

Funny Jo's Wedding

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Funny Jo had turned forty.

All the time since the year of his mother Baker-Marte's death, he had worked as an extra hand at the surrounding farms, floater in the springtime, harvester in the summer and lumberjack across the forest coupes in the winter. Liveliness and laughter lay like smoke around him, where ever he came and went, and the whole household joined in; because the work was like a dance, and all the hardship at the farm was sort of stricken off, when Funny Jo was inbetween the other workers. "You're laughing all day you Jo," they tended to say.

"D'you mean I's supposed to do it all night, eh?" Funny Jo then replied.

Then the laughter was loose again.

Sensible people along the village marvelled about Funny Jo not getting married, as the rapid worker he was, and well admired amongst the girls. But Funny Jo was not listening to it all. If anyone made an uttering about the subject, he put on a serious face: You must have forgotten the Seventh Prayer," he was then likely to answer. Then the people had to laugh.

Until, at last, the little lass came by, who made Funny Jo forget the Seventh Prayer in The Prayer for Our Father. Her name was Kirsti Troen and came from the Tyldalen as a milkmaid at Hangard one summer, Funny Jo did some harvesting work there. She was petite and quiet with a thick, yellow-grayish hair, which she constantly tucked in behind the headscarf, and a couple of big, grey eyes which always was focused on one, quietly and puzzled. And when she spoke her voice was confident and trustworthy. One would think she knew of nothing but the good in the world. All though she came from a place far North in the Tyldalen and was of poor people.

This Kirsti Troen Funny Jo could not get out of his mind. He stayed at Hangard all winter, and when the spring arrived he astonished the people of the village by building a small cottage in the hill above the Hangard field, on an old settlement which had lay deserted for almost a half of a hundred years.

When someone passed by, either from the seter* or from the village, they paused and asked him what in all heavens kind of building he put up, he usually came over to the hafell* and sat down: " Oh, it's sorto a kindo' botsfengsel* he answered. Here it's gonna be punishment for life."

But to her he said nothing.

It was in the fall the same year.

Down the road from Hangard seter came a little lass. She was petite, with a grey hair scarf tightly bound under the chin, head half tilted carrying a heavy bentwood butter box in her hand.

She had a quick pace; but when she arrived to the small grove, where Funny Jo's cottage was located, she abruptly lowered her pace; she had heard wood chopping sounds down there.

Eventually she came up front, urging to pass.

But in the middle of the grove Funny Jo stood chopping fencing sticks. He had begun putting up a skigard* surrounding his cottage. And the chimney was puffing smoke.

"Kirsti, come here and elp me now," he said.

She stopped and smiled.

"Oh, I think you're good enuff to elp yoursef," she replied.

It came out strangely quiet.

He put down the axe.

"Yes, then I spose I'd rather elp you," he said.

He went straight up to her, took the butter box out of her hand and headed for the cottage. "No, really, she said.

"Yeah, really," he replied; he turned and looked back; then he went straight to the cottage.

Kirsti Troen stood, head struck. She took a couple of steps to follow him, but paused again and stood still.

Then he came to the door.

"So, where did you wander off?" he shouted.

She felt like laughing.

"No, where did you go - with the buttah?" she replied.

He stood with hands in his pockets, looking at her.

"The buttah is where it's s'posed to be," he answered.

She put out her hand, a little hesitating.

"No, give it back to me, now," she begged.

"Find it yourself," he said; then he turned and went back inside as nothing had happened.

She smiled and came quickly after, but hesitated in the doorway.

"No, dear," she said.

A fresh smell of pine hit her face; the freshly lumbered wooden wall shun lightly; a broad bed with a woven bedspread on top of the sheepskins was standing next to the window, where the sunbeams fell in; a new pinewood table with a Hogset-bench at another window and between the fireplace and the bed a huge cabinet.

"No, dear!" She repeated it and put her hands silently together where she stood looking around the room.

Funny Jo was standing by the fireplace and looked at her with a strange, bashful smile.

"Stop saying that!" he said.

"Yes, I'll rightfully say it!" she answered. "This I never expected!"

She straightened her hair scarf and came closer. Her eyes roamed the bed with the beautiful bedspread.

Funny Jo saw it and smiled.

"Wife bed," he said.

Kirsti Troen slowly got flushing red. She didn't reply. Just turned and looked around the room.

"Give me back my butter box now," she begged and had a kind of impatience in her voice.

He didn't answer. Just stood there watching her.

