

Dad and the cat and the tree

By – kit wright



Kit Wright [FRSL](#) (born 17 June 1944) is an English writer who is the author of more than twenty-five books, for both adults and children,^[1] and the winner of awards including an [Arts Council](#) Writers' Award, the [Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize](#), the [Hawthornden Prize](#), the [Alice Hunt Bartlett Prize](#) and the [Heinemann Award](#). After a scholarship to [Oxford University](#), he worked as a lecturer at [Brock University](#), St Catherine's, in [Canada](#), then returned to [England](#) and a position in the [Poetry Society](#). He is currently a full-time writer.

Dad and the Cat and the Tree

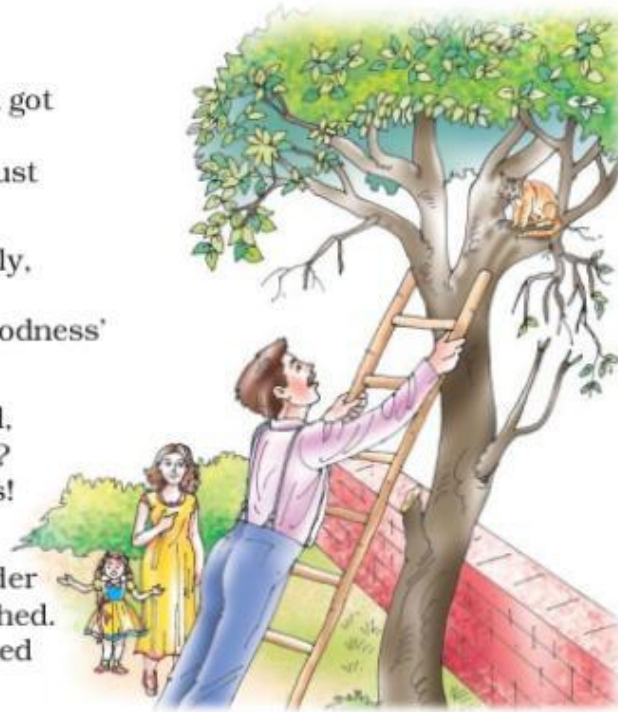
Have you ever seen a cat climbing a tree? Sometimes a cat may climb too high and get stuck in the tree. The poor thing can't come down without help. How would you help it? Surely, not like Dad in the poem. Is Dad a good climber? What were his plans? Read the poem to find out.

This morning a cat got
Stuck in our tree.
Dad said, "Right, just
Leave it to me."

The tree was wobbly,
The tree was tall.
Mum said, "For goodness'
Sake don't fall!"

"Fall?" scoffed Dad,
"A climber like me?
Child's play, this is!
You wait and see."

He got out the ladder
From the garden shed.
It slipped. He landed
In the flower bed.





"Never mind," said Dad,
Brushing the dirt
Off his hair and his face
And his trousers and his shirt,

"We'll try Plan B. Stand
Out of the way!"
Mum said, "Don't fall
Again, O.K.?"

"Fall again?" said Dad.
"Funny joke!"
Then he swung himself up
On a branch. It broke.

Dad landed wallop
Back on the deck.
Mum said, "Stop it,
You'll break your neck!"

"Rubbish!" said Dad.
"Now we'll try Plan C.
Easy as winking
To a climber like me!"



