

The tall three

I've never known anyone who likes to travel as much as Tanzin. What a girl! She's like a top spinning around from one place to the next. She can't stay still.

Tanzin spends her life going from village to village. Today here, tomorrow there, every day of the month, every month of the year.

The people of these lands are used to seeing her silhouette in the distance. Here and there she goes, always dressed in a cotton pulu, the tunic worn by the women of Tibet, the highest country in the world.

I'll bet you're wondering why Tanzin can't stay still. She says that everyone has a role in life and that hers is to travel around to help people. That's true because she never tires of giving advice and offering remedies to anyone who asks for her help.

When people ask her how is it that such a young girl can be so wise, Tanzin smiles and blushes and always says it's a secret, a secret she discovered the day she climbed up the tall tree.

One day, Tanzin was crossing the fields under a bright, blue sky. She'd been walking all day long without a rest when in the distance she saw a solitary tree standing right in the middle of the high plateau.

"That tree would be a good place to spend the night," thought Tanzin when she saw it. And she walked on towards the tree.

The tree was a magnificent oak, as tall as a giant, with a trunk so wide that it would take over ten people's outstretched arms to circle it. And the very long branches growing from its sides made the oak tree look like a giant parasol.

"I'll make a bed out of a few branches and get a good night's sleep," thought Tanzin convinced that no one would bother her there.

So Tanzin climbed up to the top of the tree. She curled up on one of the tallest branches, covered herself with a blanket of leaves and went to sleep.

Poor Tanzin was so tired that she soon fell fast asleep.

But that night, the animals had called an assembly at the foot of the tall tree.

All the animals from the nearby counties turned up for the event: sheep, goats, donkeys, wolves, foxes and monkeys. There were also geese, pheasants, ducks, horses and camels.

The tiger, the most fearsome animal of all, was the moderator. And the biggest chatterboxes and gossips were, as usual, the big-horned deer, the hairy bear and the near-sighted snake.

In the black of the night, the animals' eyes shone brightly like stars in the sky.

There were many things to discuss and since they argued a lot and all talked at the same time, the tiger had no choice but to shout out above the din to put some order in the meeting.

Of course, they made such a racket that they woke Tanzin up.

The girl slowly peeked out from behind a branch and her face lit up when she saw all the animals below.

Afraid of being discovered by the animals, Tanzin decided to keep quiet and prick up her ears to listen to what the animals were saying.

"Humans are fools!" she heard the tiger say.

"They don't understand us," added the hairy bear.

"They don't know how to listen," said the big-horned deer.

"If they paid attention to us, they would live much better lives," sentenced the near-sighted snake.

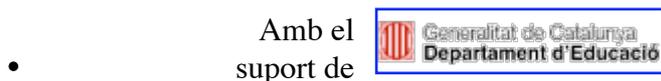
Since Tanzin thought they were right, she decided to make note of everything she heard the animals say during that whole night.

And now you know Tanzin's big secret. Ever since that day Tanzin uses everything she learned from listening to the animals to help the men and women who ask her for advice or to solve their problems.

Some people ask her where they should dig to find a water well. Others ask if there's a hair cream for dandruff. Some want to know if the weather will help the harvest or what they should eat to cure a stomachache.

And Tanzin is always right. She always gives them the best answer, except when they ask her what her secret is.

Script: J.M. Hernandez Ripoll



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