Then she started looking for the butter box, bashfully; glanced at him once in a while, paused, tucked her hair inside the hair scarf and looked at him.

"it's a sorry wife," he said, "who doesn't know where the buttah box 's s'posed to be."

She puffed.

I aint seeing no wife," she replied. Again she got flushing red.

"Me neither," he said. And that is bad, when you're gonna marry!"

She went up to the cabinet and opened it.

"What're ya up to now?" she asked. There was the butter box.

"Yes, but there's no one asking me!"

Kirsti Troen laughed and picked up the butter box.

"Me neither," she said – she didn't know where this would take her.

He came up to her. And before she could turn, she felt his arm around her.

"Then you can ask me, Kirsti, he pleaded. His voice was so small and fragile.

She turned towards him, but didn't let go of the butter box. She was almost pale; the big grey eyes looked straight into his face.

"So, is this your true intention then?" she uttered lowly, and her mouth looked somewhat weak.

"No, this is my wife," he answered; He held her tightly and swung her around. Then the butter box fell to the floor.

A while later, as Johan Dilt came with the Bjonnardshorse up the seter road downwards passing the Funny Jo place, his eyes were catching a boy and a girl sitting on a log, laughing, in front of Funny Jo's new cottage.

"Dear, was it you laugh at?" he asked; he stopped and stood watching the two with his mischievous eyes, from one to the other.

"Cause we're getting married!" Funny Jo replied.

Kirsti Troen slapped his arm cheerfully.

"Shh, Silent now!" she shouted.

Funny Jo held his hands up.

"Yes, now you can see, Johan," he said, "Now all the misery starts!"

A day in the Christmas holidays Funny Jo was strolling north towards the vicar's farm to claim for marriage, coming into the building, he met the vicar's wife in the hallway.

"Well, Funny Jo, how are things with the Seventh Prayer?" She had heard Funny Jo's saying about marriage.

Funny Jo looked up at the vicar's wife, and he got this fervently goodness in his eyes.

"I won't need 'at anymo'," he answered; "I mostly need 'a fourth."

The vicar's wife got a good laugh. "Yes, that could be very much so, Jo," she said. "When the children start coming, then..."

"Oh, them children won't come all at once," Funny Jo replied: Han slowly took the stairs up to the vicar's office, as the vicar's wife came smiling out in the kitchen to see if everything was in order for the dinner.

"Well, Jo?" The Vicar looked up from the protocol holding the feather quill between his teeth.

Funny Jo closed the door behind him.

"Oh, yes, the Vicar can say," he answered.

The Vicar put down the quill, smiling subtle. He turned the chair half towards him.

"So, what is your errand?" he asked.

Funny Jo stood still for a moment. Put on his jovial smile, stood watching, first down on his boots, then to the Vicar.

"Well, sumthin bad it is," he said. And there it came:

"I sort of thought of getting married on me."

He stood curious, looking at the Vicar.

The Vicar hid a smile and took the protocol.

"It's not the worst I have heard, Jo," he answered.

Jo came forward, with waddling steps, hat held between hands.

"No, they say it's sepposed to be the best," he replied, innocently.

The Vicar turned pages, smiling.

"It can be both, Jo!" he said.

Jo stood, reverently.

"Yes, it could likely be the worst," he mumbled to him self.

The Vicar took the quill, dipped it in the inkpot.

"I don't think that's a danger in this case," he said – "it is after all little Kirsti Troen-?"

A mild look came upon Funny Jo's face.

"yes, she is lil," he answered.

"She's the best you can have," the Vicar said, determined.

He started writing.

"I agree," Funny Jo added; he stood there with a warm look watching the Vicar write.

There was asked for year of birth and date; certificates were presented and undergone;

the Vicar had written it all into the protocol, and the day for the wedding was noted.

Now the Vicar threw sand on it all as the maid Gjertrud came up the stairs announcing dinnertime.

"Well," the Vicar said; he put on his light official face. "it is indeed an important move, Jo – with great commitments –"

Jo looked up.

"Yes," he said, deeply serious minded. "It is sumthin I fear i cannot accomplish!"

The Vicar looked at him, curiously.

"The demand is one should fill the earth, and that I don't think I'm man enuff to make dat happen!"

The Vicar looked at him, puzzled.

"It's demanded that one should fill the earth, and I don't believe I'm man enuff to make dat happen," Funny Jo continued, serious as before.

"Oh, you will manage doing your part," he said.

Funny Jo smiled.

