



# WISCONSIN FOREST TALES

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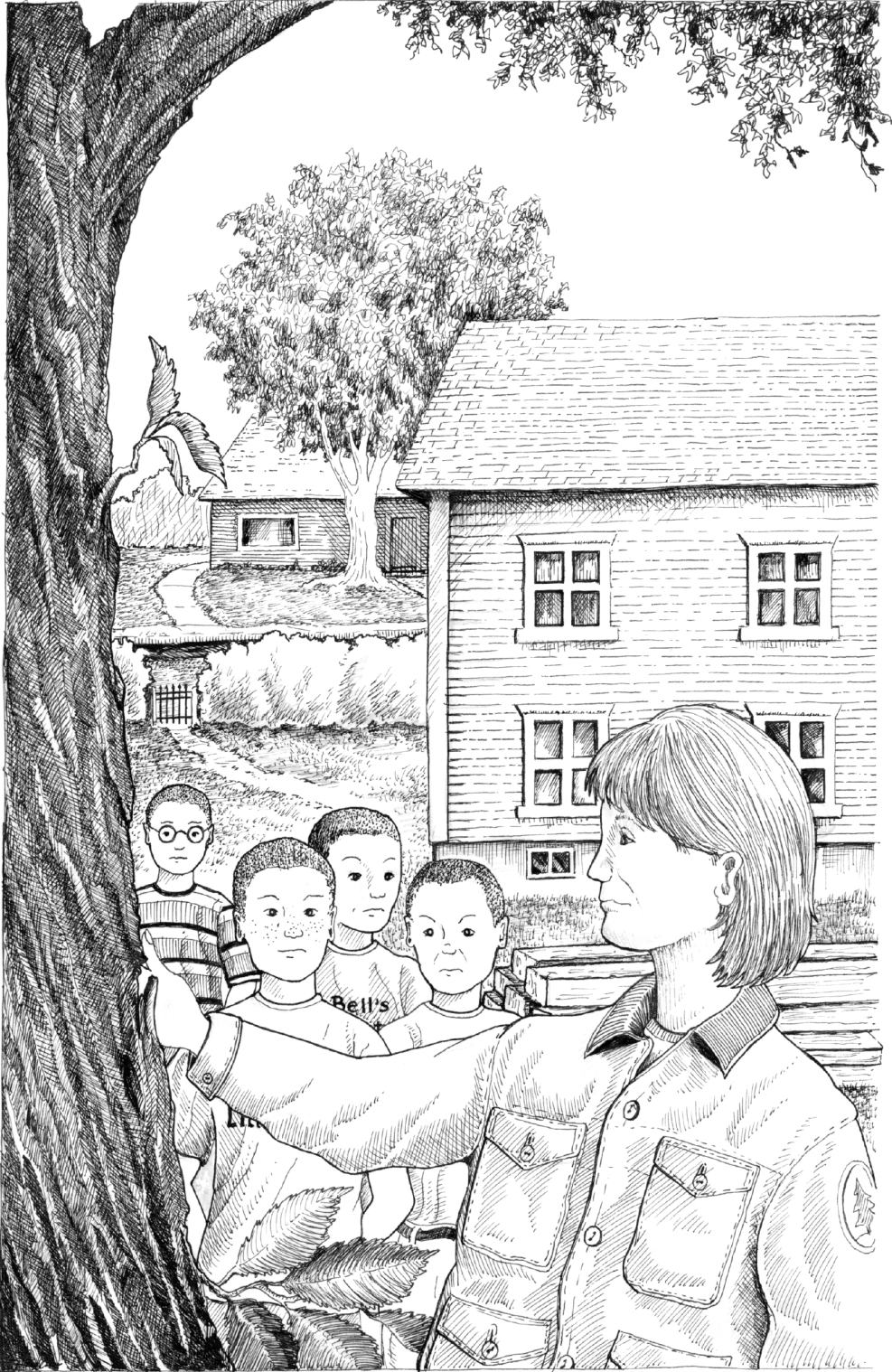
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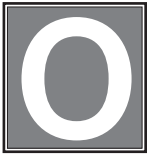
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## CHAPTER SEVEN INTRODUCTION



ONCE, ELM TREES were the pride and beauty of many U.S. cities. Their green leaves shaded houses and sometimes formed leafy arches over neighborhood streets.

