



JOHN THE SIMPLETON

One day the royal court announced that the princess was looking for a groom. She would marry the suitor who would make her laugh the most. The rumour quickly spread across the country, even to a faraway village where two brothers lived. Both at once decided they would take their chances to conquer the princess's heart. They were both very smart and well-read. One of them spoke Latin as if it were his native tongue, he was interested in medicine and adept at wood carving like no other. The other one also spoke good Latin, he was interested in law and philosophy.

Both brothers argued in front of their father which one would win the princess's heart, and so the old man saddled two horses and let them go to try their luck. They were already sitting on their horses when suddenly their forgotten third brother appeared. No one thought to pay him any mind since he wasn't as smart as his two brothers. In fact, everyone called him John the Simpleton.

"Where are you off to dressed up like this?" asked John.

"Have you not heard the royal notice? The whole country is talking about it. We are going to cheer up the princess and then she will marry one of us," answered his brothers.

"Wait for me then, I'm coming with you! I want to marry the princess too!" said John, but everyone around only laughed at him.

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The two brothers spurred their horses and galloped away while John the Simpleton went to their father and asked him for a horse as well.

“I won’t give you anything, you would only bring us shame. Why don’t you go clean the stables instead?” said the father.

But John wasn’t going to give up that easily. He took a goat from the pen, jumped on its back and rode after his brothers. He sang as he travelled and was always looking around for something to bring the princess as a gift. Meanwhile, his brothers were silently passing through a forest, planning how to convince the princess to marry them.

“Hey, I’m coming too!” shouted John at his brothers when he spotted them in the distance. He was holding a dead mouse by its tail and waving it around like a victory flag. “I can’t wait for the princess to see this,” shouted John merrily.

“What in the world are you planning to do with that, you fool?” asked the brothers.

“I bet the royal daughter had never seen a mouse before,” told them John.

Both brothers roared with laughter. “Go ahead and try it,” they retorted and rode on.

“Oi, dear brothers, look what I’ve got!”

They stopped to look what their brother found this time. He was waving an old holey pot he pulled from a pond: “I’m sure this will fit right into the princess’s royal kitchen!”

The two of them cackled and mocked John, telling him to make sure to take it with him.

Before long John was waving at his brothers once again: “You won’t believe this, the princess had never seen a piece of mud this soft! It will surely cheer her up like nothing else,” rejoiced John and stuffed both his pockets full of mud.

His brothers only shook their heads, kicked their horses and trotted away to arrive at the royal palace before John to save themselves from the shame.

The palace was already swarming with suitors, but after seeing the princess, each of them had to leave empty-handed. Everyone who entered the royal chambers was suddenly left speechless and the princess soon had them thrown out. Finally, it was time for John’s brothers to shine. The first one entered and as soon as he

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stepped in, he froze in shock before the stern looks of the scribes in the room. They were there to write down his every word, but he didn't manage to form a single one.

"Eh, must be hot in here?" he finally managed to say. It really was hot, so hot that drops of sweat were dripping from his forehead.

"It is hot, my pops is roasting roosters for lunch, that's why," yawned the princess in response.

Something funny in reply was almost crawling towards the tip of his tongue, but he swallowed it before it got out and the princess was already nodding at the guards to escort him out.

Then it was the second brother's turn, but he didn't fare any better. The heat in the room must have overheated his head and he didn't say one word, let alone a funny one. So the guards took him out to the first brother.

About that time John the Simpleton finally arrived at the royal courtyard. The exhausted goat was panting her lungs out, both from the journey and from the heat because John rode her all the way to the princess in the royal chambers.

"What a swelter!" he exhaled.

"That's because we're roasting roosters next door," replied the princess.

"Isn't that a lucky coincidence! I've got this mouse with me. I can go right ahead and cook it along with them," rejoiced John and proudly picked up his mouse by the tail.

"You could, but I'm not sure what you would cook it in, we don't have any pots in the palace," brushed him off the princess.

But John readily pulled out his old pot, already putting his mouse inside.

"I guess that should do, but don't you need some kind of stew to go with the mouse?" smirked the princess at John, almost starting to enjoy the bizarre conversation.

John pulled out the mud from his pockets: "Don't you worry, princess, this is guaranteed to make a splendid stew!"

Suddenly the princess was having fun with John. The scribes were writing everything down because every word was to be recorded, then printed out the

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next day and sold for a penny to the people.

“I like you, you’re the only one who can talk to me and that’s why I’m going to marry you,” said the princess and the scribes wrote everything down.

And thus John the Simpleton became the king. He got half of the kingdom and a beautiful princess on top. But who knows how it really was. This is just what we read in the morning press that we bought at the market for a penny. And who knows if one can believe what’s written in the newspapers.