



Once upon a time there was... Joan Amades

Joan Amades was an inquisitive man. He criss-crossed the country on the back of his donkey, in search of tales, riddles, traditions and sayings. He was really worried that these tales might be lost, and always carried a pencil ready to jot them down. Then one day... Whoosh! Some words flew right past him. Joan barely saw them, but his ears were very finely tuned and he heard a whisper saying: "ONCE UPON A TIME..." The words flew off, but Joan' curiosity had been aroused, and so he went after them.

ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS... JOAN AMADES

Joan was prepared to travel across the whole of Catalonia until he tracked down those words. He wanted to know which story came after them. Riding his donkey, he followed the trail, until he reached the river Ebro. There, the boatmen who sailed up and down the river said yes, maybe they had seen those words flying past –or maybe not– but they also knew a few stories of their own. Then they told him the story of an old lady who veery rich and who didn't want to die. The lady took her grandchildren on all kinds of adventures, and all together they met Buffy Bufaina, Escoltam Escoltaina, Forcim Forçaina and all of their friends. When they finished their tale, the boatmen asked Joan Amades to write it all down. They didn't know how to write, but they didn't want their story to be lost. Suddenly, the words flew over the river

"ONCE UPON A TIME..."

So Joan Amades got back on his donkey.

The words were quick and very slippery, and they didn't want to get caught. Trotting along on his donkey, Joan Amades reached a town of little white houses beside the Mediterranean sea. He walked through the narrow streets and peered through doorways, until he reached the harbour, following the sound of the waves.

The fishermen didn't know anything about his mysterious words.

There were some ladies mending nets on the beach, and they lifted their heads from their work and said yes, maybe they had seen the words, or maybe not, but if he liked, they could tell him a lot of stories. Stories of princesses, enchantments, giants and witches. Magical stories and other stories as true as life itself.

Joan Amades quickly took out his paper and pencils and noted down the tale of a girl who was very, very poor, very, very pretty and very, very conceited, who would only

marry a boy with a golden beard! And then suddenly, splash! The words jumped up from the water: “ONCE UPON A TIME...” But they disappeared as quick as a flash, leaving Joan Amades to get back on his donkey and chase after them.

He travelled so fast that he barely noticed he’d already reached the heights of the Pyrenees. The houses were made of stone, and their roofs weren’t made of red terracotta tiles, but of grey slate. And instead of sand, there were green meadows.

There was no sign of the words anywhere, but Joan Amades was sure they had to be close by. The donkey was fidgety. It could smell a flock of sheep. Joan Amades made his way towards them, down a steep track to a field of fresh grass. There he met a shepherd, and asked him if he’d seen the words. The shepherd thought for a moment, and then said yes, maybe he had seen the words, or maybe not ... but he knew a story about a brother and a sister who got lost in the woods. The boy was found, but not the girl. Time passed and the girl had a son, a wild, brave boy, who she raised with the help of a great brown bear, so everyone called him Joan the Bear.

Amades wrote everything down, delighted to learn such a fantastic tale. Until once more, he heard the whisper he’d come to know so well:

“ONCE UPON A TIME...”

But this time, the words didn’t take flight. Joan Amades caught them carefully in his hands, and he put them inside the book where he had noted down the tales people had told him as he travelled the country. Then he realised which story it was that came after those words -and this is how it went:

“Once upon a time there was a wise man who went from town to town in Catalonia, collecting stories that people told him, as if they were a treasure made of words. With all the stories he’d collected, he wrote a book: “TALES OF CATALONIA” That man was Joan Amades and he was loved by everyone.”

Script: Anna Manso