

## The Water Drop and the Direction of Time

*A fairy tale in the spirit of H.C. Andersen by Henrik Frederiksen, ©ElephantTribe.org*

There sat a little water drop at the very tip of a pale green beech leaf. It was so round and clear that the whole world could see its reflection in it. The forest, it is true, was upside down in the drop's belly, but that did not matter, for the drop was young and newly born of the night's cool dew.

"How blessed it is here!" thought the little drop, gleaming proudly as the morning sun struck it. It felt like a whole little sun itself.

But suddenly, the drop felt a strange, pulling weight. It slid slowly – oh, so slowly – further down toward the leaf's outermost, sharpest tip.

"No, wait!" it cried, trying to cling to the fine veins of the leaf. "I want to go back! Up to the middle of the leaf, where it was safe and flat. I want to go back to when the sun had just risen!"

*"You cannot do that, little friend," sighed the Wind, who just swept by and tickled the beech leaf. "Time has only one direction, and it moves forward. Always forward."*

"What a strange thing time is," asked the water drop, quivering with anxiety, for it now hung by a very thin thread of water. "And why can't I just roll backwards? The past was so beautiful."

The Wind died down a little and wrapped itself around the leaf like an invisible shawl.

"The past," said the Wind with its deep, ancient voice, "the past is like the dark puddle down on the forest floor. Can you see it?"

The drop looked down and grew dizzy. Deep below lay a still, brown puddle filled with withered leaves, forgotten feathers, and yesterday's rain.

"In the past, everything that has been is gathered," continued the Wind. "It is heavy, deep, and immovable. You can reflect upon it, you can learn from it, but you can never, ever swim back into it. It is a closed land."

"And what about the future then?" asked the drop, as it slipped further over the edge. "Is the future up there?" It looked up toward the great, blue sky, where white clouds sailed like proud ships.

"Yes," smiled a warm Sunbeam, who stepped in to help and laid its golden hand upon the drop. "The future is the light, the clouds, and the great, unknown sea. The future is light because it has not yet been written. But there is a rule in this world, little drop..."

"What rule?" squeaked the drop, which was now more oblong than round.

**"That in order to reach the future, you must first let go."**

"But if time only moves forward, and I let go, I will fall down into that dark puddle of the past!" cried the drop.

"That is a terrible and unfair direction time has!"

"You do not understand the true nature of time," whispered the Wind gently. "The direction is not a fall. It is a *transformation*."

At that moment, the thin thread broke.

*Plip!* it went.

The water drop fell through the clear morning air. For a brief, breathless second, it felt a rushing terror. Then it struck the surface of the dark puddle on the forest floor. It merged with the motionless water of the past, and the little drop thought that now its whole life was over. Now it had become nothing. Now it was merely a memory.

But the hours passed. The sun climbed higher into the sky, and it grew strong and warm. The golden Sunbeam that had spoken to the drop slipped all the way down to the forest floor and laid itself across the puddle.

Suddenly, the water drop felt something marvelous. It wasn't heavy anymore. It wasn't bound by the dark mud of the past. The heat filled it, and like a fine, invisible vapor, it rose from the puddle. Up, up, up!

It drifted over the ferns, past the pale green beech leaf, and further up into the great sky, helped along by its old friend, the Wind. It had become part of a mighty, white cloud that would travel out over the oceans of the world.

And only then, raised high above the forest, while it basked in eternity, did the drop understand the difference: The past was the place where it was allowed to leave its weight behind, so that, light and free, it could journey into the future.

Time indeed went only one way – but that way always led toward the light.