

Johnny Lingo's 8-Cow Wife

In a story published in *Woman's Day* magazine and reprinted in *Reader's Digest*, author Patricia McGerr recounts the story of Johnny Lingo whenever she sees husbands or wives belittling or scorning one another.

"When I sailed to Kiniwata, an island in the Pacific, I took along a notebook filled with descriptions of flora and fauna, native customs and costumes," she said. "But the only note that still interests me is the one that says: 'Johnny Lingo gave eight cows to Sarita's father.'"

She explained that everyone on the island was quick to tell her that she must meet Johnny Lingo, and then they would precipitously break into laughter. "What goes on?" she demanded. "Everybody tells me to get in touch with Johnny Lingo and then breaks up. Let me in on the joke."

It was explained that Johnny was the brightest, strongest (and richest) young man on the island. Inquiring how someone so respected could be the butt of such jokes, McGerr was told, "Only one thing. Five months ago, at fall festival, Johnny came to Kiniwata and found himself a wife. He paid her father eight cows!"

Knowing the culture of the island, McGerr knew this to be an inordinately large price to pay (2 to 3 cows would have been considered a fine price).

"Good Lord!" she said. "Eight cows! She must have beauty that takes your breath away."



On the contrary, she was told the young woman, Sarita, was quite plain, homely and unconfident. Her father feared he would be stuck with her for life. The people of Kiniwata were quite amused by how the likes of someone as smart and savvy as Johnny Lingo could be so badly duped by the young woman's father.

But when McGerr visited Lingo on his island of Nurabandi, what she found truly took her aback. She met his bride – a lovely and graceful young woman full of confidence and charm. Puzzled, she questioned Johnny about the transformation.

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“Do you ever think,” he asked, “what it must mean to a woman to know that her husband has settled on the lowest price for which she can be bought? And then later, when the women talk, they boast of what their husbands paid for them. One says four cows, another maybe six. How does she feel, the woman who was sold for one or two? This could not happen to my Sarita.”

“Then you did this just to make your wife happy?” asked McGerr.



“I wanted Sarita to be happy, yes. But I wanted more than that. You say she is different. This is true. Many things can change a woman. But the thing that matters most is what she thinks of herself. In Kiniwata, Sarita believed she was worth nothing. Now she knows she is worth more than any other woman in the islands. I wanted to marry Sarita. I loved her and no other woman. I wanted an eight-cow wife.”

Johnny Lingo wanted an eight-cow wife, and he got one. The high price he was willing to pay for his bride produced the desired effect.

Because her husband was willing to pay so much for her hand in marriage, Sarita discovered a new level of self-esteem and self-worth. Johnny Lingo got his eight-cow wife because that was the value that he communicated to her.

And so it is with every husband. You, too, get the wife you're willing to pay for; not just in cows – or even dollars. By treating your wife with love and respect, you gain a wife with self-respect and confidence.

The Apostle Paul put it this way: *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her* (Ephesians 5:25 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter