

Don't Mess with Joha

A Joha Story Retold



Joha's favorite late afternoon activity was to sit in the coffee house and drink coffee. One day Joha went to his favorite café where he took off his jacket, placed it on the back of a chair at his favorite table, and then sat down and ordered a coffee. While he was waiting for his order, he decided to get up and go to the washroom to wash his hands.

Joha had many friends in town and a couple of them were sitting in this café on that day. They were cousins known as Big David and Little David, though neither was taller than the other. Big David got this name because he was jolly and rather wide and Little David got his name because he was thin and anxious. The Davids waved to Joha on his way to the washroom and exchanged greetings.

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Big David, who was known about town as a bit of a prankster, had an idea. "Let's play a trick on Joha and see what he will do," he said to Little David.

When Joha returned to his table, he realized that his jacket was gone and that it was nowhere to be seen.

"Has anyone seen my jacket," Joha inquired of the room. There was no response—barely anyone looked at him.

"Ahem," Joha repeated, "I said, has anyone seen my jacket? If you took it, please return it."

Still nothing.

"Excuse me," said Joha, even louder this time. "If you don't return my jacket to me, I'm going to have to do what my father did!"

"What did his father do," a very anxious Little David whispered into his cousin's ear.

Big David's eyes were as wide with fear as Little David's. "I don't know," Big David whispered back to him, "maybe his father beat someone up."

"Or maybe Joha's father killed someone. Hurry, give Joha back his jacket before he does something terrible to us," urged Little David.

The David's, now trembling with fear, shakily handed the jacket back to Joha.

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"We're so sorry, we're so sorry," they kept repeating. "We were only joking around, please don't be mad at us."

"I'm not mad," responded Joha, "I just wanted my jacket back."

Feeling a little bit better and a wee bit braver, Little David hesitantly asked, "Joha, do you mind telling us what it was that your father did?"

Joha replied, "Oh, nothing much. He just went and bought a new jacket—but I didn't want to have to do that."



SOURCE:

Koen-Sarano, M., Herman, D., & Masch, E. (2003). Folktales of Joha: Jewish trickster (p. 164). Philadelphia, PA: Jewish publication Society.