

The Willowbee Tree

All Story Descriptions by Season

In the backyard of an ordinary house on an ordinary street in an ordinary town, there was once a most extraordinary tree. It was an enormous willow tree. In the middle of its trunk there was a hole. And if you found yourself near that willow tree with a certain wonder stirring in your heart, you might notice a colorful sparkle coming from that hole. And what was that sparkle?

An invitation to go somewhere long ago and far far away.

Follow the stories of Willowbee children – ordinary children who take some not-so-ordinary adventures through the powers of their extraordinary willow tree.



Autumn Season:

This is a collection of 13 autumn stories, for the 13 weeks of autumn.

The Cattle Drive

Clancy does not want to go on the first-grade hike. He thinks it will be long and hard, and he simply won't make it up the mountain. When the willow tree takes them to South Texas to meet a melancholic longhorn steer, Clancy is able to inspire him to re-join the herd — and inspire himself in the process.

The Silly Seals

Piper thinks that some of the girls in her new school don't like her. They smile and whisper and she is sure they are talking about her. Later, the willow tree takes her to an island off the coast of Ireland where she meets some puffins and a group of seals that have similar worries about a new resident of the island — a fisherman.

Plenty for All

Little Ty does not want to share his blocks with his older brother, and when Clancy leaves to play something else, he folds his arms and wonders why he is suddenly all by himself. Later, when all three children travel to an oasis in the Sahara desert, they learn from a desert fox, an antelope, and a gazelle how generosity brings new friends.

The Corn Children

At a local corn maze, older sister Piper leaves her younger brothers behind to get to the middle faster. She can't understand why everyone gets upset until later, when the willow tree takes them to the Yucatan and a mother jaguar teaches her the importance of keeping your word.

Pushing the Sun

Little Ty has been feeling particularly small lately. If he could have one wish, it would be to be taller. But then the willow tree takes him to the Nile River of Ancient Egypt, where the smallest creature of all pushes the powerful sun across the sky with its tiny legs and tiny steps. He and his brother and sister return home with a new appreciation for the powers of being small.

True Gifts

It is Mrs. Willowbee's birthday, and all she wants is for the family to attend the local harvest festival. She says "No gifts! No cake! I simply want to have fun at the festival with you." Piper and Little Ty make their mother a gift anyway, but Clancy is confused: What is a birthday without birthday cake? And what can he make his mother so he has a gift to offer too? He gets a great idea, however, after The willow tree transports the children to the coast of Iceland, where they encounter dolphins and a clear-eyed gyrfalcon.

First Flurries

While enjoying the joys of autumn, Clancy and Piper see small flurries of snowfall. This is exciting for Piper, but startling for Clancy. He is not ready for snow — the thought makes him want to go inside and climb into bed. But when the Willow Tree takes them to Alaska, where it is colder and snowier, they meet some animals that meet the winter weather in very different ways.

Stillness and Quiet

Clancy has chicken pox and has to stay home for up to two weeks! At first, he likes the idea of reading books in his bed and eating snacks on the couch, but it doesn't take long for him to feel antsy and itchy and even a little bored. When the willow tree offers him an adventure to the mountains of Japan, he jumps at the chance — but is surprised at the wisdom he receives from a group of macaques peacefully bathing in the hot spring baths.

The Angry Elephant

Piper, the oldest Willowbee child, has a bit of a temper. She can get very frustrated when others do not work or play in the way she thinks is best or at the pace she thinks is appropriate. And after she accidentally breaks something of Clancy's while having a bit of tantrum, the willow tree invites her to go to the west coast of India, where she meets an elephant with a similar temper.

The Wild Ponies

Clancy misses his old school. He wonders what first grade is like back in the city where he used to live. As he recalls all the differences, the willow tree beckons him and his sister on an adventure. They land on Chincoteague Island off the coast of Virginia, where a group of wild ponies imagines what life would

be like back in the land where their great-grandparents once lived. They all discover that life is really quite good just where they are.

Defeat the Goats

The Willowbee children climb out of an ancient olive tree to meet a gathering of wild boars who are gearing up for a battle. The boars talk of the goats — their bitter enemies — and describe how weak, mean, and silly they are. Upon further investigation, however, the Willowbees learn that none of the boars have ever actually met a goat. Everything they know about goats comes from stories and tall tales. Piper, drawing on a similar experience she was having at school, encourages them to meet a goat and see for themselves.

A Gift in the Thin Times

Little Ty is a picky eater. He often eats only one thing on his plate and refuses the rest. When the Willowbee children are taken to the far north of Norway, they encounter a pair of reindeer and an arctic hare that reveal the blessings of light, warmth, and food during a season where all of three are scarce. After that, food never tasted quite so good.

