

THE BELL OF ATRI

Once upon a time a good and wise king ruled in the city of Atri. He wanted all his people to be happy. To make sure that justice¹ was done to everyone, he hung a great bell in a tower. A strong rope was tied to the bell, so long that it reached nearly to the ground.

"I have placed the bell in the center of my city," said the king, "so that it will be near all the people. The rope is long, so that even a little child can reach it."

Then the king gave out this order²:

"If there is anyone among my people who feels that he has not been justly treated, let him ring this bell. Then, whether he is old or young, rich or poor, his story will be heard."

The bell of justice had hung in its place for many years. Many times it had been rung by the poor and needy, and justice had been done.

After a while the old rope became worn with use and age. When it was taken down, another rope, long enough and strong enough, could not be found. So the king had to send away for one.

"What if someone needs help while the rope is down?" cried the people. "We must find something to take its place."

So one of the men cut a long grapevine³ and fastened⁴ it to the great bell. It was in the springtime, and green shoots and leaves hung from the grapevine rope.

Near Atri, there lived a rich old soldier. This soldier owned a horse that had been with him through many battles⁵. However, the horse had become old and lame, and was no longer able to work. So his cruel master turned him out into the streets to get his living as best it could.

"If you cannot find enough to eat, you will die," said the miser; "you are of no use to me."

The old horse went limping⁶ along; it grew thinner and thinner. Finally he limped up to the tower where the bell of justice hung. His weak eyes saw the green shoots⁷ and the fresh leaves of the grapevine. Thinking they were good to eat, he pulled at the vine.

"Ding-dong! ding-dong!" said the great bell. When they heard the sound, the people of the city came running from all sides.

"Who is calling for justice?" they cried.

¹ justice: Gerechtigkeit

² order: Befehl

³ grapevine: Weinrebe

⁴ to fasten: befestigen

⁵ battle: Kampf

⁶ to limp: humpeln

⁷ shoot: Trieb, Spross (einer Pflanze)

There stood the old horse, chewing on the grapevine.

"Ding-dong! ding-dong!" rang the great bell.

"Whose horse is this?" asked the judges, as they came running up.

Then the story of the old horse was told, and the judges sent for his cruel master. They ordered him to build a warm barn⁸, and said that the faithful horse should have the best of hay⁹ and grain¹⁰ as long as it lived.

The people shouted for happiness at this act of justice, but the miser¹¹ hung his head in shame and led the old horse away.

EXERCISE 1 Answer the questions in full sentences.

a) Why did the king hang the bell in the tower?

b) What happened when the rope got old?

c) Why did the soldier send his old horse away?

d) Why did the soldier have to build a barn for the horse?

EXERCISE 2 Find all passive verbs in the text. Write them down and identify the tense.

EXAMPLE: Line 2: Justice was done to everybody – simple past

⁸ barn: Stall

⁹ hay: Heu

¹⁰ grain: Korn

¹¹ miser: Geizhals

Lösungen

EXERCISE 1 a) Why did the king hang the bell in the tower?

He hung it there so everybody could call for justice when they felt they had been treated unfairly.

b) What happened when the rope got old?

The rope had to be replaced with a grapevine.

c) Why did the soldier send his old horse away?

The horse couldn't work anymore.

d) Why did the soldier have to build a barn for the horse?

The judges of the city told him to do so.

EXERCISE 2

- ... justice was done to everyone. – simple past
- A strong rope was tied to the bell. – simple past
- ... he has not been justly treated ... - present perfect
- ... his story will be heard. – will-future
- ... it had been rung by the poor and needy ... - past perfect
- ... justice had been done. – past perfect
- ... it was taken down ... - simple past
- ... another rope ... could not be found. – simple past
- ... the story of the old horse was told ... - simple past