



THE SINGING FLUTE

Once there lived a king and his three sons – Pedro, Juan and José. They lived happily together in the royal palace, but one day the old king fell ill. He invited healers from all over the world, but no one was able to help him. He was quickly losing his sight. He was nearly blind when a healer from the far east visited his court, telling the king there was only one cure for him: a potion from olive blossoms. When the king heard him, he thanked the wise man and rewarded him with a pound of gold. At first, he was overjoyed – until he realised there were no olive trees growing anywhere in his kingdom. He called for his three sons and asked them to go find olive blossoms for his potion. The eldest son approached his father and said: “I’ll go and seek the olive blossom as you ask. But wandering across the world will cost me a fortune. Give me my inheritance money that’s rightfully mine and I’ll set off on my journey.” He travelled far and wide, weeks and months had passed, but he hadn’t come across a single olive tree. As he was roaming the world, one day he met a wrinkled old lady. She said to him: “Please, kind sir, give me a coin or two, or share a little of your food with me. I hadn’t eaten for two days.” But Pedro didn’t have a good heart. The only thing he gave her was a nasty look and then he just walked away. He kept on walking for weeks, but he didn’t find any olive trees.

THE SINGING FLUTE

Time was passing and the king grew more and more restless and frustrated. He called for the middle son, Juan, and asked him for the same thing. But the second son also requested his inheritance before he left and the king had no choice but to pay him off. Juan, too, met the same old woman as his brother, but he didn't have a good heart either. When she asked him for something to eat, he pushed her away and ran off. And just like his brother, Juan too wandered the world for weeks without coming across a single olive branch.

Seeing that his two brothers still hadn't returned and his father's sight was getting worse by the day, the youngest son stepped in front of his father and said: "I'll go looking for the olive blossom as well so you can get your sight back."

The king agreed and the youngest son set off to the world. When he chanced upon an old lady asking for food, he felt sorry for her and said: "I don't have any money, but we can share the rest of the food I have left."

They sat down by a fire to eat and José told the old woman about his quest.

"My dear boy, you need to go beyond that hill and over to a soaring mountain peak. An olive grove grows on the top. There you will surely find enough olive blossoms for your father," advised him the old lady to repay him for his kindness. José didn't waste a moment, he bid the kind woman farewell and made his way to the mountain. He walked for three days and three nights before he stood at its foot. He started climbing and when he reached the top, he found himself standing inside a blooming olive grove. He quickly collected as many blossoms as he could carry and headed back home, filled with joy.

As he was walking, he ran into his two brothers, who still had no luck finding an olive tree. When they saw José bringing their father the olive blossoms, they were jealous and wanted to steal them from him. José didn't want to let them take the blossoms, so they beat him so hard he fell to the ground motionless.

The two brothers were afraid their terrible deed would be revealed, so they buried José by the road, took the olive blossoms and rushed back home.

The king was almost dancing with joy when Pedro and Juan returned with the olive branches. He showered them with rewards and luxurious gifts. Deep inside he was troubled, though, that José still hadn't returned. He had no idea his son

THE SINGING FLUTE

was buried in the ground with hazel trees growing from his grave.

One day, a shepherd was passing by José's grave when he heard a divine melody coming from the hazel trees. He came closer and recognised a young man's voice, singing:

“Play me, shepherd, to the world,
every hill and valley scour,
let them hear on your path curled
the truth about the olive flower.”

The shepherd broke off a branch and carved out a flute. It was a peculiar flute indeed. Whenever he played it, José's voice came out singing:

“Play me, shepherd, to the world,
every hill and valley scour,
let them hear on your path curled
the truth about the olive flower.”

The shepherd walked the length and breadth of the world until one day he came across the royal palace. He stood before the king and when he played his flute, a young man's voice sang:

“Oh, dear father, give me strength,
play me, let the true words sound,
I'll tell the tale in all its length
about the olive trees I found.”

The king took the flute from the shepherd's hands. He put it to his lips and listened to the voice of his son, who told him how he had found the olive blossoms and how his brothers beat him up and buried him by the road.

The king, drowning in sorrow, had Pedro and Juan thrown into a dungeon. Then he left the palace to look for José's grave. When he finally found it, soldiers dug away the dirt and underneath they found José. Luckily he wasn't dead as his brothers had thought. He stood up and embraced his father, crying tears of joy just like his old dad.

When José finally came back home, they threw a magnificent feast and the king, grateful for his son's safe and sound return, forgave the two spiteful brothers and released them from prison.