



## Willow and the Wedding

**Denise Brennan-Nelson**

**Cyd Moore, Illustrator**

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*Willow and the Wedding encourages self-expression, positive thinking, and pursuing whatever makes you happy.*

Willow's zest for life and love for her family takes center stage in Denise Brennan-Nelson's *Willow and the Wedding*, the story of how one barefoot flower girl's thoughtfulness and compassion unintentionally heal years of emotional pain and heartache.

It's a well-known fact that Uncle Ash does not dance. Ever. Concerned that he will miss out on his wedding day, Willow is determined to get Ash moving to the music, especially when she learns that he once loved dancing more than anything.

Told from Willow's point of view, the uplifting message of doing what you love, regardless of what anyone else thinks, is appropriate for all ages. It's a simple story for children, when taken at face value, or a more complex and emotionally nuanced journey for adults able to read between the lines. Themes of bullying, teasing, humiliation, and abandonment are subtle but still present as Willow focuses on helping Uncle Ash rediscover his love of dancing without fear or hurt.

Cheerful and fluid, sweet and colorful, illustrations by Cyd Moore follow Willow and Uncle Ash as they cuddle dogs at the shelter, slide on the playground, goof off with doughnuts, and walk down the aisle. Even the end pages, done in teal and white doodles, are creatively inspirational and entertaining glimpses into Willow's world.

The embodiment of unconditional love and confidence, Willow is always in motion, her joyful exuberance easy to see as she flits and flutters around wedding guests, getting a warm beach blanket for shivering Aunt Carol and a lemonade for overheated Uncle Larry; nothing dampens her excitement. When Cousin Joe begins whispering that he's "never been to a wedding like this before," Willow's perfect response, "Isn't it splendid?" sets the tone for a lovely sunset wedding complete with seashells, palm trees, and, of course, dancing.

*Willow and the Wedding* encourages self-expression, positive thinking, and pursuing whatever makes you happy, whether it be singing, dancing, or letting loose while spending time with family and loved ones.

PALLAS GATES MCCORQUODALE (LGBTQ+ 2017)

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