

A HOUSE WITHOUT WALLS

By Janine Bouyssounouse

In a shady corner of my backyard, stood a towering puzzle bark tree. The bark was thin and peeled off in your hand in pieces looking like jigsaw puzzle pieces. The base of the tree pushed up against the side fence and the limbs stretched over the neighbor's vegetable garden. Next to the tree was an old playhouse made out of smooth, weather beaten plywood and two by fours. The wood on the playhouse was worn where little hands were years before. Bridget, my friend since I was five, and I couldn't see the side fence since the ivy was covering it like a leafy, green fur coat.

We would lean up against the trunk of the tree, where we'd pulled off the puzzle pieces of bark. We'd walk up the side of the playhouse, using the playhouse window as a foot hold then climb on top of the roof. From the roof, we'd grab one of the higher branches to steady us as we climbed into the branches of the tree. Once we were in the tree, we could climb about ten feet to find two branches for us to sit on to survey the land around us. We saw Bridget's house on the next block. We heard the neighbors in their back yards, as the tree swayed back and forth when the wind blew.

When my little brother was big enough to climb up the tree with us, it was no longer our own place. We decided to put a door on our tree house. We didn't need walls or a roof because the tree provided shade and the walls would have blocked our view of the neighborhood. So we just needed a door with a lock on it.

The old playhouse was filled with musty smelling wood and there were plenty of nails in the garage. We took the bus to a hardware store to get a latch, hinges and a lock for the door to our tree house. We made quite a ruckus with the pounding of hammers on nails to make what looked like a piece of a short wooden fence. Next we got out the saw and cut a hole big enough for us to climb through. We nailed the hinges onto it, nailed the latch on and locked it.

We found a rope in the garage and tied it around our door. Bridget climbed up, holding one end of the rope. She pulled while I pushed and we finally got it up to where we wanted it. Once we got it there, we nailed it to the branches and we had ourselves a tree house with a locked door as an entrance. It was a little bit of a squeeze to get through the opening, since it was on an angle and we measured the size of the opening as if it were flat, but we didn't mind. It was still our private tree house. No trespassers allowed...

A HOUSE WITHOUT WALLS Follow Up Questions

1. Why was the tree called a puzzle bark tree?
2. Was the tree in one backyard or two? How do you know?
3. How did they get up to the branches of the tree?
4. What could they see from the top of the tree?
5. What did they do when the little brother climbed the tree?
6. Where did they get the materials for their project?
7. How did they get it into the tree?

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Follow Up Questions And Answers

1. Why was the tree called a puzzle bark tree? *The bark came off of the tree in pieces that looked like pieces to a jigsaw puzzle.*
2. Was the tree in one backyard or two? How do you know? *The tree leaned over the next door neighbor's backyard, so it was in two backyards.*
3. How did they get up to the branches of the tree? *They walked up the side of the playhouse and used the window of the playhouse as a step to get to the roof of the playhouse, where they could reach the branches to use them to climb into the tree.*
4. What could they see from the top of the tree? *They could see Bridget's house and some of the neighbors' backyards.*
5. What did they do when the little brother climbed the tree? *They decided to build a door to the playhouse with a lock on it, so he couldn't get to where they were in the tree.*
6. Where did they get the materials for their project? *The wood was in the playhouse. The nails were in the garage and they took the bus to the hardware store for the hinges, latch and lock.*
7. How did they get it into the tree? *They tied a rope around it and one person pulled the rope while the other person pushed the door into place.*