In 1930, the leaves on an elm tree in Ohio turned yellow and wilted. Soon branches drooped. And a tree sickness called Dutch elm disease spread from Ohio through the United States and Canada. Since then, more than half the elms in the northern United States have died because of the disease.

Dutch elm disease is caused by a fungus, spread by surprisingly small bugs called elm bark beetles. These insects set up house-keeping in elm trees. They eat and lay eggs under the bark. They even nest in stacks of firewood and dead elms. If the tree has Dutch elm disease when the bugs leave to find a new tree, they carry the disease with them.

That fungus infects elm trees' roots. It spreads from tree to tree through the roots. On streets where all the trees are elms, the results have been terrible. Towns and cities have no choice. They must cut down every infected tree to keep the disease from spreading even further.

Dutch elm disease became a huge problem in Wisconsin in the 1960s. Elms were very popular trees. After the disease was found and the elms were cut down, many streets were left bare.

Today, different kinds of trees are planted along streets. If one kind of tree gets sick, there are still other kinds of healthy trees.



## THE ELM STREET TREE HOUSE CLUB

**M**onday. The first day of summer vacation. Schwinn Sting-Ray bikes. Little League. The beach. But first, Jimmy and Doug Butler had plans. Big plans. Doug spread a big piece of poster paper on the kitchen table. Jimmy printed “Stuff for the Tree House” at the top and wrote:

**Trapdoor—important**  
**Hammers**  
**Nails**  
**Screws and screwdrivers**  
**Two-by-fours—lots**  
**Plywood—for the floor**  
**Old window**  
**Roof shingles**  
**Bucket and rope to pull stuff up**

Doug nodded like a judge at the county fair saying, “Yep. A blue ribbon for this one.” He snatched the marker and wrote, “Elm Street Tree House Club. Jimmy, Doug, Steve, and Ron.”

“Let’s get the guys!” Jimmy said. They grabbed the list and raced out the door.



The four boys rang every doorbell in the neighborhood. They explained their tree house idea. “It’s called the Elm Street Tree House Club. Want us to take that plywood out of your garage?” they’d ask. Or “Got any two-by-fours lying around?”

They scrounged in basements and hauled junk from back-

yards. And, at every single house, Jimmy asked, "Got anything we could use for a trapdoor?"

They were in luck. Mr. Schmitt's garage was bursting.

"Doesn't he ever throw anything away?" Jimmy whispered as Mrs. Schmitt opened the garage door. There were odd pieces of plywood, pieces of old kitchen tile, and about twenty window screens. In one corner, two-by-fours were stacked like long, brown sticks.

"Take anything," Mrs. Schmitt said. What a haul! Fifteen two-by-fours.

"One. Two. Three. Heave!" said Doug. Four boys hoisted two-by-fours onto their shoulders. Each boy's hair was shaved to a stubble. They wore blue jeans, T-shirts with "Bell's Cut Rate Little League" printed on the front, and Red Ball Jet sneakers. Red, of course.

"Hold on, Ron," Jimmy shouted. "You're gonna drop 'em!"

"Look out, Doug! You almost put the two-by-four through the garage window!" Steve hollered.

"Left foot. Right. Left. Right," Doug called. The boys marched like soldiers, carrying the two-by-fours out of Mr. Schmitt's garage, down his driveway, and up the block to Doug and Jimmy's house.

Mrs. Fisher, over on Park Street, gave them a whole box of nails. The football coach on the corner gave them an old window and a giant slab of plywood. Ron's grandpa gave them wooden shingles left over from his new roof.