The Secret of the Source

The Willowbee family has a winter holiday tradition where they are visited by the house gnome who brings them gifts. This year, Piper is determined to see the house gnome and concocts a plan to catch a glimpse before it disappears into the snow. But when the willow tree takes them to visit a group of curious rhesus monkeys who want to find the secret source of the Ganges river in India, Piper learns the value of mystery and how one question often leads to more questions.

Winter Season:



This is a collection of 13 winter stories, for the 13 weeks of winter.

Give and Take

Clancy loves his mother's baking so much that one day he takes more than his share and hides it away in his room. He believes that his mother won't notice the missing treats. When the willow tree takes him to Borneo to meet some long-nosed monkeys and a mother orangutan, he learns the value of giving rather than taking.

Growling

It is winter vacation and Piper and Clancy are bickering. They can't seem to agree on much — especially what games to play — and Little Ty, their younger brother, is tired of it. Later, when the willow tree takes them to the Rocky Mountains and they meet a bickering mountain lion couple, Little Ty and the mountain lion cub show the rest that bickering and arguing can become a distraction from much more important matters.

Sharing a Meal

The Willowbee children are resistant to attending a potluck party and sharing their mother's delicious nutty cinnamon rolls. The willow tree takes them to Tasmania to meet a Tasmanian Devil, a Tasmanian Tiger, a few quolls, echidnas, and other curious animals that are happily sharing a bounty of local food — teaching the children that food is ever so much better when shared!

Feeding the Storm

Clancy is mad. His day has not gone well at all and instead of saying anything to anyone, he has only gotten more and more upset. Finally, the willow tree takes him to the coast of Newfoundland, Canada where a Newfoundland Wolf shows him how the storm inside needs to be expressed and fed in order to pass.

I Am Myself

Piper is discouraged because her friends at school want her to be like them. The sports kids want her to only play sports, the musical kids want her to only play the piano, and the artistic kids want her to be interested only in art. When the willow tree takes her to the Philippines and introduces her to a Kagwang, a Binterong, a Pilantok, and a Mawmag — she learns that being herself is the best thing to be.

Making New Friends

Clancy is feeling nervous about the school's "Winter Festival" and is worried that he might get lost in a group of people he doesn't know very well. When the willow tree takes him to Catahoula Lake in Louisiana, he meets a shy duck from Manitoba and helps her find new friends — and finds his own courage in the process.

Have Fun Finding

Everyone wants to know how Little Ty can always find anything lost. Whenever they ask, he only answers, "I just find it". But then the willow tree takes the Willowbee children to Loch Ness in Scotland and a fun-loving otter explains to everyone the best way (and Ty's way) to find something. And oh, what they find!

Taking Your Time

Piper, the oldest child, can be rather competitive with her friends and family. Sometimes she likes to finish first even if it means making mistakes or not doing her best work. When the willow tree takes them to the jungles of Ecuador, a three-toed sloth teaches her the value and power of moving slowly and taking her time.

Playing with Nothing

Piper and Clancy have a snow day from school, but instead of a day of snowy fun outdoors, they must stay indoors due to the wind and cold temperatures. They quickly get tired of their usual games and books, and they moan that they don't have anything to do. But then, the willow tree invites them to the

barren Penguin Island off the coast of Namibia, and they learn from a group of penguins that one can have fun even when you are surrounded with what looks like nothing.

The Jewel Island

When the Willowbee Children receive a gift of coins and sparkly crystals from their aunt, Clancy immediately wants the "treasure" for his own collection. This turns into an argument between the three of them — and it is not until the willow tree takes them to Halong Bay in Vietnam, that they all learn what is truly treasure.

The Race

Piper and her friend Elise have so much in common — they both like sports, music, art and answering questions in school. When Piper learns that they will compete against each other in the obstacle course, she is hesitant to race. But then the willow tree takes them to the American prairies and she learns from a roadrunner and jackrabbit the best way to race your friends.

Listen to the Lights

Spring is coming and the Willowbee children are filled with excitement and energy. Unfortunately for their mother, this excitement is expressed with very loud voices. She encourages them to use their 'inside voices', but only after the willow tree takes them to the far north and a Moose shows them how to listen to the magical 'northern lights' do the children understand how to be both excited and quiet.

Through the Hedgerow

Piper comes home feeling tired of all the same things, both at school and at home. When the willow tree takes her and Clancy and Little Ty to a verdant land of grassy fields and beech hedgerows, she learns from the local cows that adventures abound in their neck of the woods — only the adventures are much quieter and more subtle than she was expecting.



Spring Season:

This is a collection of 13 spring stories, for the 13 weeks of spring.

Sacred SnackTime

Sometimes Little Ty gets so excited about playing that he forgets to eat. He would rather do so many other things than eat — especially play tag or hide and seek.

Then the willow tree takes them to Mexico and he learns a valuable lesson from thousands of Monarch Butterflies on why to eat peacefully before a big event.

