

# ***The Lizard of Jaén***



**Baeza /Spain**

## THE LIZARD OF JAÉN

Dear readers, ladies and gentlemen:

We have travelled in time. We have travelled to the darkest period of the Middle Ages. We have travelled to the city of Jaén, in the South of Spain, land of borders, land of rich history. Just like most cities, Jaén has a legend based on a true story. A tale that filled with panic the streets of the city.

Our legend says that one day a courageous and brave young man was walking at the foot of the castle of Jaén. Then he saw something shining behind some bushes; he got closer and saw a wonderful little body.

“I never thought there were such wonderful animals. How soft he is! So beautiful! I will take him with me, and it will be the pet of La Magdalena”, he said.

Fascinated, he put him in a box and walked to his neighbourhood, where they were all friends. Immediately he met some ladies who were washing some clothes in the river and singing some popular verses.

- Washerwoman 1: Hey, boy! What do you have in that box?
- Boy: It is an animal that I have found near the castle. I would like to find a safe place in our neighbourhood.
- Washerwoman 2: It is so beautiful!
- Washerwoman 1: I did not know lizards were so cute.
- Washerwoman 2: Sure, boy. You could leave it by the spring, so it will have water. Then we will give it food.

Near the spring he met some young shepherds who were talking while they were watching their sheep.

- Shepherd: Boy, what are you hiding in that box?

- Boy: It's got the lizard of La Magdalena. Look! It will be our pet.

The young man continued his walk and met other characters like the baker, the butcher and the blacksmith, and he showed them his pet with pride. Finally, he arrived at the little cave where the spring was, and there he left the small lizard. He realised it was the ideal place for him.

Over time, all the inhabitants of the neighbourhood loved the lizard and were proud of him. However, this changed soon, when the lizard started to grow and needed bigger and bigger quantities of food. He had not enough with the small animals the neighbours brought for him (sometimes a frog, sometimes a rabbit). Some time afterwards, and unfortunately for the citizens, he started to attack and eat their lambs, sheep, and even pigs.

During the day, he was hidden in his den, but when the night came, he got ready and attacked any nearby animal. He was always hungry, and people started to get frightened.

The days passed and the situation got worse when the lizard, increasingly fierce and hungry, began to eat innocent children that he found in the streets. The neighbours organised turns to keep an eye day and night, night and day. They were tired and desperate. Then one night they saw him.

Male peasant: Look! Something is moving! It is a huge thing, and it shines in the dark. Can you see?

Female peasant: There it is! It is the lizard! It is the lizard that eats our cattle and our children!!

Once the mystery was solved, everybody in the city claimed for justice. The King listened to their pleadings and decided to announce a Royal Decree in order to put an end to this tragic story. This royal decree was read aloud in the square of La Magdalena by a herald, and it said:

“ By order of your Royal Majesty, it is made known:

That the prisoner Alonso de Corbera, sentenced to prison, but being a citizen of great courage, will be the one to put an end to the horror in Jaen. In this way he will obtain his freedom”.

Everybody was happy about these news, especially the prisoner himself, Alonso de Corbera. Even though he was fighting a creature of enormous dimensions, he was sure he would kill the beast and get his freedom. The first thing he did was to ask the King for a horse, the skin of a sheep, bread and gunpowder.

In the afternoon, Alonso was released and put on a horse. He came to the spring and they left him alone. Then Alonso started to throw pieces of bread from his horse into the cave of the lizard. One minute later, the animal came out and began to eat with hunger and fury. At that moment, Alonso showed him the skin of the sheep, under which he had hidden a huge amount of gunpowder, and threw it on the ground in front of the lizard.

The lizard, thinking that it was a real lamb, jumped on him and swallowed him in one bite, including the complete load of gunpowder. Alonso, who was escaping on his horse, heard the terrible explosion.

The lizard of Jaén had burst and no one ever heard of him again.

The legend says that the remains of his body are scattered all over the neighbourhood of La Magdalena. There have been people, throughout history, who have heard him scream, moan, cry. Be careful and do not stop while you are walking through that legendary neighbourhood. A huge lizard can catch you, because it is still hungry.