

grand house with formal gardens, a boxwood labyrinth, and a fine carriage with six white chargers to draw it. His work was easy, his wealth was great, and he had everything a man could ever want.

One day a girl came to Death's door. She had blue eyes and a smile like sunshine. "I've come to be your housekeeper," she said.

"Do I need a housekeeper?" Death asked, astonished.

"Everybody needs a housekeeper." And so she moved in.

Now, Death was not stupid. He saw immediately that the girl was intent upon mischief. A moment's thought brought to him that he had her lover. But he said nothing, for he was curious to learn the exact nature of her game.

The next day, Death came home from work to find his house clean as a whistle. The floors shone, the windows sparkled, and there were flowers piled around the fire safe. "What's this for?" he asked.

"To honor your heart. That's where you keep it, don't you? I'd keep my heart in the fire safe if I could."

"No, no," Death grumbled. "I keep it in the topmost room of the tallest turret of my mansion." And he went off to bed.

The next day, when he returned home, the tallest turret of his mansion was wreathed in flowers. "What's this?" he asked.

"It's in honor of your heart," the housekeeper told him. "You told me you keep it there."

"I lied," Death said. "I keep it in an egg within a jeweled box at the bottom of the water in the well in the back yard." And, so saying, went off to supper.

The next day, Death came home to find, predictably enough, that the well had been surrounded by flowers. But the housekeeper was sopping wet, and there was a sheepish look in her eyes.

"Fool!" Death cried. "You thought you could find my heart, crush it, and kill me. But the joke is on you. I don't have a heart!" And, laughing cruelly, he went off to his library to read.

But on the fourth day, Death came home from his labors to find nothing left of his fine mansion but glowing embers. The gardens had been dug up, the boxwoods uprooted, the carriage smashed to flinders, and the throats of all six chargers had been slashed. It was incomprehensible to him that one small girl could have done so much damage. In a single day, she had pauperized him.

In a rage, Death rushed out into the world, striking out wildly, left and right, at all around him. Whether he slew the girl is not known, even to him. For he had lost all his composure. He was in a blind and passionate frenzy.

As he remains, even to this very day.