The sky was getting dark when they finally flopped down in the Butlers' backyard to slap mosquitoes and count two-by-fours. "Dad says if we clean the leaves out of our basement window wells, he'll buy more two-by-fours for us," Ron said.

"We're almost there," said Steve. "Ten more two-by-fours and we've got ourselves a tree house."

Jimmy stretched out in the grass. "What I want is a trapdoor," he said. "You can't play pirates without a trapdoor."

Splat! Doug whacked a mosquito on his brother's forehead. "You've been reading too many Blackbeard the Pirate books. I want

to play Tarzan. Or Spiderman. But I vote for a trapdoor, too.”

“Supper!” Mrs. Butler called from the back door. “Ron’s and Steve’s mothers are going to think they’re never coming home.”

The boys got up from the ground.

“Oh, boys,” Mrs. Butler said. “That sweet little Elizabeth Van Doren called. She has the perfect trapdoor. If . . .”

“All right! We’ve got a trapdoor!” Doug, Steve, and Ron whooped and yelled.

“Wait a minute,” Jimmy shouted. “Hold on. Mom said *if*. ‘The perfect trap door. If . . .’”

“If what?” Doug asked.

“If you’ll let Elizabeth and her sister join the club,” Mrs. Butler replied.



On a school day, the boys would have grumbled and pulled their blankets over their heads at 6:30 in the morning. But this was summer. So they tumbled out of bed and raced to the Butlers’ backyard.

“I vote we let Lizzy and her sister in,” Jimmy said. “And use ’em to play pirate. I’m Blackbeard. You guys are the crew. We let the girls be rich ladies kidnapped for ransom.”

Steve howled. “Yeah! And nobody would pay ransom for Elizabeth Van Doren. So the pirates just make ’em walk the plank! They’ll run away and never come back.”

“Lizard Van Doren can keep her stupid trapdoor,” Ron said. “No girls. That’s final.”

“Girls are OK,” said Steve. “But I want our club private. Nobody watching us. It’s nobody’s business if we want to play pirate or have camp-outs or swing like Tarzan from a rope.”

“Yeah,” Ron and Jimmy agreed.

Doug mumbled, “Why not girls? Lizzy’s smart. When Jimmy dared her to ride down Heart Attack Hill, she jumped on her bike and didn’t even blink. And her sister . . .”

Jimmy screeched, “Doug thinks Lizzy’s sister is pretty!”

Everybody made kissing noises. Everybody laughed but Doug.

“Well, she *is* pretty,” Doug grumbled. “And smart. Last year she recited Shakespeare for Arts Week at school.”

“Ohhhh! Shakespeare! She could be Juliet and you could be Romeo,” Jimmy said.

The boys spent the morning teasing Doug and drawing plans. The massive elm tree in the Butlers’ backyard was perfect for a tree house. It had large, sturdy branches.

The boys boosted Steve into the tree. He scrambled from branch to branch with a tape measure. He called down to the other boys, “I think there’s room for a tree house seven feet long and six feet wide.”

Steve inched up the tree trunk like a spider. “We might have to take down some branches to make room for the roof,” he said. “But these branches look dead anyway. The leaves are all yellow and droopy.”

“What?” hollered Jimmy. “Dead branches?”

The measuring and planning had to stop while the boys ran to their houses for lunch. While Mrs. Butler boiled hot dogs and pulled chips from a yellow box, Doug talked a mile a minute.

“Mom, Steve says branches on our elm tree are dead.” He pulled a couple of wilted yellow leaves from his pocket. “Look. These leaves look sick.”

Mrs. Butler turned the leaves over in her hands. A frown spread across her face. She picked up the telephone and dialed Mr. Butler’s work number.

“Hank,” she said. “The boys found wilted yellow leaves on the big elm. The article in the paper said to watch out for dying branches and wilted yellow leaves. We’d better call the city forester.”

Doug and Jimmy’s mom and dad continued to talk. Mrs. Butler kept frowning and saying, “I hope not. I really hope not.” The boys felt as wilted as the yellow leaves. Something was wrong with their tree house tree.





