

The Secret of Star Chestnuts

On the eve of the Castanyada (the Catalan chestnut festival), Mar and her brother Biel went to gather chestnuts with their grandmother. Under the oldest chestnut tree, they found five chestnuts marked with a star.

“Don’t put them on the fire yet,” their grandmother warned. “Star chestnuts have a secret that can only be discovered by sharing.”

The siblings put them in a basket. That night, just as the square was filling up with people, a storm knocked out all the lights. The street became so dark that no one dared to move. The chestnut seller couldn’t find her paper packets, the musicians had lost their sheet music, and Mr. Llorenç, who walked with a cane, was standing frozen in his doorway.

Mar picked up one of the chestnuts. Nothing happened. Biel rubbed it, shook it, and even sang it a song. It was still dark.

“Grandma said the secret was sharing,” Mar remembered.

They gave the first chestnut to the chestnut seller. As soon as three hands touched the fruit, the star lit up. It didn’t burn: it emitted a warm light like a lantern.

They gave the second chestnut to the musicians, the third to a group of children, and the fourth to the baker. Each chestnut shone brighter as it passed from one hand to another. With the fifth, Mar and Biel went to find Mr. Llorenç. He held it while the siblings accompanied him to the town square.

When they arrived, the five lights rose a few centimeters and drew a huge star above the tables. The party continued with songs, laughter, and warm paper cones of chestnuts.

After a while, the electricity came back on, and the chestnuts went out. They looked like normal chestnuts, but no one wanted to cook them. They planted them by the fountain.

Over the years, five chestnut trees grew. Every autumn they bore fruit marked with a star. The villagers shared them with those who came alone to the festival, because they had learned the secret: some lights only appear when someone decides to share them.