



## When Children Could Fly

Overcoming sadness and adversity

There once was a wonderful little girl who was full of joy. She was always making up new songs to welcome the day. She greeted each new thing with such excitement that light would spread across her face like the rising sun. Whenever she made a new friend, she would run to hug them and make them feel special. So, wherever the little girl went she was greatly loved.

One day as the little girl was out spreading her joy, she met an angry person. "Stay away from me foolish girl," they shouted. "Don't you know I'm busy."

The little girl was shocked. She felt as if someone had hit her. Suddenly for the first time in her life, she felt sad. The clouds started to spread across her face and it began to rain. Great drops of water were falling from her eyes.

She ran home while the rain kept falling. She didn't want to make the whole house cloudy, so she hid in a corner (went into her room and closed the door).

Her Mother was concerned. What could be wrong? Instead of joyful singing, all she heard was sobs. Slowly she opened the door. The little girl tried to hide under the covers, but her wise mother took her on her lap. "Why are you crying, my child?" she asked.

"Today someone didn't feel happy when I greeted them. They got mad and shouted at me. It hurt. And I'm feeling sad."

"This reminds me of the time when people were slaves," the mother replied hugging the girl tightly:

"Children used to have to work in the fields just like their parents and sometimes it was so hard they would cry. Some of the Owner's men didn't like that the children were full of joy – and they tried to beat it out of them or yell at them every time they would show their happiness.

But every night when the owners went to bed, the children would gather and listen to the stories of the old folks. As they listened to the stories their troubles would disappear like sparks from the fire rising in the night air. And by morning they'd be fresh again. Soon they would feel like the stories made them fly – far away from the pain and anger of the fields.

So each night they'd ask the old man, "teach us to fly," and the man gave each of them a favorite story. Whenever they were in pain or sad they would remember their story and begin to fly away. For the rest of their lives no matter what happened, the story helped them escape the sadness. Finally, the day came when they were strong enough to tell their story loudly enough that the world listened. People started to believe they could make a kinder world. And they did."

"So you must keep your story of joy – and even when someone else is angry or doesn't feel happy – don't let it change your story. You are meant to spread light wherever you go – so don't let others try to put it out!" Her mother hugged her tight, gave her a kiss, "now go spread your light."

By then the rain had stopped falling from the little girl's eyes – and the smile had started to spread. Soon she thought of a new song – and the house was light again.



**So, my fellow travelers,** remember we all have a light inside us – the more we feed it with happy stories and good thoughts about others the brighter it will shine. It will keep the sadness away from us and even from those around us. We know how to keep our bodies strong, by eating good food and exercising, but happiness will keep our minds strong.

## **Background**

The title is based on the African American tale “When the people could fly.” It’s a must read for anyone wanting to understand how the spirit triumphs over adversity and oppression. But we all suffer from sadness at some point, whether from a life event – sickness, death, separation or from pain inflicted from bullying or racism or other forms of societal oppression. We must give our children the tools to over the sadness we inflict on them, sometimes even without knowing it – locking away their light. And stories and the music and art they create are a simple way for them to find a way to climb out!!