

Johnny Lingo's Eight Cow Wife

Written by Bill Perkins

Patricia McGeer tells the story of a journey to the island of Kiniwata in the Pacific. While on the island she repeatedly heard stories about Johnny Lingo--the brightest, strongest and richest man on the island.

Eight Cows

Every time his name surfaced people laughed. When Patricia asked why she was told that he had paid eight cows to marry Sarita. While not ugly, Sarita was skinny, walked with hunched shoulders and a bowed head. The kindest word anyone used to describe her was, "plain." Everyone on the island agreed her father would happily have taken two or three cows. Instead, Johnny Lingo paid more for Sarita than anyone on the island had ever paid for a wife.

Curious, Patricia visited Johnny Lingo's home. Once inside Johnny boasted about the great price he paid for the woman he chose to be his own. "Always and forever, when they speak of marriage settlements, it will be remembered that Johnny Lingo paid eight cows for Sarita," he said.

The Most Beautiful Woman

As he spoke the most beautiful woman Patricia had ever seen momentarily entered the room. The lift of her shoulders, the tilt of her chin, the sparkle in her eyes all revealed a stunning charm.

After she left, Johnny asked, "You admire her?"

"She's glorious," Patricia said. "Is she Sarita?"

"Perhaps she doesn't look the way they say she looked," Johnny said.

"How can she be so different?" Patricia wondered aloud.

An Eight-Cow Wife

"Many things change a woman," Johnny said. "Things that happen inside, things that happen outside. But the thing that matters most is what she thinks about herself. Before I offered eight cows for her, Sarita believed she was worthless. Now she knows she is worth more than any other woman on the island. I loved her and wanted to marry an eight-cow wife. And she became one."

Chosen Before the Foundation

When I first read that story I thought of Ephesians 1:4-5 where Paul wrote, "Just as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will."