

A photograph of a lush garden. In the background, a large, leafy tree stands prominently. In the middle ground, a yellow playhouse with a red roof is partially obscured by dense green foliage. In the foreground, a red toy car and a blue toy car are visible, also surrounded by plants. The overall scene is vibrant and overgrown.

WILLOW

We all have barbed
wire in our hearts.
It is that which shapes
us to be the strong,
beautiful beings we
become.....

A SHORT STORY
BY
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Tommy

Tommy loves water .

His earliest happy memory is splashing about in a big yellow plastic bath . His mum would sing to him and play silly games. The warmth, the love, the laughter. So happy .

But that was then .

Looking at Tommy now , well , Happy is not a word you would use .

Tommy is 16 years of age and lives with his Mum . His Dad moved out some months past .

At first he was pleased . He could go swimming again and not have to explain where the bruises came from . He had tried to be good for his dad but so often it went wrong . His dad got angry so quickly and it was hard to remember exactly what had set him off .

The funny thing is that he missed his dad . He wanted him to come back and for everything to be O.K.

If only , like that one perfect afternoon when he went fishing with his dad , it could always be like that .



As for his mum , he only felt anger .

Angry she hadn't
protected him

Angry she didn't love
him enough

Angry she had driven
dad away .

He would tell her too .
Shout and scream at
her . Throw things at
her . Wish she were
dead .

His mum would cry a
lot , which made him
more angry .

How could she be so weak ?



The Healing Centre



He didn't want to go but his social worker thought it a good idea . As did Mr. Terry at school . He trusted Mr. Terry . It wasn't that long ago

that Mr. Terry had put an end to his being bullied . And that had been going on for a long time . But best of all Mr. Terry had given him the project of making a nature pond at the school animal sanctuary .

Of course his mum had been going to The Healing Centre for a while . She found it a safe place to be . Long hair , long skirts and beads seemed to be the dress code . The windows were heavily curtained to subdue the light and perhaps the sound from outside . Daylight excluded was replaced by scented candle light within . This was definitely a calm , safe place to spend time .

Tommy , however , wasn't so sure . No sooner had he entered with his mum through the front door than he was out the back door alone , into the garden .

WILLOW

It's not known how long WILLOW had lived in this forgotten garden . How long since his seed had ended an uncertain journey to this place . Perhaps the Well which lay close by had influenced his choice . Certainly he was very impressive . Big strong trunk with those long , long leafy branches reaching back to earth as if to protect his body within .



Was it to protect or was it to keep a secret ? If you part the branches and step within his world then it soon becomes clear of his past conflict .

A time when Humans had sought to enforce their will on him with Barbed Wire . Yes , the conflict is there to be seen . Strands of barbed wire disappear into his trunk and reappear a

bit further on . This is a conflict that was neither won nor lost

WILLOW had simply absorbed the hostility .



Tommy meets WILLOW

This was a much better place for Tommy to be . His Mum was happy to be with her friends inside the house and Tommy had found his own Sanctuary . The Garden was very overgrown but as far as he was concerned this just added to its attraction . The large tree at the end immediately took his

attention, but he was unable to get close to it . He found some rusty garden tools and set about his new project .

He was amazed how much he had cleared when his Mum came calling for him some hour and a half later .

"Look , Mum ! Come and see this ! "