“Some tree-expert guy from the forest is coming,” Jimmy said to the guys on Wednesday morning. “Mom talked to him yesterday. His name’s Jack.”

Doug sat down on the Butlers’ front porch. “Last night Dad used the big house-painting ladder to check out the yellow leaves. He didn’t look happy when he came down.”

Ron plopped down beside him. “Where my aunt lives, elm trees got sick and the city cut them down.”

“All of them?” Jimmy asked.

“Yep. Big trees, too. Their branches met above Aunt Sylvia’s street. I thought it looked like a tunnel of leaves. Aunt Sylvia said the elm trees were dancing. Their giant green arms meeting in the sky. Their trunks like legs. Then they got a disease. Dutch something it was called. Bingo! Every tree was gone. Every one.”

Jimmy paced back and forth. What if their tree house tree had the disease? The other trees in their yard were puny, skinny things. One thing was sure: no elm tree—no tree house.

“That’s awful,” Doug muttered.

“You can say that again,” Ron said. “I wonder where those kids build their tree houses now?”

The boys were interrupted by a green pickup truck stopping at the curb.

*Well, thought Jimmy. If our tree’s got the Dutch something disease, I guess we’ll find out pretty soon.*

“You’re the tree guy?” Doug blurted out.

“That’s right,” the forester said. “And you must be the Butlers.”

Mrs. Butler opened the front door. “Thank you so much for coming. I’m Susan Butler.”

The forester shook hands with Doug and Jimmy’s mom. “And I’m Jackie Johnson,” she said.

Steve whistled between his teeth. “Jim, your tree expert from the forest is a city forester.”

“And for a guy named Jack, she’s awful pretty,” said Doug.

All the boys laughed. Even Jimmy. They followed Mrs. Butler and the forester into the backyard.

Jackie Johnson examined the elm tree like a doctor doing a checkup. She picked leaves and broke off small branches. She pulled a jackknife from her back pocket and peeled the bark off the branches.

Finally she shook her head and frowned. “Bad news. It’s Dutch elm disease. The wilted yellow leaves are one of the first signs. Then the fungus causes these brown streaks under the bark. I found these elm bark beetles, too.”

Miss Johnson said Dutch elm disease was caused by *Ophiostoma ulmi* (oh fee oh **stomuh uhl** my), a fancy name for a fungus carried by little brown beetles. She said the beetles laid eggs in elm trees. Gazillions of them. Baby beetles hatched and went looking for elm trees of their own.

“Probably every elm in the neighborhood has the disease,” Miss Johnson said. “But I’m especially sorry about your tree.” She walked over to the pile of two-by-fours where the boys were sitting. “Your mom says you were planning a tree house.”

“What are you going to do?” Doug asked.

“Until tree experts come up with some other treatment, the only solution is to cut down the sick tree.”

Doug covered his face with his hands.

Miss Johnson went to her truck and returned with pamphlets and printed papers only grown-ups would bother to read. They had titles like “Dutch Elm Disease in Our Cities” and “Replanting Shade Trees.”

On the cover of one pamphlet was a photo of yellow leaves.

“American elms,” she said. “Cities all over Wisconsin planted whole blocks with them. They’re beautiful shade trees. It won’t make you feel any better, but yours isn’t the only city block to lose its trees.”

She handed a stack of pamphlets to the boys. “Would you pass these out to the neighbors?” she asked. “I like people to hear about

Dutch elm disease so they're prepared when we contact them about cutting down their trees."

Jimmy felt as flat as a leaky tire. *There goes our tree house*, he thought. The boys watched as Miss Johnson folded her jackknife and walked off to check every tree on Elm Street.



No need for an alarm clock on Monday morning. After an overnight in a tent in the Butlers' backyard, the boys woke to a roaring, grinding sound followed by a loud *crash!*

"The tree cutters!" Steve cried. The boys didn't even stop to put on their sneakers. They tossed the tent flap open and dashed outside.

