

Monica

"I'm telling you it's time to get up!" Monica whispered very loudly into her brother's left ear, while crouched by his bed.

Mark pulled the covers over his head and said, "I'm too tired and it's still dark."

"Nope, you're wrong there buddy boy. It's almost sunrise and we don't want to miss a minute of this day!"

Being 5 instead of 9, Mark didn't feel the urgent need to hurry to sit in a tree all day.

"I'm telling you, we've got work to do." Monica barked as she dressed her sleepy little brother, guided him in and out of the bathroom, handed him his lunch sack and pushed him out the back door into a beautiful sunrise at 6:15 a.m.

"Wow, look at those colors," beamed Monica as she marched the two of them through the neighborhood to the high grass and the creek that ran on the east border of the subdivision.

"Now, listen, today is the day we're finally going to the top of this old tree."

Mark dropped his head slowly back to take in the horror of the situation. He knew no matter what he said she was going to make him do it somehow.

"Ok, I think I've got enough wood and nails to make it to the first limb. Once we get up we can figure out how we get the big wood up for a platform."

Mark sat at the base of the huge trunk eating his peanut butter sandwich from his lunch sack awaiting his orders.

Monica started pounding nails in the new “steps to heaven”. Mark handed her one nail at a time out of another well worn paper sack.

“Now, as I climb up each step to pound in the next one, you climb up behind me to hand me the wood and nails.”

Mark looked at her and then the distance to the first branch. He just said, “I can’t do it.”

“You have to because I can’t carry everything myself – why do you think I let you come?”

Mark was silent, dropped the nail sack and went back to his lunch sack.

“I’m not kidding, you big baby, we’re doing this TODAY! Don’t you want to see what the world looks like from way up there?” screamed Monica.

“No”, Mark answered quietly, but in his heart he knew she wasn’t kidding. He knew he’d be up that tree by noon with no lunch.

“Come on Mark, reach a little further!”

“I can’t, I’m going back down.”

“We’ve only done two steps – just three more to go.”

"I can't hold on with one hand anymore and I can't reach that far," Mark mumbled while he peeked in the lunch sack at his Twinkie.

"I'm sick and tired of having to do and think of everything!" Monica growled with both hands on her hips in front of her brother. "Don't you wanna have any fun?"

"I don't think this is fun."

"Yet! It's not fun yet! But it will be! Just a little more work – then we can have fun up there for a long time," Monica yelled.

Mark opened his Twinkie.

"Oh, you make me so mad!" Monica stomped the ground. "Have you still got that string I stuffed in your pocket?"

"I guess", Mark said with Twinkie filling oozing out of his mouth.

"Well, give it to me, I've got an idea. I wish we had a bucket", she said out loud. "I'm going up that tree TODAY no matter what!" Monica said.

After Mark gobbled the last of his Twinkie he said, "Why don't you wait to see if the other kids by to help?"

"You can't just sit around and wait for someone else to do your work – we'd never get up that tree TODAY."

“Now, listen, I’m going up there, getting the steps in place then I’ll come back down and help you up. Then we’ll get to eat our lunch in the tree for first time, TODAY!” Monica stated.

Mark looked into his empty lunch sack.

Monica was rigged up like a mountain climber. Luckily her jeans had big deep pockets for the nails and a loop for the hammer while the wood “steps” dangled from a belt loop on slip knots on the twine Mark carried. Slip knots had been taught in one of her brownie classes. Up she went.

“Now don’t stand directly underneath me in case I drop something by accident”, Monica ordered.

“Ok” was Mark’s reply.

Monica struggled for a while but couldn’t coordinate the board, nail, hammer routine with one hand. Down she came.

“This isn’t working” Monica pondered aloud. “I can’t hold on and hold all the other stuff and pound, too. Ah Hah!” She pounded the nails through the boards on the ground, did slip knot twine thing and climbed up and did one step at a time. She tapped the boards in place with her hand, then took the hammer out of its loop and gave it two good pounds (whacks?). Back down and back up she went for the next one. Higher and higher each time.

Finally all five steps were in place and with a stretch Monica could climb out and sit on the big first limb over the creek.

“See, it worked!” Monica beamed. She looked down at her red raw left hand and felt proud. “Now we can reach the top of this tree from here without steps. The rest of the tree has its own built in steps. Mark, look, I’m going to go a little higher then I’ll be down to get you, ok?”

“Ok”, replied Mark, worried, as he watched his big sister disappear in the leaves.