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## **Family Plays**

# A Tree With Arms

By  
James Saba



# A Tree With Arms

***A Tree With Arms* had a successful long run  
at Carolina Actors Studio Theatre in Charlotte, N.C.**

***Drama. By James Saba. Cast: 12 (roles may be either gender as long as there are girls and boys on both teams).*** A rivalry between tree house builders emerges in this dramatization and leads to battle—until peacemaking carries the day. Corky Johnson's tree house is nestled peacefully at the end of his large suburban back yard, providing comfort and secrecy to all who are allowed to sit in it. But when Corky comes down to his tree house one summer morning, he is shocked to find that his enemy, Joel, has constructed a bigger and fancier tree house in the neighboring yard. Corky declares war. The two leaders enlist teams and attempt to outdo each other. Tension mounts until the members of both sides decide that the situation is out of control. They conspire together to convince their leaders that the battle is wrong. The teams learn about friendship, allegiances and, finally, peacemaking. *Production notes are available in the script containing details on set. Single set (representational or realistic). Contemporary casual clothes. Approximate running time: 2 hours. Code: TN1.*

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## **DEDICATION**

**“A TREE WITH ARMS” is dedicated to the following mentors:**

**Nancy Poynter**

**Jenna Worthen**

**and**

**Suzan L. Zeder**

**"As the twig is bent,  
the tree inclines"  
- - Virgil**



## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### CORKY'S TEAM

Corky	11 years old. (Male)
Jeremy	10 1/2 years old. (Male)
Finch	9 years old. (Male)
Bree	11 1/2 years old. (Female)
Tara	11 years old. (Female)
Ruthie	9 1/2 years old. (Female)

### JOEL'S TEAM

Joel	11 years old. (Male)
Brock	11 years old. (Male)
Alex	11 years old. (Male)
Lindsey	10 1/2 years old. (Female)
Katie	9 years old. (Female)

**TIME:** The present

**PLACE:** Two backyards. The yards are on very large lots that neighbor each other on either side of a chain link fence that serves as the property line. There are two "trees," each containing a treehouse. Corky's treehouse is old and weathered. Joel's treehouse is brand-new. The trees and treehouses can be as elaborate or as simple as the theatre can accommodate. Two platforms and two ladders can suffice for treehouses and the trees can be represented by simple greenery or through lighting. All props, however, need to be realistic. Cutesy, cartoon-like scenery is strongly discouraged.

For performance of such music and recording groups mentioned in this play as are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained.

The playwright suggests that producers update any recordings or musical groups (i.e. The Beatles, Peter Paul and Mary, etc.) mentioned in the play for the purposes of keeping the play current to today's audience. Please remember that the musical groups should be appropriate to the ages of the kids' parents.

## ACT I, SCENE I

*(CORKY and JEREMY enter. They are playing catch on CORKY's side of the fence. Perhaps JEREMY is offstage for his first few lines.)*

JEREMY: So this girl is running through the woods and her clothes are coming off . . .

CORKY: Her clothes are coming off?

JEREMY: Yeah, anytime anyone runs through the woods their clothes come off.

CORKY: Why?

JEREMY: Because people like to see other people naked.

CORKY: Oh.

JEREMY: So she's running, see, and her clothes are almost totally off. I mean you can kind of see her boobs, but her underwear is still on. So she runs in the cabin and locks herself in a closet. Then her best friend's head plops down in front of her face and blood is like pumping out of these tubes and veins that are hanging out of her neck, and there's a nail sticking out of her eye. Man, it was so cool!

CORKY: You're so lucky you have cable. My mom says it rots your brain.

JEREMY: My brain feels fine.

*(JEREMY throws the ball past CORKY and it hits the fence. CORKY goes to retrieve the ball and THEY see JOEL's treehouse for the first time.)*

CORKY AND JEREMY: Whoa!

JEREMY: Who built that thing?

CORKY: It's Joel Ingraham's.

JEREMY: What a slimebag!

CORKY: And he didn't build it, he bought it. It's not even a real treehouse. It's like a fort that you buy in a toy store and he just shoved it in a tree.

JEREMY: Let's kill him. Let's chase him through the woods and mutilate his body, that'd be so cool!

*(CORKY and JEREMY stand at the fence, transfixed by JOEL's treehouse. FINCH enters out of breath.)*

FINCH: I won! I won!