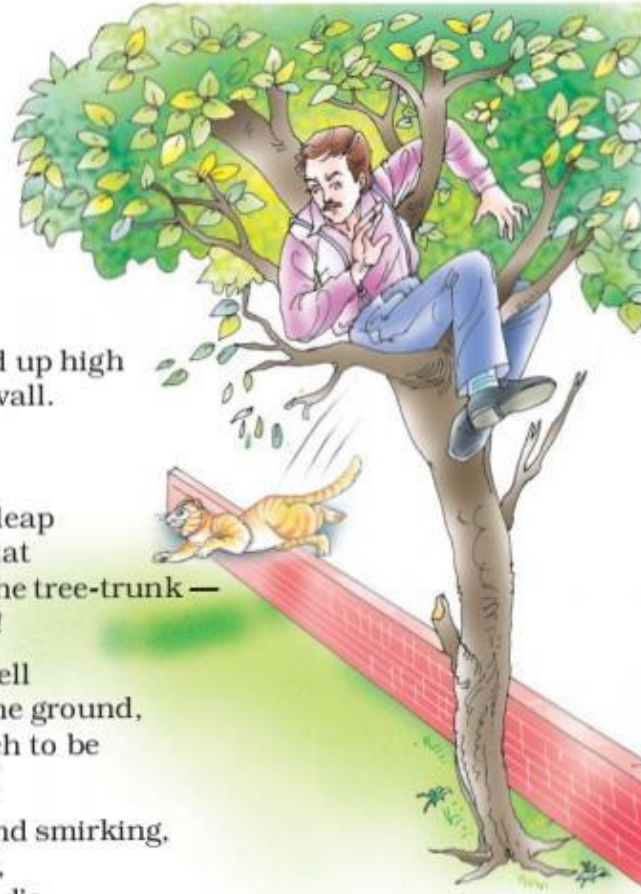


Then he climbed up high
On the garden wall.
Guess what?
He didn't fall!

He gave a great leap
And he landed flat
In the crook of the tree-trunk —
Right on the cat!

The cat gave a yell
And sprang to the ground,
Pleased as Punch to be
Safe and sound.

So it's smiling and smirking,
Smug as can be,
But poor old Dad's
Still
Stuck
Up
The
Tree!



This morning a cat got
Stuck in our tree.
Dad said, "Right, just
Leave it to me."

Word Meaning

dad: informal way of saying father

leave it to me: you can count on me, I'll be responsible for it

Explanation of the Poem – *The incident took place in the morning when a cat got stuck in the tree present in the poet's house. The poet's dad saw the cat who was in trouble and told the other members of the family to leave the task of rescuing the cat to him. He meant to say that he would surely get the cat to safety.*

The tree was wobbly,
The tree was tall.
Mum said, "For goodness'
Sake don't fall!"

Word Meaning

wobbly: unsteady

mum: informal way of saying mother

for goodness' sake: an exclamation expressing protest

Explanation of the Poem – *The poet in this stanza describes the tree. The tree was tall and wobbly, meaning that it was risky for a middle-aged man like the father to climb it. That is why the mother is introduced in this stanza. As a caretaker of the family, she will naturally be worried for her husband's safety. She said the phrase 'for goodness' sake' which clearly indicated that she was protesting or she was against the idea of her husband climbing an unsteady tree. She asks him to be careful and to not fall off.*

"Fall?" scoffed Dad,
"A climber like me?
Child's play, this is!
You wait and see."

Word Meaning

scoffed: laughed mockingly

child's play: very easy to do

Explanation of the Poem – *When the father heard her wife's warning, he scoffed and gave a light-hearted reply. He told her that a climber like him would never fall off a wobbly tree. In other words, we can say that he was trying to show his family that he was brave and nothing could hurt. He wanted to see them be proud of him. He said that climbing a tall, wobbly tree was a child's play, and he told them to wait and see how heroically he rescues the cat.*

He got out the ladder
From the garden shed.
It slipped. He landed
In the flower bed.

Word Meaning

shed: simple roofed structure used for garden storage, to shelter animals, or as a workshop.

flower bed: a garden plot in which flowers are grown.

Explanation of the Poem – *In this stanza, dad brings out the ladder from the garden shed. He placed it and climbed it. However, the ladder wasn't placed properly. When he climbed it, the ladder slipped and he fell. He landed right on the flower bed of the garden.*

"Never mind," said Dad,
Brushing the dirt
Off his hair and his face
And his trousers and his shirt,

Word Meaning

brushing the dirt off: removing the dirt from oneself

Explanation of the Poem – Dad didn't let this failure demotivate. He said never mind as he removed the dirt off his hair and face and clothes. This meant that he was getting ready for a second attempt.