"Whoa!" said Doug. "Look at that guy!"

A slim, dark-haired young man was climbing like a monkey in the giant elm across the street from the Butlers' house. Muscles bulged in his arms. Metal spikes were attached to his boots. He sat in a sling that let him swing from a rope.

Steve whistled through his teeth. "Spiderman," he said. "That's the perfect job for me."

"Send up the saw," the climber yelled. In a second, another worker had tied a big yellow chain saw to a rope. The climber hauled it up.

All morning Jimmy, Doug, Ron, and Steve followed the tree-cutting crew. Like kids at the circus, they didn't want to miss a thing. Chain saws buzzed. Crane engines roared. Branches and mammoth trunks crashed to the ground.

At noon, the workers pulled black metal lunch boxes from their truck and stretched out on the grass in front of Steve's house. Steve's mom came out carrying a big tray loaded with sandwiches, lemonade, and a mixing bowl piled high with oatmeal cookies.

"I figured wild horses couldn't drag you inside for lunch," she said. "Steve, offer some cookies to those workers you've been watching all morning. I brought enough for everybody."

Steve's eyes sparkled. "Thanks, Mom." He grabbed the cookie

bowl and headed toward the tree-cutting crew.

“My name’s Matt,” said the climber. “Thanks for the cookies.”

“You’re like Spiderman,” Steve said. “Unbelievable.”

“I used to climb trees when I was your age,” said Matt.

“Steve’s the climber in our club,” said Jimmy. “He’s the one who found the yellow leaves in our elm tree.”

“Yeah,” said Doug. “Our mom took one look at those leaves and called the city forester.”

“And now we’re here with our chain saws,” said Matt. “I’m sorry you’re losing your trees.”

“It’s not just the trees,” said Jimmy. “We were building a tree house. We’ve got everything. Two-by-fours and plywood. Shingles. Nails. Even a window.”

“We measured and planned the whole thing,” said Doug. “Except now we don’t have the tree.”

“Bad news,” said Matt. “Can’t have a tree house without a tree. I’m sorry. Really sorry.”

*Yeah, bad news.* In a second, all the excitement seemed to drain out of the boys, as if someone had pulled the bathtub plug. Watching the climber dangle high in the trees was fun, but that didn’t change the facts. In a few days, all the elm trees would be gone. And so would their plans for a tree house.



By Friday afternoon, Matt and his crew had **felled** the last tree on Elm Street.

**fell:** to cut down

At nine in the morning, the sun already blazed hot and bright. “The street looks empty,” Jimmy said. The boys leaned against the Butlers’ front porch.

“Dad says that without shade, all of the grass will turn brown,” said Steve.

“Without shade, I’ll turn red!” said Ron. Even a little sun burned Ron’s freckled face. Last summer, his Little League team had nicknamed him “Lobster.”

“Our parents are talking about getting an air conditioner,” said Jimmy. “Even my mom, the queen of fresh air. Without the trees, she says it’s just us and the sun. And the sun wins every time!”

The week crawled by. Even attending Little League tryouts and riding bikes didn’t lift the heavy sadness that felt like sandbags on the boys’ shoulders.

One Saturday, Elizabeth Van Doren and her sister stopped by the Butlers’ house. “Sorry about the tree house,” Lizzie said. “We should have just given you the trapdoor instead of trying to make you let us join the club.”

“Thanks,” said Jimmy. “We’re sorry, too.”

Every afternoon, the four boys found themselves sitting on the pile of two-by-fours in Jimmy and Doug’s backyard. Every afternoon they said, “We should get rid of this stuff.”

But every afternoon ended the same way. The boys hung around till suppertime, talking about the tree house. Then each boy headed home thinking, *Can’t have a tree house without a tree.*



A few weeks later, a truck arrived from the city loaded with saplings—young ash and maple trees. They looked like skinny branches with a big ball of roots on one end and twigs on the other. Work crews planted them along the street.

