctor had left, Sue went into the workroom and cried hard worrying about Johnsy's health. The doctor's remarks on Johnsy's health made Sue cry 'a Japanese napkin to a pulp'. Soon after that breakdown, Sue composed herself and walked into Johnsy's room creating an impression that everything was fine. She didn't want to upset Johnsy more by discussing how seriously ill she was and that she wouldn't live for long.

Question 5.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

"Well, it is the weakness, then," said the doctor. "I will do all that science, so far as it may filter through my efforts, can accomplish. But whenever my patient begins to count the carriages in her funeral procession I subtract 50 per cent from the curative power of medicines. If you will get her to ask one question about the new winter styles in cloak sleeves I will promise you a one-in-five chance for her, instead of one in ten."

After the doctor had gone Sue went into the workroom and cried a Japanese napkin to a pulp. Then she swaggered into Johnsy's room with her drawing board, whistling ragtime.

Explain the phrase 'swaggered into Johnsy's room ... whistling ragtime'.

Answer:

The author has used the phrase to explain how Sue entered Johnsy's room after the discussion with the doctor. Although Sue was very upset over Johnsy's health, she didn't make it obvious to her friend when she entered the room. She came into the room confidently humming a jazz tune, making Johnsy feel comfortable and good despite her health condition.

Passage 3

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

As Sue was sketching a pair of elegant horseshow riding trousers and a monocle of the figure of the hero, an Idaho cowboy, she heard a low sound, several times repeated. She went quickly to the bedside.

Johnsy's eyes were open wide. She was looking out the window and counting – counting backward.

"Twelve," she said, and little later "eleven"; and then "ten," and "nine"; and then "eight" and "seven", almost together.

Sue look solicitously out of the window. What was there to count? There was only a bare, dreary yard to be seen, and the blank side of the brick house twenty feet away. An old, old ivy vine, gnarled and decayed at the roots, climbed half way up the brick wall. The cold breath of autumn had stricken its leaves from the vine until its skeleton branches clung, almost bare, to the crumbling bricks.

"What is it, dear?" asked Sue.

"Six," said Johnsy, in almost a whisper. "They're falling faster now. Three days ago there were almost a hundred. It made my head ache to count them. But now it's easy. There goes another one. There are only five left now."

"Five what, dear? Tell your Sudie."

What was Sue drawing?

Answer:

Sue was sketching a pair of elegant horseshow riding trousers and a monocle of the figure of a hero, an Idaho cowboy.

Question 2.

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"Five what, dear? Tell your Sudie."

What was Johnsy doing when Sue was drawing?

Answer:

Johnsy was lying on her bed with her eyes wide open, staring outside the window and murmuring something softly while Sue was drawing.

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"Five what, dear? Tell your Sudie."

What was Johnsy counting? Why?

Answer:

Johnsy was counting the leaves falling from the Ivy vine. She did this as she believed when the last leaf would fall from the wine, she would die.

Question 4.

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"Five what, dear? Tell your Sudie."

What can one conclude about Johnsy's state of mind from the given passage?

Answer:

Johnsy seemed to have gone into a state of frenzy because of her failing health. She had given up hope of living, which was also the reason why the doctor had said that she may not survive. She was counting the leaves falling from the Ivy wine and had formed an impression in her mind that when the last leaf would fall off the wine, she would die.

Passage 4

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

"Oh, I never heard of such nonsense," complained Sue, with magnificent scorn. "What have old ivy leaves to do with your getting well? And you used to love that vine so, you naughty girl. Don't be a goosey. Why, the doctor told me this morning that your chances for getting well real soon were – let's see exactly what he said – he said the chances were ten to one! Why, that's almost as good a chance as we have in New York when we ride on the street cars or walk past a new building. Try to take some broth now, and let Sudie go back to her drawing, so she can sell the editor man with it, and buy port wine for her sick child, and pork chops for her greedy self."

"You needn't get any more wine," said Johnsy, keeping her eyes fixed out the window. "There goes another. No, I don't want any broth. That leaves just four. I want to see the last one fall before it gets dark. Then I'll go, too."

"Johnsy, dear," said Sue, bending over her, "will you promise me to keep your eyes closed, and not look out the window until I am done working? I must hand those drawings in by to-morrow. I need the light, or I would draw the shade down."

What 'nonsense' was Sue talking about?

Answer:

Johnsy told Sue about how the decreasing leaves on the Ivy vine were taking her closer to her death. Sue found no logic in Johnsy's assumptions and therefore called it nonsense.

Question 2.

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What connection had Johnsy made with the falling leaves?

Answer:

Johnsy stared at the Ivy vine outside her window every day. She had started believing that she would cease to exist in other words die when the last leaf fell from the vine. She had begun to number her days of life by the decreasing leaves on the vine.