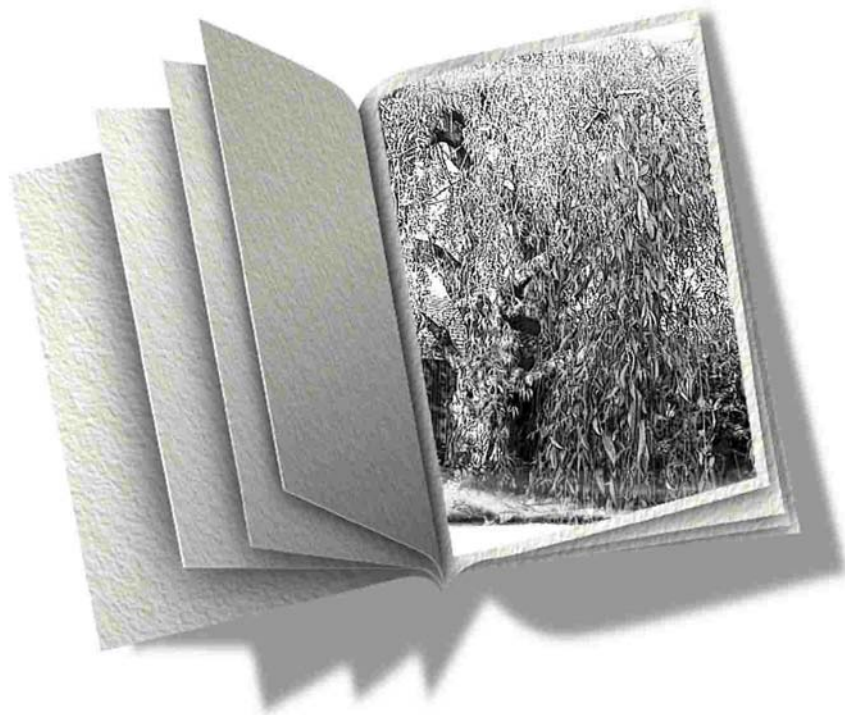
Tommy had cleared a path to a Well , which was about halfway down the garden . She stood next to him as he selected a stone from the ground and held it above the Well . They both silently counted as it fell . Two seconds , yes two whole seconds before that comforting splash .

"That's deep" his Mum said , "you be careful ."

"Oh , Mum ," he said . "I'd never fit down there , it's too narrow . "They both laughed.

Two days later it was Tommy that was dragging his Mum to the Healing Centre . He couldn't wait to get there . He'd told Mr. Terry about the Garden and even his social worker .

Tommy gave his Mum a big smile as he left her with her friends and went straight through to the Garden . How good it felt to be back . He went right over to the Well and repeated the two second measure of its depth . Yes , everything fine there , so now his attention returned to the large tree at the end of the Garden . He'd described it to Mr. Terry , who thought it might be a willow tree , but he'd given Tommy a book to help him identify it . Tommy opened the book to willow trees and looked from the picture to the tree . Yes, Mr. Terry was right . Tommy had a Willow tree in what he now considered to be His Garden .



WILLOW talks to Tommy

It was on the third visit to the garden that Tommy finally reached WILLOW .

Immediately his attention was drawn to the Barbed Wire . He touched the strong rough trunk and felt the connection between himself and his new friend .



WILLOW spoke to Tommy ! Of course , not in the way that you and I might speak , but WILLOW spoke in Tommy's thoughts and Tommy knew it to be true . Each Barb on the Wire

represented a painful experience . Some would be of small consequence and remain outside the Trunk of WILLOW . Others could be seen on the surface of his trunk trying to Bully their way in . And finally the unseen ones , Buried within his trunk .

Tommy knew only too well the story being told here . He thought back to the time when he was bullied . How sometimes the bullying seemed , like the clearly seen Barbs , to have no impact on him . Just an everyday occurrence that

would soon pass . Other times those Barbs would imbed themselves onto his skin and he felt the physical pain . But worst were the unseen Barbs . Buried in his thoughts and feelings . Tearing at his confidence whenever he tried to fight back .

This was a story that WILLOW told well .

See how tall , strong and magnificent WILLOW was . Those unseen Barbs had no effect on his growth . The pain others had tried to inflict had been recognised as the pain they , themselves , were feeling .

He took their pain without judgement and gave it healing .

For the first time Tommy understood how things had been in the past and how , with the healing help of WILLOW , things might be in the future . But in this expanding point of here and now Tommy felt so happy , so peacefully energised , so Alive .



JEFF'S VOICE...

Husband? Father?

You must be joking.... I never needed them?

How did I ever end up there?

I was free ...free to come and go... free to do as I please...OK I thought I was in love and we both wanted kids but it was always down to me.