“We’ll be a million years old by the time these trees grow big enough for tree houses,” Ron said.

Later that week, the city forester parked her truck in front of the Butlers’ house. But she hadn’t come to see Mr. or Mrs. Butler. She wanted the boys.

“People all over Wisconsin are losing their elm trees,” she told the boys. “Beautiful, big trees. They give shade and keep our houses cooler. Their roots keep soil from washing away. Birds and squirrels

live in the branches. This is a huge loss.”

Miss Johnson led the boys to her truck. “The city planted saplings along the street. But not in yards.”

The green pickup was loaded with boxes. Miss Johnson opened one.

“Saplings,” she said. “The city bought them, and I need four hardworking guys to deliver them to houses in the neighborhood where an elm tree was lost.”

*Why not?* Delivering saplings was better than sitting around on the pile of two-by-fours feeling sad.

The boys lugged three boxes to the Butlers’ front porch. Miss Johnson gave them printed lists of planting and tree care tips to hand out with the saplings. They loaded one box into Jimmy and Doug’s wagon and headed down the street.

Tree planting was sort of fun. Mrs. Schmitt let the boys plant two trees in her backyard. “You’re the experts,” she said. “Mr. Schmitt promised to clean out the garage. So you better plant the trees yourselves.”

Mr. Fisher planted a sapling in his front yard. The next day he asked Jimmy and Doug for another. He’d forgotten all about the baby tree and chopped it down with the lawn mower! Rabbits ate a few more of them, but mostly, the tree-planting adventure was a success.



“Boys, that pile in the backyard has to go. Uncle Sid’s hauling it to the junkyard in his truck.”

Jimmy and Doug stared at their mother. *Junkyard?* That pile in the backyard was a tree house. *Their* tree house. Or at least it would have been if the elm tree hadn’t been chopped down.

Mom shook her head. “I know how much you wanted a tree house. I really do. But not even your poor puppy dog faces will convince me to turn my lawn into a lumberyard.”

“But Mom . . .” Jimmy howled.

“Sorry. Uncle Sid’s coming. Go get Steve and Ron.”

Jimmy and Doug shuffled across the street. Once they’d told their friends about Mom’s orders, nobody said a word. What could they say?

At Jimmy and Doug’s house, Uncle Sid’s pickup truck stood in the driveway. The boys gathered around the lumber pile. Jimmy said, “Things could be worse. Remember last year when Ron’s mom and dad wanted to move to Idaho? Or when the lake got bacteria and the beach closed?”

The boys nodded. But nobody felt any better.

Doug bent over and grabbed a two-by-four. “Let’s get this over with,” he said.

“Hey, guys!” a voice called from the driveway. “I’m so glad you’re here.”

The boys turned. It was Miss Johnson, the forester. She carried a small white object.

“For you,” she said. “I kept thinking about you guys and your tree house. I felt awful. No tree, no tree house, I thought. Then I found this. . . .”

She put the object into Jimmy’s hand. It was a photograph.

The guys crowded around. The photo showed a huge wooden tower. Four legs, with support beams shaped like X’s. On the top was a small house.

“What is it?” Doug asked.

“A fire tower,” said Ron. “I’ve seen them up north. Fire watchers stay in the little building on top. The towers are really tall so they can see for miles.”

“You’re a walking encyclopedia!” said Miss Johnson. “I spent a summer in northern Wisconsin at Chequamegon National Forest in a tower that looked just like this one.”

It was nice of Miss Johnson to bring them the picture, but every boy had the same thought. Why? What did a fire tower have to do with feeling sad about their tree house?

“I saw this picture and I thought about you,” Miss Johnson

said. "You can't have a tree house without a tree. But you can have a fire tower without a tree."

"Here? In our yard?" Jimmy blurted out. "This tower's a zillion feet tall!"

Doug's eyes sparkled. He began to jump up and down. "Yes! Yes! Who says we couldn't build our own tower. Just smaller?"