Question 3.

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Why did Sue want to complete her drawing?

Answer:

Sue wanted to complete her drawing and sell it to the editor so that she could get some money to buy port wine for Johnsy and pork chops for herself.

Question 4.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

"Oh, I never heard of such nonsense," complained Sue, with magnificent scorn. "What have old ivy leaves to do with your getting well? And you used to love that vine so, you naughty girl. Don't be a goosey. Why, the doctor told me this morning that your chances for getting well real soon were – let's see exactly what he said – he said the chances were ten to one! Why, that's almost as good a chance as we have in New York when we ride on the street cars or walk past a new building. Try to take some broth now, and let Sudie go back to her drawing, so she can sell the editor man with it, and buy port wine for her sick child, and pork chops for her greedy self."

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Why did Johnsy keep staring out of the window?

Answer:

Johnsy kept staring out of the window because she wanted to see when the last leaf from the vine fell. When the last leaf fell she would know that it was time for her to let go of her life forever.

Passage 5

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

Old Behrman was a painter who lived on the ground floor beneath them. He was past sixty and had a Michael Angelo's Moses beard curling down from the head of a satyr along with the body of an imp. Behrman was a failure in art. Forty years he had wielded the brush without getting near enough to touch the hem of his Mistress's robe. He had been always about to paint a masterpiece, but had never yet begun it. For several years he had painted nothing except now and then a daub in the line of commerce or advertising. He earned a little by serving as a model to those young artists in the colony who could not pay the price of a professional. He drank gin to excess, and still talked of his coming masterpiece. For the rest he was a fierce little old man, who scoffed terribly at softness in any one, and who regarded himself as especial mastiff-in-waiting to protect the two young artists in the studio above.

Who was Behrman?

Answer:

Behrman was an old man in his sixties who had a Michael Angelo's Moses beard curling down his satyr like face and a body of an imp. He was a failed painter who was waiting to create his masterpiece. Old Behrman lived on the ground floor beneath Sue and Johnsy's studio.

Question 2.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

Old Behrman was a painter who lived on the ground floor beneath them. He was past sixty and had a Michael Angelo's Moses beard curling down from the head of a satyr along with the body of an imp. Behrman was a failure in art. Forty years he had wielded the brush without getting near enough to touch the hem of his Mistress's robe. He had been always about to paint a masterpiece, but had never yet begun it. For several years he had painted nothing except now and then a daub in the line of commerce or advertising. He earned a little by serving as a model to those young artists in the colony who could not pay the price of a professional. He drank gin to excess, and still talked of his coming masterpiece. For the rest he was a fierce little old man, who scoffed terribly at softness in any one, and who regarded himself as especial mastiff-in-waiting to protect the two young artists in the studio above.

Explain the line "forty years he had wielded the brush without getting near enough to touch the hem of his Mistress's robe".

Answer:

Behrman was an unsuccessful artist. In his forty years as a painter, he had failed miserably at even sketching the outline of the masterpiece that he so dearly wish to paint.

Question 3.

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What was Behrman's source of income?

Answer:

Behrman earned money by posing as a model for young artists who couldn't afford to hire professional models.

Question 4.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

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Describe Behrman's character. What does O'Henry achieve by introducing Behrman in the story?

Answer:

Behrman is a perpetual drinker and an unsuccessful painter. Though he is generally rude, he feels highly protective of Sue and Johnsy who live in the studio above him. Although he smells of gin all the time, he appears to be a good natured man who always speaks of his coming masterpiece. O'Henry has used some comical relief by introducing Behrman in the story The Last Leaf. As we know, the story is rather a sad and mournful tale about Sue trying hard to bring her best friend back on the road to recovery after a brief illness. The conversations that happen between Sue and the doctor and between Sue and Johnsy are rather serious and dull. However, with the introduction of Behrman, the tone of the story is lightened.

Passage 6

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

Sue pulled the shade down to the window-sill, and motioned Behrman into the other room. In there they peered out the window fearfully at the ivy vine. Then they looked at each other for a moment without speaking. A persistent, cold rain was falling, mingled with snow. Behrman, in his old blue shirt, took his seat as the hermit miner on an upturned kettle for a rock.

When Sue awoke from an hour's sleep the next morning she found Johnsy with dull, wide-open eyes staring at the drawn green shade.

"Pull it up; I want to see," she ordered, in a whisper.
Wearily Sue obeyed.

But, lo! After the beating rain and fierce gusts of wind that had endured through the livelong night, there yet stood out against the brick wall one ivy leaf. It was the last one on the vine. Still dark green near its stem, with its serrated edges tinted with the yellow of dissolution and decay, it hung bravely from the branch some twenty feet above the ground.