"We'll try Plan B.
Stand Out of the way!"
Mum said, "Don't fall
Again, O.K.?"

Explanation of the Poem – Dad said that he would try Plan B. He told everyone to stand out of the way so that nothing could stop him or hinder his plan. The mother, who became more anxious due to the fall, pleaded with him to not fall again.

"Fall again?" said Dad.
"Funny joke!"
Then he swung himself up
On a branch. It broke.

Explanation of the Poem – Dad replied that him falling again was a joke, meaning that it would be impossible. He then tried to save the cat for the second time. He swung himself up on a branch. However, the branch was too weak to support his weight, which is why it broke and he fell again.

Dad landed wallop
Back on the deck.
Mum said, "Stop it,
You'll break your neck!"

Word Meaning

landed wallop: fell heavily

deck: ground

***Explanation of the Poem –** He now landed heavily on the ground. The mother, who was first just worried, is now shocked and scared for the father's life. She expresses this by telling the father to stop climbing the tree or he'll break his neck.*

"Rubbish!" said Dad.
"Now we'll try Plan C.
Easy as winking
To a climber like me!"

Word Meaning

rubbish: nonsense

winking: closing and opening one eye quickly

***Explanation of the Poem –** The father didn't pay much attention to his wife. Instead, he said that she was saying rubbish things and that climbing a tree was as easy as winking to a great climber like him. He means to say that he was such a great climber that he could easily climb a wobbly tree just he could easily wink.*

Then he climbed up high
On the garden wall.
Guess what?
He didn't fall!

Explanation of the Poem – The father then goes on to try out his Plan C, which is his third attempt to rescue the cat. He climbed up the tall garden wall and climbed till he reached the top of the wall. The poet here introduces a twist here – we were expecting the father to fall from the garden wall, but he didn't. What the poet tries to tell is that when we are determined to do something even though we fail a lot of times, we tend to succeed because we learn from our mistakes. The father tried his best to learn from his mistakes and chose the best possible way to save the cat. That is why he didn't fall.

He gave a great leap
And he landed flat
In the crook of the tree-trunk —
Right on the cat!

Word Meaning

leap: jump or spring a long way, to a great height, or with great force.

flat: in or to a horizontal position.

crook: bend

Explanation of the Poem – The father then gave a great leap towards the tree. Then, he landed in a horizontal position on the bend of the tree-trunk, on which the cat was sitting. He thus landed right on top of the cat he wanted to rescue.

The cat gave a yell
And sprang to the ground,
Pleased as Punch to be
Safe and sound.

Word Meaning

sprang: move or jump suddenly or rapidly upwards or forwards.

pleased as Punch: very pleased

safe and sound: unhurt

Explanation of the Poem – *When the father landed onto the cat, the cat yelled as it was surprised and hurt by the father's weight. It then jumped rapidly towards the ground. It was now not stuck from the tree. The cat was feeling very pleased as it was on the ground safe and sound.*



So it's smiling and smirking,
Smug as can be,
But poor old Dad's
Still Stuck Up The Tree!

Word Meaning

smirking: smiling while evoking insolence, scorn, or offensive smugness

smug: having or showing an excessive pride in oneself or one's achievements.

Explanation of the Poem – *trouble now. It is feeling great satisfaction to see the hero being stuck up the tree. The cat is laughing at the father while being on the ground, whereas the father is now in trouble because he is the one who is stuck up the tree.*

"Dad and the Cat and the Tree" by Kit Wright is a humorous poem that narrates an adventurous and light-hearted incident where the narrator's father attempts to rescue a cat stuck in a tree. The poem is written in a playful and rhythmic style, engaging young readers with its amusing tone and vivid descriptions.