The boys looked at each other. *Could they? Would Jimmy and Doug's parents say yes?*

Just then they noticed Mrs. Butler in the doorway. She'd heard it all. She smiled and raised her hand in a thumbs-up sign. *Yes!*

"I hoped this might give you ideas," Miss Johnson said.

"Thanks, Miss Johnson," Jimmy said as the forester slid into her truck. "We'd given up the tree house idea. We were taking our lumber to the junkyard."

Miss Johnson started the engine. The boys waved as she backed the truck out of the driveway. "I almost forgot," she called as she drove away. "Somebody on the next block has a pile of lumber in their driveway. There's a sign saying, 'Free wood. U-Haul.'"

"Mr. Schmitt's garage!" Doug, Jimmy, Ron, and Steve all shouted at once. They took off like firecrackers.

By lunchtime, the boys had hauled every single two-by-four from Mr. Schmitt's driveway. He gave them more shingles, two enormous sheets of plywood, and a stack of pine boards nearly as tall as the boys. Mrs. Schmitt was so pleased with her clean garage that she handed out sugar cookies to everyone.

The boys trekked from Jimmy and Doug's backyard to the Schmitt's driveway. Back and forth. Finally they dragged the last heavy piece of plywood into the yard. They dropped the plywood—and themselves—onto the grass.

"I can't move," Doug moaned.

"I've got splinters in every finger," said Ron.

"Me, too," said Steve. "But who cares? We've got enough wood to build a fire tower taller than the garage!"

"Taller than the state capitol," said Jimmy.



Doug laughed. "Taller than . . ."

"The Empire State Building." A voice finished Doug's sentence. It was a girl's voice.

Lizzie Van Doren. And her sister. What were they doing here?

The boys sat up and stared at the two girls. Lizzie carried a small door, complete with hinges, a lock, and a big ring in the center for a handle.

"Wow," Jimmy whispered.

Steve whistled between his teeth. "That's the trapdoor?"

"Yep."

"How'd you know we needed it?"

Lizzie put the door on the grass. "Your mom told my mom. My mom told me," she said. "So here we are."

Jimmy couldn't believe what he was hearing. "You're giving us the trapdoor?"

"Yep," said Lizzie.

"No ifs?" Doug asked.

"No ifs," said Lizzie. "We're happy you can have your tree house. Or whatever you call a tree house without a tree. But we're not asking to be in your club."

"It's a fire tower, not a tree house," Ron stammered.

"You don't want to be in the club?" Doug asked.

Lizzie's sister smiled. "Thanks for inviting us, Douggie. But our parents are turning our third-floor attic into a clubhouse for us. Girls only."

Lizzie smiled. "Yeah, it's nice of you, Doug. But Shari and Susan Wood and Carrie Sue are all joining."

Whew! That solved the problem of Lizzie Van Doren! Jimmy felt like somebody had just lifted ten two-by-fours from his shoulders.

"Great! Girls should have clubs, too," he said. "What's your club's name?"

Lizzie's smile grew bigger. And bigger. "Well, I'm thinking about calling it the Watchers."

*The Watchers? What kind of club name was that?*

“Hmm. Interesting,” said Jimmy. “What does it mean?”

“It means our clubhouse is on the third floor. Higher than the trees,” said Lizzie’s sister.

*What?* Those girls weren’t making a bit of sense.

“You’ll figure it out,” said Lizzie. The sisters were still smiling as they turned and walked to their own yard and disappeared through the back door of their house.

“Strange,” said Steve. “What were they talking about?”

“Of course it’s strange,” said Ron. “They’re girls.”

“This is perfect,” Jimmy said. “The whole day is perfect. We’ll have a tree house even without a tree. We’ve got enough wood to build a tower twenty feet high if we want.”

The boys examined the trapdoor. The hinges and ring were shiny gold-colored brass. The wood was smooth and dark. Pirates would be jealous!

“The perfect ending to this perfect day,” said Jimmy. “The girls have their own club. We have ours. We can play pirates and fight forest fires. We can play Tarzan. Nobody bothering us. Nobody watch . . .”