What did Sue ask Behrman to do for Johnsy?

Answer:

Sue requested Behrman to paint a leaf similar to the last leaf on the Ivy vine so that Johnsy would think that the last leaf was still on the vine.

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How was the weather outside when the two went up to Johnsy's room?

Answer:

The weather outside was rough when the two went up to Johnsy's room. It was raining persistently and snowing at the same time.

Question 3.

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Explain the symbolism of the climate in relation to Johnsy's illness.

Answer:

The doctor had given up hope of Johnsy recovering because she herself lacked the willpower to recover. The weather outside was unpleasant with persistent rain and snow. The atmosphere outside was dull and grim, just as Johnsy's health and her emotional condition.

Question 4.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

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Explain the term 'livelong night'.

Answer:

The term 'livelong night' stands for a night that seemed never-ending. The weather on that night was very rough with persistent snow and rain. Moreover, both Sue and Johnsy knew that the last leaf would fall from the Ivy vine that night. The inclement weather and the fragile

condition of Johnsy added hours to the already restless night making it seem longer than normal.

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Explain the symbolism of the leaf that hung to the vine.

Answer:

The last leaf that clung to the ivy vine carries deep symbolism. It represented Johnsy, who was ill and in a critical condition. The leaf was also brave like Johnsy, who, although showed no inclination directly, clung on to life in her own way despite all odds by means of the leaves on the vine.

Passage 7

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

When it was light enough Johnsy, the merciless, commanded that the shade be raised.

The ivy leaf was still there.

Johnsy lay for a long time looking at it. And then she called to Sue, who was stirring her chicken broth over the gas stove.

"I've been a bad girl, Sudie," said Johnsy. "Something has made that last leaf stay there to show me how wicked I was. It is a sin to want to die. You may bring me a little broth now, and some milk with a little port in it, and – no; bring me a hand-mirror first, and then pack some pillows about me, and I will sit up and watch you cook."

An hour later she said:

"Sudie, someday I hope to paint the Bay of Naples."

Why does Johnsy refer to herself as merciless?

Answer:

Johnsy calls herself 'merciless' as she had set a date for her own death by looking at and counting the leaves falling from the Ivy vine. She ceased to care for anyone, even for her roommate and friend Sue, who had been taking very good care of her during her illness.

Question 2.

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An hour later she said:

"Sudie, someday I hope to paint the Bay of Naples."

What was Sue doing when Johnsy called her?

Answer:

Sue was stirring chicken broth over the gas stove when Johnsy called her.

Question 3.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

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Johnsy lay for a long time looking at it. And then she called to Sue, who was stirring her chicken broth over the gas stove.

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An hour later she said:

"Sudie, someday I hope to paint the Bay of Naples."

Why did Johnsy feel that she had been a bad girl?

Answer:

When Johnsy saw that the last leaf had managed to cling on to the vine despite the blustery weather of the previous night, she realised that she had been mean in giving up on life. The last leaf being still there on the vine was like a revelation to her. She understood how inappropriate it was to think about death when the doctor and Sue were trying their best to treat her illness.

Question 4.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

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An hour later she said:

"Sudie, someday I hope to paint the Bay of Naples."

What did Johnsy ask Sue to bring for her?

Answer:

Johnsy asked Sue to bring her some broth and milk with a little port wine in it. She also asked Sue to give her a hand mirror and pack some pillows around her so that she could watch Sue cook.

Question 5.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

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The ivy leaf was still there.

Johnsy lay for a long time looking at it. And then she called to Sue, who was stirring her chicken broth over the gas stove.

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An hour later she said:

"Sudie, someday I hope to paint the Bay of Naples."

How does Johnsy's attitude change in this given extract?

Answer:

Throughout the story, we see a very cynical and a pessimistic Johnsy, who has no willpower or strength to recover from her illness. Sitting idle in her bed, she thinks that she too will wither away like the falling leaves from the Ivy vine outside her window. She starts counting the falling leaves and concludes that she is going to die when the last leaf falls off. However, after a very stormy night when Johnsy sure that the last leaf has fallen instructs Sue to draw the curtains she sees that the leaf is still clinging on to the vine. The leaf's struggle to survive helps her realise how mean and illogical she has been to herself and to Sue in waiting for her death. In the given passage, we see a different Johnsy, someone who is ready to bounce back to life.

Passage 8

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

And that afternoon Sue came to the bed where Johnsy lay, contentedly knitting a very blue and very useless woollen shoulder scarf, and put one arm around her, pillows and all.