JEREMY: Shut up, dumbhead.

FINCH: Hey, Corky, I raced Tara down the hill and I . . . *(FINCH sees JOEL's treehouse.)* Whoa! Is that Joel's?

CORKY: Yeah.

FINCH: What a dumbhead.

*(TARA enters out of breath.)*

I won.

TARA: I know you did.

FINCH: Did you let me win? I hate it when you let me win.

TARA: I didn't let you win, Finch.

FINCH: Swear?

TARA: Swear.

FINCH: Swear to God and hope to die?

TARA: Yeah.

FINCH: Say it.

TARA: Swear to God and hope to die.

FINCH: On your mother's grave?

TARA: My mother isn't dead.

FINCH: Still counts.

TARA: On my mother's grave.

FINCH: If you're lying, your mother's gonna have a heart attack tonight, even if your fingers are crossed.

TARA: You won Finch, now drop it.

FINCH: Hear that Corky?

CORKY: *(Still preoccupied with the treehouse.)* Big deal.  
*(TARA sees the other treehouse.)*

TARA: Whoa!  
*(RUTHIE and BREE enter and proceed to climb into CORKY's treehouse.)*

BREE: Are you sure it's a cocoon?

RUTHIE: I'm positive it's a cocoon. We saw that butterfly just before I found it on the ground.

BREE: Don't cocoon's have to be attached to a twig or something?

RUTHIE: No, that's only in science movies.  
*(BREE skeptically smells it.)*

BREE: I hate to tell you this, Ruthie, but I don't think it's a cocoon.

RUTHIE: What do you think it is then?

BREE: Cat poo.

RUTHIE: Gross! No way. It's a cocoon, you'll see. In a couple of days it'll turn into a butterfly. Just wait.  
*(RUTHIE searches for a safe place for the "cocoon," as BREE turns around to see the other treehouse.)*

BREE: Who -

CORKY: *(Interrupting.)* Don't even say it.  
*(RUTHIE has now spotted it.)*

RUTHIE: Whoa!

BREE: Whose is it?

CORKY: It's Joel Ingraham's.

RUTHIE: He is so spoiled. His parents buy him anything he wants.

BREE: I think it looks kinda cool.

CORKY: Cooler than ours?

**BREE:** No. I mean, I still like ours better, but look at that thing!

**FINCH:** Let's get Brock. Brock'll go over there and beat Joel up.

**JEREMY:** No way. Brock and Alex Farnsworth said they were gonna beat me up 'cause of what happened to Alex's cat. Brock even asked Corky to help him, but he wouldn't because he knew it was an accident. Right, Corky?

**CORKY:** *(Not really listening.)* Yeah.

**RUTHIE:** *(To CORKY)* What are you gonna do?

**CORKY:** I don't know.

**TARA:** Let him have his stupid treehouse. He only built it to make us mad. Besides he's just gonna have to sit up there alone. He doesn't have any friends.

**JEREMY:** Nuh-huh. He built it to spy on us. He's gonna sit over there with binoculars and listen to our secret plans and try to decode our secret codes.

**FINCH:** We have secret codes? What secret codes? No one told me about any secret codes.

*(JOEL and BROCK come down the hill. JOEL has a sign that reads "KEEP OUT" and a hammer and some nails.)*

**CORKY:** Brock!

**JEREMY:** *(To JOEL)* You big fat jerk.

**JOEL:** What's the matter with you?

**CORKY:** What are you doing, Brock?

BROCK: What do you mean?

TARA: You've gotta lot of nerve, Joel.

JOEL: What did I do?

JEREMY: *(Mocking him.)* What did I do?

CORKY: You know what you did. You're a copycat!

JEREMY: You built that ugly treehouse just so you could spy on us.

JOEL: No I didn't. My mom and dad gave me this for my birthday. I didn't even ask for it.

JEREMY: Oh yeah, like we're really gonna believe that. I'm gonna get you, Ingraham. My dad's got a chainsaw in the garage and . . .

CORKY: Wait a minute, Jeremy. Why did you have to put it in this tree? You've got tons of trees in your backyard.

JOEL: I don't know. I just like this tree the best. Not because I want to spy on you guys. What would there be to listen to?

JEREMY: Lots of secret things go on here and you know it.