"It ain't easy taking on to a task you're not experienced for," he answered, weakly.

The Vicar turned, took the protocol and put in to it's place on the shelf.

"The experience will come," he said. "When you have three, four children, I believe you have enough of that pleasure."

"I'll neva believe that," Funny Jo answered. "Much wants more, and many will crave more," he said. He produced his purse from his pocket and handed a daler* to the Vicar.

The Vicar gave him back three mark* and twelve skilling*. Funny Jo looked at him.

"I guess the Vicar aint one of those who wants more," he said.

"No, Jo," the Vicar answered. "I am also one of those who doesn't have much," he added.

Funny Jo stood with three mark and twelve skilling in his hand, partly stretched out towards the Vicar.

"No, Jo," the Vicar repeated.

Funny Jo stood for another moment.

"Was it no or yes da Vicar sayed?" he asked.

The Vicar pushed his hand back.

"Think of Kirsti, Jo," he said; he put on his friendliest smile. "There will be enough of occasions later!"

Jo took the money and put them slowly back into the purse.

"Oh, I'll be thinking of the Vicar too," he said.

Then he put out his hand.

"Vicar, thank you," he said, this time seriously.

The Vicar took his hand.

"May you have a good marriage, then, Jo," he said.

"Same to you, Vicar," Funny Jo answered.

When the Vicar came down to the dining room, where the beer soup, herring and the smoking hot potatoes stood on the table waiting, the smile on his face was still present in his cheek and around the eyes.

"Now, what is it," the Vicar's wife asked; she sort of got a glare of the Vicar's smile.

"Oh, it was just Funny Jo," the Vicar answered, stroke her cheek and sat down.

Then came the wedding day.

Funny Jo had asked around at some acquaintances throughout the village if they wanted to marry too, or if they at least would join them and witness the misery; they had accepted with a smile and sent wedding presents and food, both butter and cheese and other nibfood to Hangard, where the wedding should be held in the old hall.

It wasn't grand, the hoop coming from Hangard driving and walking in between with Funny Jo alone in the leading sleight, driven by the Hangardgubben* himself; it was even a lesser hoop coming from the Vicar's farm, the Vicar strolling as usual in his robe and bottforer* even in the winter day towards the church and little Kirsti Troen beside the Vicar's wife in the broadsleigh; but the church was full both in churchchairs and standings; because everybody wanted to see smiles in church today, as Funny Jo was standing as groom.

But when he eventually came up the aisle and sat down on the Hangard stool, they could all see he was pale, and when they looked for the bride, little Kirsti Troen, she sat in the very Vicar's farm chair alongside the Vicar's wife carrying a nice little wreath of myrtle surrounding her yellow grayish hair.

Suddenly everything was silent. A feeling flew through the church which today Funny Jo would experience something more delicate and good than could be covered behind a joke.

And as the psalms were playing and the two came up and stood hand in hand at the altar, the Vicar spoke about a man who had received a great gift, one who did him well and nothing evil for the the rest of her life, and those who had good eyes could see that Funny Jo and Kirsti Troen sort of came closer to each other as the words were said. Even if they stood looking downwards the whole time.

Not until the questions and the answers were said, and the Vicar declared them husband and wife, Funny Jo regained kind of his own power. They observed him heavily drawing his breath standing more straight.

And when the Vicar read advises for young newly wed from the book and came to a place where it is demanded to fill the earth – he dared himself to give a glance at the Vicar.

But the Vicar held the book higher up in front of his face, reading with a loud voice, face half turned towards the bride. An irresistable merry sensation allmost took away his power.

Then came the final psalm.

They went hand in hand out of the church, the two of them, through a long chain of acquaintances, who stood watching him and her in quiet marvel whom they knew so well. But as Funny Jo safe and sound came out on the road and sat in the Hangard sleigh at Kirsti's side, he took a look at the surrounding people: "This I'll neva' do again," he said. And then he drove off.

*

Word explanations

Seter: A cottage with grazing fields in the mountains

Botsfengsel: here meaning: A place to contemplate over one's sins and wrongdoings.

Skigard: A fence made of raw cut woodboards, put diagonally in between vertical wooden rods bound together with willow branches.

Daler: Monetary value, like dollar.

Mark: Monetary value, like pence

Skilling: Monetary value, like shilling.

Hangardgubben: The house master at Hangard farm

Bottforer: Light Vicar's shoes

Translation: Runa Aadalen

Translated in the spirit of the old way of writing, slang wise, word wise and grammar wise.