

Ada and the Rascals

A Tale From Holland

A farmer named Johan lived in Holland long ago. Sad to say, he wasn't very intelligent. The smartest thing he ever did was to fall in love with Ada, for she had wit enough for two. They married and settled on a farm in the countryside.

One day Ada told Johan to take their fattest cow to town and sell her for no less than one hundred guilders. (Guilder is the Dutch name for dollar.) He left early in the morning, leading the cow with a rope. About a mile down the road, he passed by an inn where three rascals liked to eat.

"Let's trick Johan out of his cow," said one. "He is stupid and it should be easy to cheat him."

The others agreed and they quickly thought of a plan. All three raced across the field and posted themselves on the road about half a mile apart. When Johan passed by the first rascal, the man said, "What a nice old horse you have there. Are you taking her to town?"

"Are you blind?" asked Johan. "Anyone can see that this is a cow."

Johan kept walking and came to the second fellow who said, "Good day, farmer. That certainly is a fine horse you're leading. Why not ride her?"

"No, no!" said Johan. "This is a cow! Ada said to take the cow to market, and that's what I'm doing."

"I know a horse when I see one," said the scoundrel, and he walked away.

Johan grew worried and thought that perhaps he had made a terrible mistake, but then again, he thought to himself, the animal at the end of the rope looked more like a cow than a horse.



The third joker walked up and said, "Hello, good neighbor. Is your horse for sale?"

"That does it," said Johan to himself. "It's a horse after all."

"I asked if she is for sale," said the rascal, "because I will give you thirty guilders for her."

Johan knew that thirty guilders was a good price for an old horse and said, "It's a bargain."

When the simple man returned home, Ada was furious! She realized that her husband hadn't stood a chance against three clever thieves and decided to teach them a lesson. She went to town early the next morning and set a trap. Then she went home and gave Johan an old brass ring and told him exactly what to do.

Johan began walking to town that afternoon, the ring prominently displayed on his finger. He arrived at the inn and found the three rascals inside. They gladly accepted his offer to buy refreshments. When it came time to pay the bill, Johan held up his hand, twisted the ring on his finger, and asked, "How much do I owe?"

"Nothing," said the innkeeper. "It's all taken care of."

The three men looked at each other in astonishment, but said nothing. They walked with Johan to the next inn and joined him in an expensive meal. After they had eaten their fill, Johan twisted his ring. The second innkeeper rushed to their table and thanked them for coming, adding quietly that the bill was already paid for.

The scoundrels had to know where Johan had found the charmed ring. They kept pestering him with questions until at last he replied, "My wife discovered it in the garden. She said it is worth a fortune."

"We'll give you a hundred guilders for it!" said the lead rascal. "How does that sound?"

"Like a fortune!" said Johan. "It's a bargain."

Johan took the money home and Ada was pleased. "Now we have 130 guilders from those thieves," she explained, "One hundred to pay for the cow and thirty more to pay for the food and drink which I arranged with the innkeepers this morning."

Those three rascals never tried to trick simple Johan again.

Pleasant DeSpain
Thirty-Three Multicultural Tales to Tell
August House