I always had control and with that pressure..
To provide more but get less in return .

I got more and more down.

Yes...Tommy was a good kid but the anger I felt ended up in his direction.

I know the drinking didn't help...but I felt more and more lonely..

Mary once was everything I wanted.

She was my sweet darling .

I only wanted to be with her.

Wanted to keep her close so that no one could take her from me, and for a long while that was safe.

But when Tommy was born, everything changed,

Of course at first I was the proud Dad ...but it wasn't enough

I wish it could have been. But it wasn't...

The son I had gained had given a bigger loss ..

I'd lost control to a small child.. his needs were more important than mine.

I hated that.

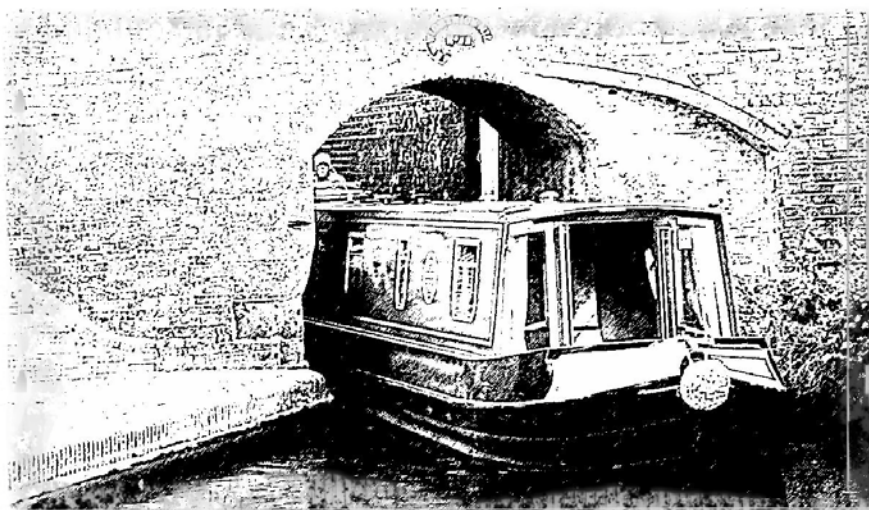
I was the one going out to work



Tommy

Ten years past now and Tommy still remembers WILLOW.

The narrow boat
on which Tommy
lives and works
is of course
called 'WILLOW'



Tommy is happy
to share his boat
with the
children from the inner city .

Taking them deep into the
countryside to the Willow Animal
Sanctuary . There would be many
Willow trees on the journey and he
would happily share stories with the
children of that one special
WILLOW that had so changed his
life .



Tommy Loves Water.



Family Diary Fun....



1 Find out some pictures or photos of your happiest memories and paste them here...

Family Diary Fun....



2 What makes you and your family angry?

Think of something you could do instead of losing your temper and write it down here...

Family Diary Fun....

3 Find out if there are any Healing Centres or therapy Centres in your City. Write down where they are and what do they do there? How can it be helpful to us?



Family Diary Fun....

4 Plant a tree or Grow a plant. Take a photo or draw a picture of it and write about what happens...



Family Diary Fun....

5 Go with a member of your family and find a wishing well.
Make a wish and draw and write about it here...



Family Diary Fun....

- 6 Go for a walk with your family and find out what all the trees are that you pass on the way. Write a list / draw / photograph / or paste a picture of them here.....



Family Diary Fun....

7 Write a poem / story / picture / poster about bullying here....



Family Diary Fun....

- 8 Ask members of your family to write or draw their "Voice" or make their "say" on this page...



Family Diary Fun....

- 9 Visit the local canal with your family and write down all the names of narrow boats that you see....



Family Diary Fun....



10 Find a local animal sanctuary or visit www.greenmeadow.org.uk and find out about an animal that was bullied before it was homed there,. Draw their picture or write a poem and send it to Daphne and Cliff or pay them a visit - Don't forget to phone first though...

Post some of your Family Diary Fun stuff to be published at www.HETwebsite.com