"I have something to tell you, white mouse," she said. "Mr. Behrman died of pneumonia to-day in the hospital. He was ill only two days. The janitor found him the morning of the first day in his room downstairs helpless with pain. His shoes and clothing were wet through and icy cold. They couldn't imagine where he had been on such a dreadful night. And then they found a lantern, still lighted, and a ladder that had been dragged from its place, and some scattered brushes, and a palette with green and yellow colours mixed on it, and – look out the window, dear, at the last ivy leaf on the wall.

Why has the author called the woollen scarf 'useless'?

Answer:

On showing signs of recovery, Johnsy once again mentioned her wish to paint the Bay of Naples to Sue. Johnsy's even contemplates knitting the woollen scarf which she may never need just to feel the normality of life that she has returned to.

Question 2.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

And that afternoon Sue came to the bed where Johnsy lay, contentedly knitting a very blue and very useless woollen shoulder scarf, and put one arm around her, pillows and all.

"I have something to tell you, white mouse," she said. "Mr. Behrman died of pneumonia to-day in the hospital. He was ill only two days. The janitor found him the morning of the first day in his room downstairs helpless with pain. His shoes and clothing were wet through and icy cold. They couldn't imagine where he had been on such a dreadful night. And then they found a lantern, still lighted, and a ladder that had been dragged from its place, and some scattered brushes, and a palette with green and yellow colours mixed on it, and – look out the window, dear, at the last ivy leaf on the wall.

Why does Sue call Johnsy 'white mouse'?

Answer:

People who are close to each other often call each other with different names. Johnsy often called Sue 'Sudie' out of affection. In the same way, Johnsy was called 'white mouse' affectionately by Sue. Since Johnsy fell ill all she did was lay on her bed passively awaiting her impending death. She showed no sign of hope or interest in life. More over her illness had rid her skin of its colour. This prompted Sue to use the phrase 'white mouse' to refer to her.

Question 3.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

And that afternoon Sue came to the bed where Johnsy lay, contentedly knitting a very blue and very useless woollen shoulder scarf, and put one arm around her, pillows and all.

"I have something to tell you, white mouse," she said. "Mr. Behrman died of pneumonia to-day in the hospital. He was ill only two days. The janitor found him the morning of the first day in his room downstairs helpless with pain. His shoes and clothing were wet through and icy cold. They couldn't imagine where he had been on such a dreadful night. And then they found a lantern, still lighted, and a ladder that had been dragged from its place, and some scattered brushes, and a palette with green and yellow colours mixed on it, and – look out the window, dear, at the last ivy leaf on the wall.

What did Sue have to tell Johnsy?

Answer:

Sue had to tell Johnsy that Old Behrman had died of pneumonia that day in the hospital. She also had to confess the truth about the last leaf on the vine.

Question 4.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

And that afternoon Sue came to the bed where Johnsy lay, contentedly knitting a very blue and very useless woollen shoulder scarf, and put one arm around her, pillows and all.

"I have something to tell you, white mouse," she said. "Mr. Behrman died of pneumonia to-day in the hospital. He was ill only two days. The janitor found him the morning of the first day in his room downstairs helpless with pain. His shoes and clothing were wet through and icy cold.

They couldn't imagine where he had been on such a dreadful night. And then they found a lantern, still lighted, and a ladder that had been dragged from its place, and some scattered brushes, and a palette with green and yellow colours mixed on it, and – look out the window, dear, at the last ivy leaf on the wall.

How did Behrman die?

Answer:

Old Behrman spent the entire night painting the last leaf on the Ivy vine outside Johnsy's window in the rain and the storm. The janitor found him in the morning in his room helpless and in pain. His shoes and clothes were icy cold and wet. Behrman was ill for the next two days, and given his age, he couldn't recover and died of pneumonia.

Question 5.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

And that afternoon Sue came to the bed where Johnsy lay, contentedly knitting a very blue and very useless woollen shoulder scarf, and put one arm around her, pillows and all.

"I have something to tell you, white mouse," she said. "Mr. Behrman died of pneumonia to-day in the hospital. He was ill only two days. The janitor found him the morning of the first day in his room downstairs helpless with pain. His shoes and clothing were wet through and icy cold. They couldn't imagine where he had been on such a dreadful night. And then they found a lantern, still lighted, and a ladder that had been dragged from its place, and some scattered brushes, and a palette with green and yellow colours mixed on it, and – look out the window, dear, at the last ivy leaf on the wall.

Can one say that the last leaf was Behrman's masterpiece that he always wanted to paint?

Answer:

The last leaf is definitely Behrman's masterpiece. It was so accurate that it gave a new lease of life to Johnsy who had quit on life despite the doctor and her friend telling her that she would be fine. He was very protective about the two women and he proved this by sacrificing his life so that Johnsy could see the leaf whenever she woke up and thus find hope to live on.