

Sowing Peace - a Navajo tale
-retold by Dawn Daniels

There was a time in the world of the most terrible turmoil and fighting. The crops were laid waste, the children were starving, and all the people fought amongst one another, family against family and tribe against tribe. The waters ran red with blood and the earth was black with burning and what little food there was, was bitter with the taste of tears.

There was a young woman there whose heart was open and tender, and she was sick with grieving, for the slain young men, for the hungry children, for the ruined crops, for the anger and hatred which were eating the hearts of her people.

And so she went to the edge of the wrecked and barren fields and she wept. She wept and wept and wept, so hard and so long that her tears flowed into a stream and the stream flowed away across the cracked and barren land. When at length she looked up and saw what had come of her weeping, she felt moved to get up and **follow the flow of the water**. Even death alone in the desert seemed better than enduring the pain she had lived with.

So she followed the stream, and watched it broaden into a wide brook, and then into a river and finally it flowed into a great and peaceful lake, surrounded by white-capped mountains. **She was so intent on her journey** that at first she hardly noticed that the countryside had changed as she walked, growing ever more live and green; until by the shores of the lake, she was surrounded by a beautiful forest; filled with rustling leaves and wildlife and flowers, and rich with the sound of birdsong.

It was dusk when she reached the lake, and she hadn't walked very far when **she saw an old woman sitting on a log**, looking out over the lake to watch the moon rise. She looked up at her with eyes which held the light of wisdom and love and kindness, and said, "**Sit down, granddaughter and tell me why you've come.**"

The young woman sat down and poured out all her grief and sorrow and pain, telling the old woman about the waste and destruction in her world. **The old woman caught her tears as they fell**, and she listened in such a

deep way that in time, the young woman felt her sorrow fall away from her and her soul was at peace.

When she was done, they sat for awhile in silence, looking out at the moonlight on the lake. At length the old woman took her hand in both of hers and said, "**It has been a good visit, granddaughter. But now it's time for you to go back.**"

The girl's eyes filled with tears. "Go back? I don't ever want to go back. It's so beautiful and peaceful here, and you are so kind. I want to stay here with you forever," she told her passionately. "**Wait,**" the old one told her patiently, and from behind the log where they'd been sitting she drew up a basket of black seeds. She placed the basket in the young one's lap. "**These are for you, they are your tears.**" she said. The young woman ran her hand through the seeds and let them trickle through her fingers.

"I don't understand," she said, bewildered.

"Take these seeds back, and plant them with the help of your family. When they grow, harvest them carefully. **Prepare a feast of thanksgiving.** But you must invite your neighbors, and as a parting gift, give them some of the seeds - on the condition that when they grow, they do the same. When your entire village has been provided for, invite the next village to a feast, and do the same with them. **Trust me, granddaughter. Do as I ask.**"

And although her heart was reluctant to leave that beautiful place she took the seeds back, and persuaded her family to do as the old woman had asked. They planted them in a secret place, and tended them carefully; and invited their neighbors to the feast.

Our grandmothers tell us that little by little, peace and plenty spread through that whole valley, as neighbor shared with neighbor, and village shared with village, that the grass grew green, the children's bellies grew plump, and that little by little, the people lived together in peace once again.

May our stories be like those seeds, and may we sow peace and plenty with every spoken word.