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 smile); since looked up at the sun (who still smile); since looked up at the sun the sky still dressed in purple), and still smile; since the drops of water all out her pritty little face. Suddenly, Tanya san it was not the raindrops at all, but teardrops (yes, teddings) faiting from the eyes of all the tree in 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? "Oh Tanya, sweet Tanya," cried the sun, "no one should ever dry up anyone else's tears—especially the tears of the willows. Why don't you forget them, and have fun like everyone telse?" But Tanya couldn't have fun when such lovely trees were so very unhappy!

"Oh, dear, I smiled at the sun, and the to not know why willows squirrels, a woodchuck, a racoon, and a fabbit seated in a circle, ealthg lunch, and chatting gaily a said "Good Afternoon" hem, and began: "My dear little friends, how can you enjoy lunch when the poor willows have only the Sea of Sadness to drink from. The animals looked at one another, whispered among themselves, and replied: "Tanya, we think you should go play with your friends. Don't worry your pretty little head about the willows!" With that, the animals went back to their meal. Tanya, even more confused than when she began, just stood there and shook her head with disbelief.

Suddenly, Tanya heard the grass beneath her feet talking to her: "Tanya, sweet Tanya, we make a lovely green blanket for the earth. In the beginning of the world, God asked us to make a nice place for children and animals to play upon. The willows have a job to do, also, everyone should accept their job gracefully. Now, return to Father Willow, but make sure you do not step into the Sea of Sadness." Tanya stroked the grass affectionately, said "thank you," and ran all the way back to the millows!

The willows (all of them except for Father Willow) were waiting for Tanya to return, and they exclaimed: "Ha! You've finally given up. Good little girl-now, run along and play with your friends." Tanya said that she didn't want to play right now; she wanted to know why weeping willows wept, and if

she 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 to 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 se 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 beep?" Father the word of the hadn't hard her question (and maybe he hadn't.) "Our brinches were made o absorbe all the secrets of the ky: our trunks and roots were pade to absorbfall the secrets of Wound 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 the been weeping ever since.

-Father Willow

