

HARMONY

By Mike Paolucci

Once upon a time, in a remote forest, there was a small lake about fifty meters across and circular in shape. Surrounding the lake was a doughnut-shaped white sandy beach about four meters across, separating the lake from the surrounding forest.

Three logs lay across the beach, running from the forest to the lake, and dividing the beach into three equal sections. From above, the logs gave the lake a letter Y appearance.

Three clans shared the water of the lake, but each kept to their own section. Whenever someone would get close to a log separating his part of the beach from another's, there would always be hollering by the clan encroached upon.

Each clan had a skill that the others did not. The Watengas built excellent houses: sturdy, warm at night, and cool during the day. The Belutas were experts in making clothes: light cotton fabrics for the midday heat, warm woolen clothes for the cooler months, and always bright, stylish, and colorful. The Asanas produced the finest foods: vegetables rich in flavor and nutrition, and tender meats.

The Watengas lived in wonderful homes, but wore crude furs and lived on roots and berries. The Belutas wore wonderful clothes, but lived in dilapidated huts and ate whatever vegetation they could forage. And the Asanas enjoyed the finest foods, but lived in grass huts and wore rough clothes woven from palms.

Early one morning, a Watenga girl, a Beluta boy, and an Asana boy, all about four years old, were playing in their respective areas of the beach. The Watenga girl had found a pretty stone and was examining it. The Beluta boy was curious and stood watching her for a while. When she noticed him she walked to the log separating them and showed him the stone. The Asana boy saw this and leapt over the log separating his beach from the Beluta boy's beach, and all three stood together admiring the beautiful little stone.

The Watenga girl's mother came onto the beach and saw all three children together. She screamed in shock and ran to them. She scolded her daughter and the other children until the daughter calmed her mother by pointing out that all three children were safe and happy. The mother was still upset, but at least not hysterical now.

The Beluta boy's mother heard the shouting and she stepped onto the beach to find her son. When she saw the group she began screaming and ran to them. Again, the children reassured

her that all was well. She looked at the group with disbelief, but eventually accepted that they were all indeed safe and happy.

Finally, the Asana mother completed the scene.

Just then a cloud rolled across the sun, putting a chill into the air. The Watenga and the Asana women folded their arms and shivered, but the Beluta woman did not because she wore warm clothes: she had on a coat, a sweater, and a heavy shirt. She removed her coat and sweater and gave them to the two other women. The Watenga and Beluta women had never worn such warm garments!

The father of the Asana boy stepped onto the beach and was puzzled and surprised to see his wife and child in the mixed group. He had just been gathering fruit from his orchard, and as he ran toward the group he struggled to keep from dropping his harvest. After his wife had assured him that everything was alright he began sharing the fruit with the group. The Watenga and Beluta women rolled their eyes in delight as they tasted the succulent fruit that they had never known before.

The Watenga woman invited everyone to her home where they could enjoy their new-found treasures in warmth. The Asanas and Belutas were awestruck by the fine construction of the home, and the fact that the roof didn't leak!

When the Watenga woman's husband returned home to find the other clans in his house he chided his wife. But she assured him that they were all friends and, reluctantly, he sat down and began enjoying the delicious fruit.

The Asana and Beluta women later left the house and returned to their homes to bring more food and clothes, and to invite the Beluta woman's husband. In a short time, all three families were clad in brilliant clothes, and sharing a marvelous feast, in the wonderful house.

Today, the logs are gone. And the women and children meet on the beach everyday to share food and clothes, while the men work together building well-constructed houses.