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Tree House Trouble

by Sally Derby Miller • Art by Noela Young



Sam was stubborn and liked to do things his own way. He liked to eat his meals one food at a time—no mixing. At bat, he liked to dig his foot into the dust, swing the bat three times, then settle it on his shoulder. He always swung at the second pitch. He wore his purple socks on Tuesdays and his lucky sweater whenever he had a spelling test.

Oscar was Sam's father. He liked to do things his own way, too. While the neighbors mowed their lawns, Oscar grew a wildflower meadow. He got a haircut on the first Thursday of every month, whether he needed it or not. And he wore his lucky sweater to every one of Sam's ball games.



Hi! Spider here. Stubborn means unable to change your mind about things.

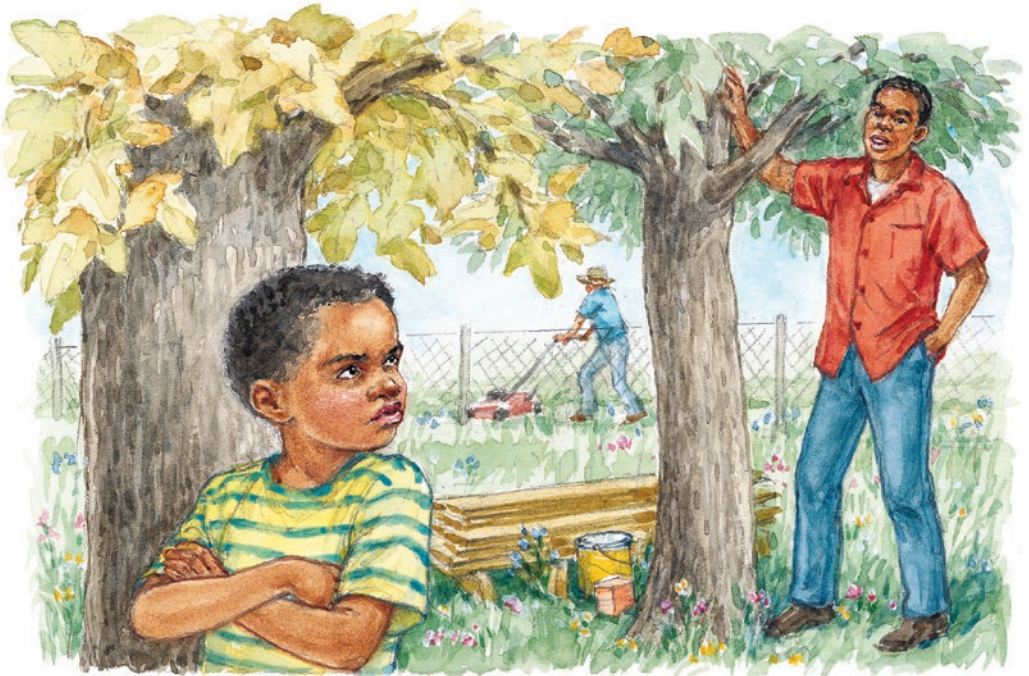
Sam thought his dad was the smartest man on earth, and his dad thought Sam was the finest son a man could ever want . . . until the day they decided to build the tree house.

Sam had a picture in his mind.

Oscar had a picture in his mind.

The pictures didn't match.

At the lumberyard and the hardware store, they disagreed on how much wood to buy. They bickered about how long the nails should be. They quarreled about what color paint they should pick. And when they got home, they argued and ARGUED and ARGUED about which tree was best.



Sam wanted the maple. He wouldn't give in.

His dad wanted the hackberry. He wouldn't give in, either.

The boards and the nails and the paint sat in the backyard. They sat there in the hot, summer sunshine. They sat there when the autumn leaves fell. They sat under a blanket of snow all winter.

"Sam is so stubborn," Sam's dad complained to Sam's mother. "If he'd listen to reason, I could show him why the hackberry is best."

"Why won't Dad listen to my ideas?" Sam asked his mom. "He wants to do everything his way."



Sam's mother tried talking to Sam's dad. He wouldn't listen.

She tried talking to Sam. It did no good.

Sam stayed stubborn, and Oscar stayed obstinate.

Spring came. The wildflower meadow began to bloom, and baseball practice started. Soon it was Mother's Day, and Sam made his mother a clay pot and filled it with flowers. She loved it.

Now Father's Day was coming up. Sam thought and thought and finally decided on a present for his dad. He would take some of the lumber they'd bought for the tree house and build his dad a fancy box for keys and change. He would build the box all by himself.



Obstinate means
unwilling to
change your
mind.



Sam sawed and pounded, but the saw kept sticking and the nails were too long. It was a dumb box, Sam decided. He would throw it in the trash.

Just then his dad wandered out into the backyard. “Hey, did you make that box all by yourself?” he asked Sam.

“It was going to be for you for Father’s Day,” Sam said, “but I couldn’t do a very good job. I’ll buy you something instead.”

“Oh no! I like this,” said his dad. “It’s just what I need to keep my keys in.” Then he added, “Your mother says if we’re not going to make a tree house, we should move this pile of lumber into the garage. Will you help?”



“Sure,” said Sam. He picked up a board with a big knothole in it. “I was going to use this one for the back door,” he said sadly. “The knothole would have made a great peephole.”

Sam’s dad looked at him in surprise. “You planned on a back door?” he asked.

Sam nodded. “And a porch.”

“I was thinking of towers,” his dad told him. “Like a castle might have.”



Sam looked at him. “Castles can have back doors.”

His dad nodded. “And a drawbridge is like a front porch.”

“But we still don’t know which tree is best,” Sam said.

Sam looked at the maple.

His dad looked at the hackberry tree.

Sam’s mother looked out the window. “Well, my dear obstinate Oscar and stubborn Sam, if you’re going to make a tree house after all,” she said, “why not put it in the oak?”

Sam and his dad grinned at each other.

“Magnificent Mom has spoken,” Sam said. “What do you think?”

“I think it’s a great idea,” said Sam’s dad. “Let’s get to work!” 🕷️

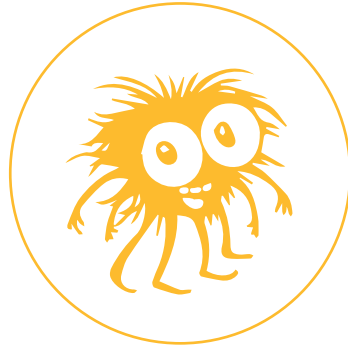


Even if two people are stubborn, there's always room for compromise.





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