

Why Weeping Willows Weep

by Marlene Rosenfield

A childhood ago, (when only children inhabited this earth), a beautiful little girl named Tanya went out in the forest to play. The sun was shining brightly, the sky was a lovely blue-violet, and the blades of grass were still whispering their morning secrets. All the birds chatted gaily with one another; music filled the air. Tanya smiled to herself, said "Good Morning" to all the blades of grass, waved hello to the sun, whistled to the birds, and sighed: "What a lovely day! Today, no one can be unhappy!"

Just then, Tanya felt a drop of water upon her lovely blonde head. Plop! Another one—and then another! "Oh, dear! why must the angels cry today? I thought everything so beautiful, and everyone so happy—oh, why, oh why, must it rain?" Tanya looked up at the sun (who still smiled), and looked up at the sky (still dressed in purple), and still still she felt drops of water all over her pretty little face. Suddenly, Tanya saw it was not the raindrops at all, but teardrops (yes, teardrops) falling from the eyes of all the trees in front of her!!! Tanya ran quickly to the lovely willows to learn why they were weeping.

A large puddle of tears stood between Tanya and the willows. Suddenly, the largest tree, took out a giant-size hanky, wiped his eyes and said: "Tanya, careful—do not stop into our tears. We do not ever want children to be drenched by The Sea of Sadness. Never!" "But, Father Willow, I only want to know what makes you weep," said Tanya, as she moved a little closer to the edge of the Sea. "Stop!" cried all the other willows. Go play with the other children. Forget you ever saw us cry!" Father Willow motioned the other willows to be silent, and clearing his throat, he said: "Tanya has seen our tears, and no one can ignore tears. Like it or not, Tanya shall learn for herself why we weep. Tanya, listen to me carefully, and do everything I say. Walk through these woods until nightfall: listen to the grass, smile upon the sun, talk gently to every little animal or child you come across, and then return to me. Only then will you be able to understand our sadness." Tanya was very confused, but she set out on her way to do exactly what Father Willow asked of her.

The sun smiled down upon her, and Tanya exclaimed: "Dearest Sun, if you are so warm and powerful, then why can't you dry up the tears of the willows? They didn't find out, she may never have fun again! Father Willow remained silent, stretched out his longest limb to Tanya, placed it around her waist, and lifted her small body above the Sea of Sadness. Tanya now sat upon his shoulder, and waited patiently for him to begin. "Tanya, my sweet child, what did you learn today?" "OH!" she cried, "almost nothing! Everyone says I should play with my friends and forget your tears. The sun keeps everything warm, but she can't dry up your tears. The grass protects the earth and gives everyone a place to play on, and they said crying was your job, and you must do it. Oh, dear, dear, Father Willow, even the animals sit around telling stories and eating their lunch! Doesn't anyone care about you?" And she began to cry. And the willows cried with her. Father Willow hushed the others, and said to Tanya: "Now, now, Tanya, since you want to know why we weep, then you shall know. And when you do, you will be a very different little girl. But you shall know what no other child will ever be told... Tanya, these woods

are full of happiness, and the sun, the grass, the animals, and all the children are content because we willows know something they shall never know. Long ago, when God made the earth, He gave us long, slender branches, and fat, healthy trunks, and big heavy roots to wear upon our feet instead of shoes." "But, Father Willow, why would that make you weep?" Father Willow continued as if he hadn't heard her question (and maybe he hadn't.) "Our branches were made to absorb all the secrets of the sky: our trunks and roots were made to absorb all the secrets of the earth. We and we alone, know what the world is and shall be some day, some day when you are no longer a little girl. We know that happiness won't always be a part of these woods, and we know that pretty little girls must become big girls some day..."

And, at that remark, Tanya hugged Father Willow as hard as she could, while he wept and wept and wept. And that is why weeping willows wept then, and that's why they've been weeping ever since.

—Father Willow