A Stone with Wings

Clancy is a dreamy boy who has lots of "idea time". His family understands this and his teachers understand this, but sometimes the children in his class do not. They occasionally laugh at his ideas and

think what he says is silly. But when the willow tree takes him to the foothills of the Himalayas to help the local animals find a mythical source of water, it is precisely those "silly" ideas that help him find it.

The Clay Pot

Piper is home sick from school and she doesn't like it. The previous day she did not listen to her mother or her teachers and was under-dressed for a class field trip. She got cold and wet and now has a fever. When the willow tree takes her to the Smoky Mountains to hear an old Buzzard's story, she learns the importance of listening to one's elders.

Dreams and Fancy

Like many three-year-olds, little Ty has an active imagination. His sister Piper sometimes doesn't appreciate his sense of wonder — especially when she is in a hurry. From the animals of the Amazon Rain forest, a place of abundant fancy, she learns how best to engage with her brother's imagination.

Powerful Friends

Clancy is nervous about performing in the first grade play. Although he has only one line, he worries about looking silly in front of everyone. When the willow tree transports the Willowbee children to a Tlingit elder in the Pacific Northwest of the United States, Clancy learns how to benefit from the wisdom of powerful "totem" animals, and he is given the courage, not only to perform, but to enjoy it!

New Friends

When the Willowbee children visit the local park and see new children on the swings, they are at first frustrated because they wanted to swing. Then when they hear the children speak French they are further frustrated because clearly they aren't from the neighborhood. When the French children continue to swing and don't give the Willowbees a turn, Piper, Clancy and Little Ty leave in a huff. Only when the willow tree takes them to Southeast Australia where a group of Wombats hatch an unfair plot to scare a group of traveling Kangaroos, do the children realize why it is important to be welcoming to new faces rather than be judgmental.

Big Plans and Real Weather

The Willowbees are deeply disappointed when they learn the Spring Festival has been postponed due to heavy rain. How frustrating it is when the weather doesn't cooperate! Their spirits are lifted a bit when the willow tree offers to take them to a new land. They go to the northern plains of the United States, where they learn from several bison and prairie dogs how to accept and honor the weather — whether you like it or not.

Graces

Little Ty is very silly during dinnertime grace and Clancy doesn't like it. When the two brothers go through the hole in the magical willow tree, they are transported to the highlands of Scotland, long ago — where nothing is attempted without a lovely prayer of honor. A Scottish hare, two badger brothers, and a red kite inspire the boys to remember the importance of saying thanks.

What is No Longer Needed

It's the day of Piper's dentist appointment. Two of her baby teeth will be removed, and she is feeling nervous about it. The willow tree takes her to the Grand Canyon where she encounters Snake Woman, a powerful rattlesnake who is shedding her skin. Piper learns the value of letting go what is no longer needed to make room for what is to come.

The Bat Cave

The Willowbee children are to go to a "memorial service" for their Great Uncle Jack, a time to remember the kind old man who lived a long and exciting life. Clancy doesn't understand why they need to do such a thing — he remembers Uncle Jack just fine! But when the willow tree takes him to Bali and a special temple built around a mountain cave, he learns from a group of monkeys, a quiet tiger and a host of fruit bats that gathering together to remember our loved ones can be a very special time indeed.

The End of the Season

Clancy is lamenting the end of first grade and the prospect of starting a new grade. He likes the way things are, and doesn't want them to change. The willow tree takes the children to Tanzania for the migration of the wildebeests and zebras at the end of the wet season, where change is welcome. Although it's not always easy, the animals come home changed: a year older and stronger and wiser.

A Real Dragon

Ty is celebrating his three-and-a-half birthday, and he has a single wish: to see a real dragon. His parents and brother and sister are dumbfounded — how can they grant him this wish? But the willow tree knows — it takes the children to Komodo Island in Indonesia where they meet not only a real dragon but three of the real dragon's children. The dragons and the Willowbees learn a great deal about each other and realize that the stories don't always match up with the truth.

Waiting for Wings

Piper loves to read and is frustrated when her parents put a limit on what kinds of books are appropriate for her age. But when the willow tree takes her to the Barrier Islands in the Gulf of Mexico, she meets a young Whooping Crane who is determined to fly north earlier than her mother has planned. Both the crane and Piper learn a lesson about the value of waiting for the right time.



Summer Season:

This is a collection of 13 summer stories, for the 13 weeks of summer.

Afraid of the Dark

Piper doesn't want to go to sleep because she is afraid of what might be hiding in the dark corners of her room. One night, the willow tree takes her to Madagascar

where it is a very dark night. Hidden in the darkness are a fun-loving bunch of lemurs that teach Piper that the dark holds many happy creatures that wish her well.