CORKY: Wait a minute, Jeremy. Let me talk to him. Prove to us that you didn't build it to spy on us.

JOEL: How?

CORKY: Move it up the hill.

JOEL: No way.

CORKY: Do it, or you'll be sorry.

JOEL: It's my parents' property and I can do anything I want on it.

*(JOEL nails up the sign and HE and BROCK start back up the hill.)*

CORKY: Wait a minute, Brock. I want to talk to you. *(To JOEL)*  
In private.

JEREMY: A fight! Oh cool! I wanna watch.

CORKY: *(To HIS TEAM)* I need to talk to Brock. Alone.

*(CORKY's TEAM starts to exit.)*

JOEL: No way, Brock. You're on my team now.

CORKY: Team?

JOEL: Don't talk to Corky.

CORKY: Who made up teams?

BROCK: Just give me a minute, Joel.

JOEL: All right, but Corky can't come on our side no matter what.

BROCK: Just let me talk to him.

JOEL: Okay, I'll give you five minutes. I'm gonna go up the hill and plug in the electricity.

BREE: Electricity?

JOEL: Yeah, we might even get a microwave oven.

RUTHIE: Joel, you are the biggest fattest jerk in the world!



JEREMY: I'll stay here just in case he tries to beat you up, okay Corky?

CORKY: He's *not* gonna beat me up, Jeremy. Just go back up the hill, okay?

JEREMY: Okay, but if he tries anything, just scream the secret word.

FINCH: *(To JEREMY as HE exits.)* What's the secret word?  
*(CORKY's TEAM exits.)*

CORKY: Why'd you do it, Brock?

BROCK: What's the big deal about it anyway?

CORKY: We hate Joel.

BROCK: You hate Joel. I used to hate him, but now I like him.

CORKY: Why?

BROCK: I guess it was because I never really knew him before. Remember when he moved in, and he had all of those scabs all over his face and we used to tease him about it?

CORKY: Yeah, he looked really gross.

BROCK: Well, I wish I never did it. Did you know he has a disease?

CORKY: Aren't you scared you're gonna catch it?

BROCK: It's not a catchable disease. He had an operation and took these pills and he's back to normal now. But when he was a little kid he almost died.

- CORKY: Big deal, I had a 105 fever when I was a little kid and I almost died.
- BROCK: But kids don't tease you because of it.
- CORKY: So?
- BROCK: Everyone's mean to Joel. They don't even give him a chance. That's why he's mean to other people sometimes. My mom invited him to go to the movies with us a couple of weeks ago and I didn't even talk to him because I thought he was a weirdo. Then my mom got real mad at me and almost grounded me when we were at the movie. So, I started talking to him and he's a pretty cool guy.
- CORKY: Cooler than me?
- BROCK: I don't know.
- CORKY: Is it because of Alex's cat? Jeremy didn't mean to do it. It was just an accident.
- BROCK: No, it's not 'cause of the cat.
- CORKY: I thought you were my friend.
- BROCK: I was. I mean I am.
- JOEL: *(Off)* HURRY UP, BROCK!
- BROCK: I'll be up in a minute.
- CORKY: You were.
- BROCK: C'mon Corky, if you just tried to talk to him . . .
- CORKY: Shut up. Don't you ever talk to me again. Just stay on that side of the fence. If you're gonna be friends with that creep - -

BROCK: Hey, don't talk about my best friend that way.

CORKY: Best friend?

BROCK: Yeah.

CORKY: Why are sticking up for him? When Jason Goodwin said I looked like a girl in my 5th grade picture you didn't stick up for me. You just stood there like an idiot while everyone laughed.

BROCK: Jason Goodwin was right.

CORKY: Okay, now you're really asking for it. If you ever cross over this fence . . . if you ever even touch our treehouse, you'll be dead.

BROCK: Oh, scare me.

CORKY: Just you guys wait and see. You'll be sorry.

## **BLACKOUT**

### **ACT I, SCENE ii**

*(LINDSEY and KATIE enter with JOEL on JOEL's side of the fence. JOEL brings down an air-compressed horn and a broom.)*

JOEL: Well, here it is.

LINDSEY: Cool!

KATIE: Yeah, way cool.

LINDSEY: It's a million times cooler than Corky's.

JOEL: Thanks.