Summary and Explanation

1.The Problem:

The poem begins with a cat stuck on a tree. The narrator's father confidently declares that rescuing the cat is a simple task, saying, *"Easy as winking to a climber like me!"* Despite the mother's concern about his safety, Dad remains determined and optimistic.

2.First Attempt:

Dad devises a plan to climb the tree using a ladder. However, as he starts climbing, the ladder slips, and Dad falls, landing flat on the ground. This moment adds humor to the poem, showing how overconfidence can sometimes lead to mishaps.

3.Second Attempt:

Undeterred, Dad tries a different method. He climbs the garden wall, planning to leap onto the tree. Unfortunately, this attempt also fails spectacularly, as Dad ends up falling again, bruising himself.

4.Third Attempt:

On his third try, Dad finally climbs the tree directly. While this seems like a success initially, his weight causes the branch to snap. Both Dad and the cat tumble to the ground. Ironically, the cat, unharmed, lands safely on its feet and walks away calmly, leaving Dad battered and embarrassed.

Themes

•**Overconfidence and Determination:** Dad's unwavering confidence in his climbing abilities is a central theme. Despite repeated failures, he remains persistent.

•**Humor in Everyday Life:** The poem uses funny situations to show how ordinary events can turn into entertaining stories.

•**Irony:** The cat, who was the cause of all the trouble, effortlessly escapes unharmed, while Dad, the rescuer, ends up injured.

Style and Tone

Kit Wright uses a conversational and rhythmic style to make the poem engaging. The rhyme scheme and lively descriptions add to the humor and make it appealing to young readers. The light-hearted tone ensures the poem is more amusing than critical, portraying Dad's misadventures as endearing rather than foolish.

Message

The poem subtly conveys that overconfidence can lead to humorous failures, and sometimes, things resolve themselves without intervention. It teaches us to approach challenges with care and humor, even when things don't go as planned.

Question 1. Why was Dad sure he wouldn't fall?

Answer: Dad was sure that he wouldn't fall because he thought that he was a great climber.

Question 2: Which phrase in the poem expresses Dad's self-confidence best?

Answer: The phrase in the poem that expresses Dad's self-confidence best is:

“Easy as winking to a climber like me.”

Question 3: Describe Plan A and its consequences.

Answer: Plan A was to climb the tree with the help of a ladder. Although the ladder slipped and Dad fell on the ground.

Question 4: Plan C was a success. What went wrong, then?

Answer: Plan C was a success. Dad reached the place where the cat was stuck. But, the moment he reached the place, the cat jumped onto the ground.

Question 5: The cat was very happy to be on the ground. Pick out the phrase used to express this idea.

Answer: The phrase that expresses the idea that ‘the cat was very happy to be on the ground’ is:

“Smiling and smirking”.

Question 6: Describe the Cat and Dad situation in the beginning and at the end of the poem.

Answer: In the beginning, the cat was stuck on the tree, and Dad was looking at it from the ground. In the end, Dad got stuck on the tree, and the cat was free on the ground.

Question 7: Why and when did Dad say each of the following?

- (i) Fall?
- (ii) Never mind
- (iii) Funny joke
- (iv) Rubbish

Answer: (i) Fall?: As his wife warned him against falling, Dad said “fall?”, showing an expression of confidence that a climber like him can never fall.

- (ii) Never mind: As Dad fell from the tree, he said, “Never mind” while brushing the dirt off his clothes.
- (iii) Funny joke: As his wife warned him again, he said “funny joke,” boasting about his climbing skills again.
- (iv) Rubbish: Dad said this as he was yet again warned by his wife when he fell after trying plan B too.

Question 8: Do you find the poem humorous? Read aloud lines which make you laugh.

Answer: Yes, the poem is humorous. Lines that made me laugh are:

“Then he swung himself up
On a branch. It broke.”
“The cat gave a yell
And sprang to the ground,”

