

Joha and the End of the World

Mohamed, Ahmed and Mehdi were the best of friends. They usually shared nearly everything but today they were rivals. They were showing off their new designer clothes to each other.

"This shirt suits me so well."

"My trousers are a perfect fit."

"These trainers were worth every dinar."

And so on. The trouble was, they had spent all their money on their fine clothes and now they were beginning to feel hungry. From outside they could hear the sound of their neighbour, Joha, and his goat which he kept on a small patch of land at the back of the house.

"I've got an idea," said Mehdi, who was the cleverest of the three friends. "Do you remember this story?" He scrolled through his smart phone until he found what he was looking for. It was an article about a man who was predicting that the world was going to end the very next day. Mehdi explained his idea to the others then they went to see their neighbour, Joha.

He was sitting in the shade and weaving wool. His goat was trying to eat the wool but the rope he was on was too short. Joha looked up as the three friends approached. They looked concerned.

"Good morning, boys," said Joha. "What's the matter?"

"Oh, Joha. Have you not heard the news?" asked Mohamed.

"The world is going to end tomorrow," said Ahmed.

"See, it's written here," added Mehdi. He showed the screen on his iPhone to Joha even though he knew that Joha couldn't read. Joha took the smart phone and looked at it with a serious face.

"Oh dear," he said. "That is serious. But would you mind reading it to me?"

Mehdi took the phone and read out loud "Tomorrow, at 11.30 in the morning a giant asteroid will hit the earth and everyone will be killed. Only cockroaches will survive."

"I see," said Joha stroking his thin, wispy beard. "That is not good. You, me and the goat here will all perish, then?" The boys solemnly nodded their heads.

"What we were thinking," said Mohamed "is that we might have a final feast before we all die." He looked at the goat. "As the goat is going to die tomorrow anyway, why don't we eat it today?"

"Oh no, that goat is too old to eat. He would be very tough," said Joha shaking his head. The boys looked disappointed and stared hungrily at the goat. It stared back at them with what might have been a smile.

"I'll tell you what we can do though," continued Joha. "I can sell the goat and buy some food. We can cook it on the beach and have a final feast."

The boys looked delighted and quickly collected their swimming trunks. Soon they all set off together for the beach, the three boys, Joha and the goat. On the way the boys showed off their fine clothes to anyone who is interested, especially to the girls, and they asked Joha what he was going to do when the world ended.

"There's not a lot I can do, is there?" he replied. "Perhaps I shall stay in bed. It won't be worth getting up and getting dressed." The boys smiled at each other, careful to make sure that Joha didn't see them.

It was a sunny day and, as it was about two kilometres from the centre of town to the beach, they were very hot by the time they reached their destination.

"Why don't you boys go and swim while I buy the food and cook it?" said Joha. The boys changed into their swimming trunks and rushed off to the sea, but not before showing off a little to a group of girls who were sitting outside a nearby cafe and eating ice cream. Meanwhile, Joha led the goat away to so that he could prepare their lunch.

The boys divided their time between racing in and out of the waves, trying to attract the attention of the girls, and annoying some tourists who had wandered away from the usual tourist beach. Soon the smell of grilled meat wafted down the beach and their hunger returned.

When they got to where Joha was busy over a fire, cooking chicken and lamb, the smell of the food was almost too much to bear. But they were surprised to see that the goat was still there. They asked how he had got the meat if he hadn't sold the goat.

"Well," said Joha, "I thought the goat might prefer to spend his last day enjoying our picnic on the beach, so to buy the meat I sold your mobile phones."

Mehdi's mouth was open in shock and a fly flew inside but he didn't notice. Then Ahmed, who had been looking around for his perfectly fitting trousers said

"But where are our clothes, Joha?"

Joha turned the meat one last time.

"I used your clothes to make the fire," he said.

"You used our clothes to make the fire to cook the meat which you bought by selling our phones?" squeaked Mohamed, almost speechless.

"Why yes," replied Joha. "After all, the world is going to end tomorrow so you won't be needing them, will you?"

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