Being Yourself

It is summertime, and the Willowbee children are enjoying a visit from their cousins. Piper and Little Ty love how their cousins like to play rowdy, noisy games — but Clancy does not. He tries to be more like the others, but it is difficult and tiring. When the willow tree takes him to the Galapagos Islands and introduces him to the many strange and unique animals there, Clancy learns the value of being himself.

Seeing the Magic

When Mrs. Willowbee invites her new friend and her friend's daughter Darlene to come over, Piper is hesitant. Darlene is quiet and Piper doesn't think they will get along. When the willow tree takes her to Patagonia, a magical llama shows her how to see new things in places that you least expect.

Twixt the Cracks

It is the middle of summer vacation, and Piper is getting tired of the same old things — same yard, same room, same street, and same park. When the hole in the willow tree starts to glow, she hopes for an exciting adventure but is disappointed when they step out onto the rocky landscape of the Burren in Ireland. But then a lark leads them through an meditative exercise that shows them the hidden magic between the cracks.

The Fire Within

Piper has a lot of energy. She is determined, excited, adventurous, and sometimes a little opinionated. Sometimes her friends and siblings think she can be a little bossy and this makes Piper sad. When the willow tree takes her to the desert cliffs of Wadi Rum, she learns from a snake, a spider, and a scorpion that fire inside is good — so long as you can see the different kinds of fire in others.

Butting Heads and Lying Down

Clancy and Little Ty have are not agreeing. They are both stubborn as well and this creates several stand-stills in their day. When the willow tree takes them to the Bighorn Mountains in Wyoming, they meet two equally stubborn bighorn sheep who find a creative solution to their own impasse.

The Smell of Fire

Little Ty did not enjoy a recent camping trip with the rest of his family. He complained the whole time about the different sounds, and tastes and especially the smells. When the willow tree takes him to the mud pools of New Zealand, Ty and a feisty Kea bird learn what amazing things one can see once you accept the intense smell for what it is: the smell of fire.

The Perfect Pet

Mr. Willowbee announces that the children can finally have a pet! Piper and Clancy know exactly what they want, but Little Ty has trouble deciding. He loves all the animals. If he could, he would have a

house full of monkeys, goats, lions, buffalo and lemurs! When the willow tree takes him to the "Fairy Chimneys" of central Turkey, he meets an animal that he soon decides would make the perfect pet.

The Right Spot

At the local nursery, Piper discovers a beautiful blueberry plant, covered in perfect little berries. She begs her mother to let her bring it home. Her mother agrees but gives her the responsibility of finding the 'right spot' to plant the bush. She and her brothers search over the entire yard, troubling over the decision — but then the willow tree takes them to the Valley of Mexico to meet the many animals there that are also troubling over finding the 'right spot' to gather. Piper and the animals are surprised when they find that the right spot turns out to be right under their noses.

The Rarest Fruit

Clancy loves fruit - all kinds of fruit. What he wants more than anything is to taste rare fruits he has never tasted before. When the willow tree takes the children to Assam India, Clancy encounters something particularly special — the very first lemon tree.

Fairy Tales

Clancy loves fairy tales, and wonders if there are real fairy tale castles, knights and magical swords. When the willow tree takes him to Neuschwanstein Castle in Germany, he has a chance to become a brave knight with a magical sword — just like the ones in his favorite stories.

Ready to Swim

It is back to school time for Piper and Clancy, the two older Willowbee children. Clancy will now be attending first grade. He is sad about leaving Kindergarten and worried about what first grade will bring. The willow tree seems to understand this and takes the Willowbees to an island in the American south where an alligator, a white ibis and several ghost crabs show them something miraculous: the moment when a little loggerhead turtle crawls the difficult and courageous journey to the sea.

Stuck in the Stable

Little Ty is feeling left out. His older brother and sister have both gone back to school, leaving him at home by himself. He wants to have his own adventure, and when the willow tree takes him to old Chippewah lake country, he learns the value of staying home until he is just the right age.

Sample Pack:



Part One: The Lion's Eye

Six year old Clancy, notices something strange about the willow tree in the back yard of his new house. Could that be a glow coming from the center of the tree? On closer inspection, he finds a large hole and discovers that it leads him to a wonderful land where animals talk and a little boy can play games with giddy zebras, a joyful baboon and a very persnickety lion.

Part Two: Running As One

Nine-year-old Piper loves to win. But in her school's recent field day races, she didn't come in first. And she is frustrated. How can she become the very best? The Willow Tree has an answer for her — and it lies in a faraway land of cool pines where a great King Bear is racing to save his crown.

Part Three: Throwing Stones

It's hot, and three-year-old Ty is crabby. So crabby, he just wants to throw things. And his six-year-old brother, Clancy, may just start throwing things back. Just in the nick of time, the Willow Tree invites them to a distant land, long-ago, where two ruling brothers are having a throwing match of their own.