Jimmy stopped in the middle of his word. The boys stood like four stone statues. For a second, nobody moved. And nobody said a word.

Then Doug moaned. Jimmy flopped onto the grass. Steve and Ron plopped down on the lumber pile.

“Oh, no!” Jimmy wailed. “That’s why Lizzie wants to call the club the Watchers. Because their attic is higher than our fire tower!”

Doug moaned. “So anytime they want, the Watchers—those girls—can look out their windows and watch—us!”



WDNR/ROBERT QUEEN

## WHAT HAVE TREES DONE FOR YOU TODAY?

THE TREES IN YOUR YARD or in the park down the street are working trees. What do they do for you?

- Trees clean the air. They use carbon dioxide and release oxygen.
- Tree roots hold soil in place and prevent erosion and flooding.
- Shade from a tree can cool your house as much as ten degrees!
- Animals like tree houses, too. Nesting birds eat mosquitoes and other insects.
- Tree roots keep soil healthy so rain will slowly soak into the ground.
- Trees bring beauty to your neighborhood.

## A FOREST WITH SIDEWALKS AND STREETS

**W**ISCONSIN'S cities and towns have their own forests. They are called urban forests.

Urban forests can be trees in parks. Even trees planted between the sidewalk and street in the city are part of the urban forest.

Cities have foresters. Urban foresters are experts. They study trees in cities. They know the best trees to plant and how to care for them.

City trees need special care to grow healthy and beautiful. They must be able to grow in spite of air pollution from cars and factories. Their roots must be strong enough to find water and food even when the soil is pressed down by cement and buildings. Not all trees can do this.

Urban trees make our cities more pleasant. On hot summer days, families picnic in the shade of trees. People walk in parks and down tree-lined streets. Tree roots help keep soil healthy so grass and flowers will grow. Without trees, neighborhoods look bare.

So the beautiful shade tree on a city street or park isn't just a tree. It's part of the urban forest.



WDNR

**A city forester helps care for trees in people's yards, in parks, and on other land.**

## ALIEN INVADERS!

**G**YPSY MOTHS. Asian long-horned beetles. Dutch elm disease. These invaders hurt Wisconsin forests.

A few years ago, an insect called the emerald ash borer came to the Detroit airport in crates shipped from Asia.

In just three years, the insects spread across Michigan, then to other parts of the United States and Canada. If we find them in Wisconsin, it will be trouble for our trees.

Where emerald ash borers come, ash trees die. Lots of trees. One female can lay up to 90 eggs. She can fly three miles a day to find the perfect ash tree. When the eggs hatch, tiny larvae dig under the bark and begin feeding.

Like the beetles that carry Dutch elm disease, or gypsy moths that destroy trees by devouring their leaves, emerald ash borers came from other parts of the world.

Invaders from other parts of the world are called *exotic species*. Those that do a lot of damage are called *invasive exotics*. Birds and other insect eaters may not eat strange bugs. Chemicals used to control insects may not work on these pests.

Insects and diseases aren't the only invaders. Plants can be invaders, too. Plant invaders can take over an entire forest.

Garlic mustard is one invasive exotic species. These plants take up space needed by native plants. Garlic mustard crowds out wildflowers in our forests.

There's no army to defend against these alien invaders except us. People must be the defenders. Home owners watch for gypsy moth caterpillars. Campers pull up garlic mustard in parks and campgrounds. Foresters work to stop the spread of invasive species, both insects and plants.

You can help, too. Check equipment

for gypsy moth caterpillars after camping. Get a photo of garlic mustard from the state park naturalist. Then pull this plant wherever it grows. Report dying or sick trees to your city or county forester.



S. KELLY KEARNS/WIDNR

**If you see garlic mustard, pull it to keep it from spreading.**



ROBERT QUEEN/WIDNR

**Gypsy moth caterpillars are pests that eat all of the leaves off trees.**