



## The light

There is a popular folk tale from Majorca which is one of those that sets your hair on end. I really mean it! It's a ghost story which I don't usually tell because it's only meant for boys and girls who never get scared. But since I know all of you, and I know that you're very brave, I'll tell you the story today.

Once upon a time there was a little boy named Biel who lived on the island of Majorca with his mother whose name was Catalina. They were poor, so poor that they didn't have a home, so they spent their days wandering from one village to the next, begging for money or something to eat.

One afternoon, mother and son - both of them as hungry as could be and freezing cold - were walking along a lonely path when the sky suddenly filled with big dark clouds.

"It looks like we're in for a big storm," said Biel when he felt the first raindrops on his head. "Mother, I think we should try to find a place where we can get in out of the rain for the night."

And, indeed, within five minutes it was raining cats and dogs. Biel and Catalina began running down the path and, as they came around a bend - both of them soaking wet by this time - they saw a house perched on the top of a little hill.

"Look, Mother, we're in luck!" cried out Biel when he caught sight of the house.  
"Let's go see if the owners will offer us some shelter from the rain."

Biel and his mother jumped over a low stone wall and headed towards the house, hoping to find a dry corner in which to wait out the storm.

But the closer they got to the house, the stranger things began to seem. They noticed that there wasn't any smoke coming from the chimney, despite the fact that it was very cold out. Nor were there any lights in the windows. Plus they saw that the door had been forced and the house was wide open. It was all very odd. Right away they realized that this was an abandoned house.

"Is anyone home?" they called out several times, peering in through the open doorway. "Is anyone home?" they repeated, just in case their first calls hadn't been heard.

But nobody answered. The only sound around was the whistling of the wind.

Tired of waiting for an answer and seeing no signs of life around, Biel and Catalina decided to venture in, both of them now soaked to the bone. They slowly felt their way along inside the dark house until they came across a wooden kitchen table with a half-burned candle on it. They lit the candle with a match and sat down at the table listening to the thunder outside and the sound of the rain beating against the windows.

They were quietly sitting at the table when they suddenly heard a voice saying:

"Bring me a light! Bring me a light!"

They both froze in their seats, they were so frightened.

"Mother, did you hear that voice?" asked a terrified Biel.

"Oh, come now, Biel! I don't hear a thing", answered his mother, nervously.

A moment later the mysterious voice, once again, echoed throughout the entire house:

"Bring me a light! Bring me a light!"

Sure that it was the owner of the house calling out, mother and son went downstairs where the voice seemed to be coming from.

"Bring me a light! Bring me a light!" the voice repeated, insistently.

Biel and Catalina went down a hallway leading to a door which was ajar.

"It's here, Mother. The voice is coming from this room," said Biel, shaking in his boots.

They pushed open the door very, very slowly and quietly tip-toed into the room. It was a living room and, in it, was a man sitting in a big armchair. He was an extremely old man, who looked like he was more than a hundred years old, with a white beard that was so long it reached the floor. And the strangest thing of all was that he was holding an open book in his hands.

"Come here, young man, don't be afraid," said the old man. "Bring the candle over here, because I can't see the words on the page."

Biel crossed the room obediently, and held the candle up next to the book.

"Thank you, my boy. Now I can see."

And so the old man began to read, devouring page after page without uttering a word. After quite some time the old man slammed the book shut. Bang! And slowly raising his head, he said:

"Thanks to you, I was able to finish the book. I was beginning to think that I'd never manage to do it. I've been dead for 75 years. I died suddenly, on a rainy afternoon like this one, as I was sitting in this chair reading this most interesting book. And since I don't like to leave things half-done, I couldn't rest in peace until I finished it. And thanks to you, I have. Now I can go calmly off to my place in heaven, but first I want to express my appreciation for what you've done for me."

And pointing to a trap door set into the floor of the living room, the old man confessed to Biel that he would find a treasure hidden under there: a chest filled with gold coins which he wanted to give to Biel and his mother as a reward for their kindness.

Biel crawled down into the secret hiding place and in no time at all came back up carrying the chest full of gold coins, as his mother looked on in disbelief.

"Look, Mother... we're rich!" said Biel, grinning from ear to ear. It looks like we'll

never again be hungry or have to beg for alms.

After a little while, Biel and Catalina noticed how the venerable old man began to gradually disappear into thin air as though he were a ghost.

"Goodbye, you kind man. May you rest in peace. And thank you so much for the treasure!" cried out Biel when the man was practically out of sight.

This story took place some years ago. With the money from the treasure, mother and son bought that rundown house in the country and, little by little, and through a lot of hard work, they've managed to turn it into a very pretty farm house, surrounded by almond trees which bloom like clockwork every spring. Biel and Catalina know that it's the very best house in the world and they live there happy as two peas in a pod, thanks to the dim light from a candle which lit up the words on a ghost's book.

*Script: J.M. Hernandez Ripoll*

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