



Mr. Nothing

Do you know Mr. Stern? Let me introduce him. Mr. Stern was a quiet, solitary kind of chap whose head was always in the clouds because he liked to think. He worked just enough to get by - neither more nor less. He lived in a city that was neither big nor small and in a house that was almost empty because he thought he needed practically nothing. Maybe that's why this story that I'm about to tell you is titled "Mr. Nothing".

Mr. Stern had no furniture so he was always standing until it was time to go to bed. He spent the whole day standing and gazing out of the window.

But one day, there came a knock at the door. When he answered it, there was a man there who said:

"Hello friend. You don't know me, but I'm Mr. Nothing. Since you don't have or need a thing, I thought I could stay with you because this is the kind of place I feel at home in."

"Well", said Mr. Stern, "stay if you like, but I won't work more to feed you".

"Don't worry. I live on nothing. All I like is emptiness."

And that was how Mr. Nothing ended up in Mr. Stern's house. Mr. Nothing soon grew fatter and fatter as he fed on the emptiness. Every day when Mr. Stern got home, he saw that he had less and less space to live in. The day came when Mr. Nothing had gotten so big that Mr. Stern didn't fit in the house anymore. He had to leave his own house.

So he went for a walk round the neighborhood. He heard music as he turned into a street. "Music makes people happy", he thought.

He approached the music and found himself in the middle of a party like the ones held on Midsummer Night where people laugh and dance and fireworks light up the sky like shooting stars.

"They're having a ball. I've never been to a party before," thought Mr. Stern.

He didn't know where to look - at the people dancing or at the fireworks. He was in such a tizzy that he stepped on a girl's foot.

"Ow!" she cried.

Stern looked at her and begged her pardon.

"Don't worry, the other foot's OK," she said.

He thought it was a funny thing to say. As he looked at her, he thought, "What a pretty girl, and what an original hairdo." Without further ado, he asked her for a date.

After a few months, Stern loved her so much that he couldn't bear to be parted from her for a moment. That's when he asked her to live with him.

When the girl saw Stern's house for the first time, she couldn't believe her eyes,

"But you've got nothing! Just a miserable 5 watt bulb. How can you live like this?"

Stern thought to himself, "She's right. I don't need anything to live on, but maybe she wouldn't like spending the whole day just standing and looking out of the window."

So Stern sat right down to work and dreamt up an amusement park to show children how to count. If you got on the three plus six roller coasters, you reached nine, and on the two plus five, you reached seven. He made enough money from this brilliant idea to decorate the whole house.

The first day, he hung some pictures on the walls. The next day he put in a comfy sofa, and then a table. He put in a decent light bulb and a lampshade. He even made some curtains.

And all the while he was decorating, he noticed that Mr. Nothing was steadily shrinking. He got so small you could hardly see him at all.

When Mr. Stern had finished making his house more comfortable, he went to get the girl he had set his heart on. She had done her hair in that original hair style that he liked so much. And he said to her,

"Close your eyes."

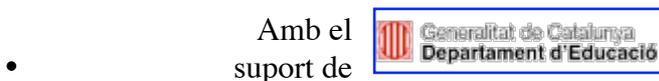
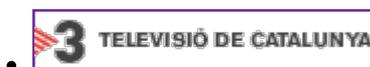
Then he opened the door. And the girl cried out in surprise!

"Stern, this is too much! I don't even recognize the place!"

And she was right. Not only was the house different, but Mr. Nothing saw there was nowhere for him in the cozy new house and vanished.

Sometimes Stern thinks of him fondly and is grateful to him because if Mr. Nothing hadn't filled every nook and cranny of the house, Stern would never have gone out. Then he wouldn't have gone to the party and met the pretty girl with whom he hoped to live happily ever after.

Script: Victoria Bermejo



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