



## The magic tree

Ever since the dawn of time, some places have been luckier than others, who knows why. Our story happens in a far-off barren land scorched by the sun, even though it is between two great rivers, one to the East and one to the West.

These rivers were dangerous places for the people and their herds because of the many wild beasts that went down to the water's edge to slake their thirst.

There was a small village of goat herders near this bleak spot. The villagers were as poor as church mice. In one family, both parents died, leaving a couple of scraggy goats and a young orphan boy who nobody wanted because they claimed to already have too much work. The boy was beside himself with grief and had good reason to be so.

Standing under the shade of a huge tree, the only tree to be found in that vast plain, the boy realized he was all alone in the world. His only company were his two goats. He could think of nothing to do but wail, "How will I get by all alone? I'm only a child. What can I do now?"

Would you like to find out how he got by? Then listen to the story of "The Magic Tree"

At that very moment, the wind whistled through the branches of the huge tree. Some leaves blew eastwards and a deep voice whispered,

"Take your goats to drink at the East river for today the wild beasts are on the banks of the West river".

The boy stood thunderstruck. Who had spoken? The tree? But he followed the voice's advice and lo and behold, it proved to be right.

From then on, the boy always asked the tree's advice,

"Oh, Great Tree! Where should I take my flock to drink? To the East river, or the West river?"

Thanks to the tree's wise words, the boy's small flock flourished and yielded enough milk and meat to live on.

One day, the witchdoctor heard rumors that the tree was responsible for the boy's good fortune.

I heard that he flew into a terrible rage! "How dare that boy speak to almighty Nature? That's my job. This will have to come to an end!" huffed the witchdoctor. He had to put an end to it. And in a trice the wicked man took up his axe and went to cut the tree down. He chopped it into tiny bits in next to no time.

The next day, when the boy came to the spot, he found the tree had been turned to matchwood. But he still asked,

"Oh, Great Tree! Where should I take my flock to drink? To the East river, or the West river?" And guess what? The same deep voice answered, "Take your goats to drink at the West river for today the wild beasts are on the banks of the East river".

The boy, happily followed the voice's advice as always.

When the witchdoctor found out his effort had been to no avail, he had a fit and went into a frightful rage.

"That's it!" he yelled. "Who does that peabrain, half-pint, bananahead think he is?"

That very night the witchdoctor built a great bonfire and burnt every last twig of the tree to ashes.

The next day, the boy arrived to find nothing but ashes. But he asked just the same,

"Oh, Great Tree! Where should I take my flock to drink? To the East river, or the West river?"

This time, there was no voice, but a gentle breeze stirred the ashes and they pointed which way the boy should go.

The witchdoctor was dumbfounded when he found out what had happened.

"Burning the wood isn't enough, is it?" he hissed. "So now I have to get rid of the ashes, too." He scooped up all the ashes and threw them in the river. "That'll settle it," he thought.

The ashes sank in the water and flowed with the current. Even so, the next day the boy asked over and over again getting no answer,

"Oh, Great Tree! Where should I take my flock to drink?" The ash-laden water evaporated in the burning sun and formed a huge cloud. All the while, the boy kept on asking, "Oh, Great Tree! Where? Where should I take my flock to drink? What shall become of me if you don't answer?"

The boy, desperate now, wept his heart out.

At that very moment, it began to rain hard - something almost unknown in that parched land. The boy's tears mixed with the rain and flowed into the soil. In a flash, a small sapling sprang from the ground at the boy's feet. Once again, he heard the tree's voice,

"Take your flock to the East river; today the wild beasts are at the West river".

From that day forth, the boy made sure no one came between him and his tree.

The two of them grew tall and strong. The boy prospered thanks to his great flock and in time he had a family of his own.

The boy never forgot the great tree and the great tree never forgot the boy. The boy asked the same question every day of his life and every day of his life the tree answered him.

*Script: Llorenç Español Nolla*

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