The Mystery of the Marigold Flower

In some towns in Sonora, when Día de los Muertos approaches, grandparents sit with their grandchildren and tell them stories.

Stories passed down from one generation to another.

Stories about paths that appear under the moonlight… marigold flowers that seem to show the way… candles that light up when no one touches them… and little skeletons that only wake up during one very special night.

And there is a story that, although every family tells it in its own way, always begins the same:

“Many, many years ago… during the week of Día de los Muertos…”

One night, while families were preparing their altars, two little skeleton girls named Chabela and Lupita discovered something very, very strange.

Something that no one could explain.

A marigold flower had disappeared.

But it wasn’t just any flower.

It was a huge, enormous marigold flower… so big that it was almost the size of a five-year-old child.

Its petals were such an intense orange that they seemed to be glowing from within.

When the candlelight touched its petals, the flower sparkled like a diamond.

And when the wind blew, its petals moved slowly, as if the flower were dancing.

It was such a special flower that, according to this story, it could show the way to those who are no longer with us and guide them toward a spiritual place.

A path filled with light that connects our memories with our loved ones… the ones we

always carry in our hearts.

But that night, something strange had happened.

Someone had taken the flower without permission.

Chabela looked at Lupita.

Lupita looked at Chabela.

And then they heard a very soft voice:

“Shhh... shhh... shhh...”

The two little skeletons froze.

“Did you hear that?” Chabela asked.

Lupita became very serious and said:

“Yes, it wasn’t me!”

For a moment, nobody said anything.

All they could hear was the wind...

and, far away, some very, very, very soft music.

The music was so strange that the two girls became terribly frightened.

They hugged each other tightly and began to shake.

Their knees were shaking...

their little feet were shaking...

even their teeth were shaking!

Their eyes looked like two enormous plates because they were so scared.

Chabela looked at Lupita.

Lupita looked at Chabela.

And they both said at the same time:

“I AM NOT GOING TO LOOK FOR THE MARIGOLD FLOWER!”

Chabela became very serious.

“Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Without that flower, no one will be able to find the path of light.”

Lupita, trembling, said to Chabela:

“Can’t someone else go?”

Chabela looked at her very seriously and said:

“No, no, no, no, no.”

Lupita took a deep breath.

“Well, but you go first. You go in front of me.”

Chabela stood up very straight and said bravely:

“Of course I will!”

And she took one step forward.

Then another step.

And just as she was about to take the third step, she heard the music again in the distance...

Chabela quickly ran back and hugged Lupita.

“Better if we go together!”

The girls left their house, hoping to find the marigold flower very soon.

It was a very dark night.

First, they went to the house of the García family.

They peeked through the window to see if they could find the flower.

But the only thing they saw was a basket full of freshly made tamales on the dining room table.

They smelled delicious!

Lupita looked at Chabela.

Chabela looked at Lupita.

But neither one of them saw the marigold flower.

From there, holding hands, they ran to the second house: the home of the López family.

They peeked through the window and saw a plate filled with Mexican candies, little colorful flags, peanuts, marzipan candies, and muéganos.

Everything looked delicious!

But the marigold flower wasn’t there either.

They crossed the street and arrived at the home of the Durán family.

They looked through the kitchen window and saw a huge pot of champurrado that Doña María was preparing.

She stirred it round and round and round…

And it smelled so good that Lupita almost forgot about the mission.

But Chabela reminded her:

“Lupita! The mission is to find the flower!”

“Oh, right!” Lupita answered. “I almost forgot!”

They ran to the next house: the home of the Rosas family.

There they saw Mrs. Rosas arranging white candles for Día de los Muertos.

But the flower wasn’t there either.

Still very frightened, the two girls decided to go back home.

They were very sad.

The flower was gone.

As they walked, they wondered:

“Who could have taken such an important flower for the night of the altars?”

Suddenly, as they crossed the street, they saw something in the distance.

A light.

An orange light that was moving…

It was coming toward them, running.

Trotting…

Almost jumping.

Chabela and Lupita froze.

With tremendous fear and their teeth chattering, they hugged each other tightly.

“What could that be?” Lupita whispered.

The light came closer and closer.

Closer…

Closer…

Until finally they could see a little figure running toward them with the enormous marigold flower.

“It’s a little skeleton!” Lupita shouted.

It was Paco, a friend of theirs.

Paco arrived running, almost out of breath, carrying the enormous flower.

“Chabela! Lupita! I’m so glad I found you!”

Chabela looked at him very seriously.

“Paco… did you take the flower?”

Paco lowered his head.

“Yes… but I didn’t mean to keep it.”

Lupita crossed her arms.

“Then what did you do with it?”

Paco pointed to the flower.

“We didn’t have a marigold flower at our house for our altar. I only wanted to borrow it to light up our home.”

Chabela looked at him with surprise.

“Then why are you running with it?”

Paco smiled.

“Because the flower lit the way back to my house… and now I’ve come to return it!”

The two girls stared at the flower.

Its petals were glowing so brightly that it looked like a little orange sun in the middle of the night.

Lupita opened her eyes very wide.

“So… the flower wasn’t lost?”

Paco shook his head.

“No.”

Chabela smiled.

“Then it wasn’t stolen either.”

Paco raised his hands.

“It was just out for a little walk!”

The three little skeletons began to laugh.

Together, they carried the flower back to where it belonged.

That night, the enormous marigold flower began to shine once again beside the altars.

And ever since then, people say that when one family shares its light with another, that light always finds its way home.