

PERE CALDERS AND THE ATTIC AT CAN MAURI

At the Can Mauri farm, instead of turning on the TV when it got dark, they lit the fire. In those days, TV hadn't yet been invented. / Pere, their grandson from Barcelona, loved listening to his grandparent's tales by the fireside, and while he listened, he drew pictures with his pencils. Pere never wanted to stop. When it was time for bed, he wanted to carry on drawing stories, and he often stayed up by himself as the fire burnt down to embers. His long-suffering grandmother warned him:

“Pereeee, that's enough drawing, you'll wear out your eyes and catch a cold! Time for beeeeed!”

So even though he didn't want to, he went to his room. He wouldn't be able to draw or read or listen to stories until tomorrow, but he didn't want to upset his grandparents. / That night was different, though. He wasn't a bit sleepy and he was itching to do something new. Instead of stopping at the first floor, he carried on climbing up the stairs until he reached his favourite hiding place:

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It was the first time he had stepped into the attic at night. The flickering light of his candle in the darkness made everything look so different it was frightening. Until an inquisitive little mouse stepped out to greet him, Pere forgot to be frightened and quickly sketched the mouse, as he said:

“Thank you, little mouse. It's very kind of you to let me draw you. You look as if your name should be... Nimble-wits! Aha, now I know who's nibbling grandpa's favourite cheese from Montseny.”

But suddenly, a noise startled the little mouse, which slipped away between Pere's feet. A great barn owl burst in through the window and started to speak in a feathery voice.

“Good evening! You haven't seen the little mouse that was here a moment ago, have? It looked so plump and tender...”

Pere was determined to protect the little mouse, so he said he had seen no such thing. The clever owl guessed that Pere was telling fibs and suggested they play a game.

“I see you like telling stories. Very well, I'm going to say a word, and you have to make up a story. If you win, I'll go and find my supper elsewhere. But if you fail, I'll have a nice little mouse for my tea.”

A ray of moonlight shone into the attic. “I've got the first word: moon!” - announced

the owl. The cogs in Pere's brain started whirring rapidly. He wanted to save his little friend. Friends should help each other, he thought. Suddenly, his hands started drawing the story of a boy who wanted to catch the moon, and who, thanks to a friend and a set of mirrors, managed to catch it and shut it up in a drawer.

He sighed in relief when he finished his tale. But the owl carried on playing! Through the window the night was starry and clear.

“Let's see how you do this time. I want you to make up a story with the word... star.”

Pere was flustered, just like his mother got flustered at home in the city, when their gossipy, grumpy neighbour Pepeta distracted her while she was hanging the washing out to dry.

“Got it!” - said Pere, and he told the owl the story of a star which fell to earth where two ladies were hanging out their washing. They started arguing about what the shiny object could be, and which of them should have it, until one of their daughters arrived, and told them that it was a star, and needed returning to the sky urgently, or it would go out. The girl took a long, long silken thread and threw it back into the sky, and there it stayed, twinkling and shining above the city. When Pere had finished, the owl glared at him and said:

“There's one more tale to go, and I'm not going to make this one easy for you. No more moons and stars. The third word is: brush!”

Pere grabbed the battered old brush that was lying on the attic floor and looked at it, frozen to the spot. What story could he come up with? He stroked the old brush. It was rough, like a dog. Pere looked up. He'd got his third story:

“Once upon a time, there was a boy who tied a rope around a brush and told everyone that it was his dog. And he played with it so much, and took it so seriously, that it became the truth. His parents thought he'd gone mad, but one night thieves broke into their house. The brush scared them off, barking and snapping, and his parents had to admit that his brush really was a dog.”

Pere had won, and the little mouse no longer needed to fear for his life. The owl was about to fly away, when Pere spoke to it:

“Thank you, owl. You're kind and generous. And that's why you have a heart on your face.”

The bird ruffled its feathers contentedly, and asked Pere to never stop making up stories. “I might become a writer, or I might draw pictures,” I haven't made up my mind,” said Pere. And do you know what he decided to do? Both! When he grew up, he drew lots of drawings, but he also wrote lots of tales, novels and short stories and he signed them all with his own name.

Perhaps you've heard of him. Pere. Pere Calders.

Script: Anna Manso