



the message of the sunflower

by Georgianna Moore

Dedicated to the children of the world

Once upon a time the earth was even more beautiful than it is today. The water was pure and deep, reflecting within itself the sunlight which gave life to all the creatures beneath the waves.

The earth was green with many kinds of trees and plants. These gave food and shelter to the birds, the animals, and to all mankind. At night the air was so clear that the starlight gave a glow almost as bright as the moon.

The people of the earth lived close to nature. They understood it and honored it and never took more than what they needed from it. The people lived in peace so they prospered and began to build many nations all around the world according to nature's climate. But one day, a terrible thing happened. A strange spirit of greed entered the hearts of mankind. People began to be jealous of one another, and they were not satisfied with all the good things they already had. The nations wanted more and more of everything: more land, more water, more resources. They squeezed precious minerals from the earth to build terrible weapons to defend their nations from other greedier nations. They killed one another. They polluted the air and the water with poisons. Nature began to die. This is called war. War is ugly. It destroys love and hope and peace.

Then one day a magical thing occurred. The birds of the air, the animals of the land, and the creatures beneath the waters came to an agreement: if they were to survive, something would have to be done to stop these wars. Only through peace could their world survive.

"We cannot speak the human language," they declared, "and mankind can no longer understand ours. We must find among us a symbol of peace so brilliant that all who see it will stop and remember that peace and sharing is beautiful."

"I am what you need," said a golden sunflower. "I am tall and bright. My leaves are food for the animals, my yellow petals can turn plain cloth to gold, my seeds are many and are used for food by all living beings. Yet, the seeds I drop upon the ground can take root and I will grow again and again. I can be your symbol of peace."

All nature rejoiced, and it was decided that the birds would each take one sunflower seed and that they would fly over every nation and plant the seed in the earth as a gift. The seeds took root and grew, and the sunflowers multiplied.

Wherever the sunflowers grew, there seemed to be a special golden glow in the air. The people could not ignore such a magical sight.

Soon they began to understand the message of the sunflowers so they decided to destroy all of their terrible weapons and to put an end to the greed and to the fear of war. They chose the sunflower as a symbol of peace and new life for all the world to recognize and understand.

A ceremony was celebrated by planting a whole field of sunflowers. Artists painted pictures of the sunflowers, writers wrote about them, and the people of the world were asked to plant more sunflowers seeds as a symbol of remembrance.

All nature rejoiced once more as the golden sunflowers stood tall with their faces turned eastward to the rising sun, then following the sun until the setting in the west.

They gave their goodness to the world so that everyone who sees a sunflower will know that the golden light of peace is beautiful. Sunflowers have become the symbol of a world free of nuclear weapons. After Ukraine gave up its last nuclear warhead, the Defense Ministers of the US, Russia and Ukraine met on a former Ukrainian missile base, June 4, 1996. They celebrated by scattering sunflower seeds and planting sunflowers. Former US Secretary of Defense William Perry said, "Sunflowers instead of missiles in the soil will ensure peace for future generations."

