

Gonçal Peris Sarrià
Altarpiece of Saint Bárbara

THE GOLDEN HOUSE

16 March 2009



There was once a young woman called Barbara, who hated her beauty. Because of it, her stepfather Dioscorus had shut her up in a tower so that no one would see her. He didn't want any young man without a title to fall in love with her and take her away from there.

And so, Barbara's stepfather locked her in the highest part of the tower, which he had specially built. But one night, her jailer, a man with a huge belly, who secretly admired her, took pity on her, opened the door and said: "Run away, your loved one is waiting for you with a horse."

And she fled.

For a few days they rode along paths, until her young lover said: "My love, I can go with you no further, but this shepherd will take you to a house where you can begin a new life."

Barbara went with the shepherd and this is how she found a house to live in. But this house was like no other, it was the most beautiful house ever seen. It was

THE GOLDEN HOUSE

The house was built completely of gold, both inside and out: the walls, the floor and the ceilings. But for Barbara the most important thing was that the neighbours came to the golden windows to welcome her and they made her feel more comfortable than anyone ever had. In the building there lived a stonecutter who told her: "I shall make for you a giant bath in which you can swim and bathe."

Barbara said to him: "Thank you, that's very kind of you."

And the masseur who lived next door added: "I shall give you a massage and prepare some bath salts so that you can relax after walking for so long."

The doctors, whose surgery was on the floor below went to greet her: "Good health neighbour, count on us if you get a cold."

Barbara replied: "Thank you very much. Good health neighbours."

Then Barbara met the shepherd who had brought her to the golden house. And he told her: "Besides being a shepherd I am the butcher and you will never go short of a lamb to eat."

The baker, who was passing by, added: "Nor a loaf of bread to soak up the gravy with!"

Barbara had never seen so many colours, so much beauty, but above all she had never met such good people.

Barbara felt so welcome, so happy, that she came to terms with herself and her beauty. So much so that she even placed her portrait in the middle of the lounge. She no longer hated being beautiful.

At that moment, as if nature was proving Barbara right, her soul left her body and this generated so much heat that the sky was filled with clouds and it began to thunder.

From that time on, the neighbours associated thunder with Barbara. Perhaps this is why the saying goes that we only remember Saint Barbara when it thunders.