

This happened to me when I was six years old.

My brother and I were playing in the garden at home when suddenly, our next-door neighbour, Annette, came rushing up the driveway towards my Mum.

"Oh, can you help? Please!" she wailed. "The door is shut and I don't know what to do!"

"It's OK, calm down Annette," my mother replied. "Explain what the matter is, and we'll try to help as much as we can." Annette stood on the spot, shaking, and was almost crying as she told us that whilst she was outside watering her plants, the back door had swung shut and closed behind her, locking itself. What was worse, the keys were on the inside of the locked door, and Annette didn't have a spare key anywhere that she could use!

Just then, my Dad came out to see what all the commotion was.

So had our other next-door neighbours, Alan and Penny, and our over-the-road neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Ross too! Everyone was crowding around on our driveway, listening to Annette describe her awful dilemma.

"No worries," my Dad said, "we'll just find a different way in." So he, Mr. Ross, and Jimmy (yet another neighbour!) all walked down the drive and into Annette's front garden to inspect the premises for another entrance. After about 5 minutes, they all came back.

"Well," my Dad began, "we've found another way in." Everyone smiled, and Annette inhaled loudly, as if someone had just told her that they'd found buried treasure! "But..." he went on, "none of us are small enough to get through the gap. We're all too big and tall." Everyone sighed, and Annette wobbled like a trembling tree. "The only way

you're going to get back into your house is if we send a child in to unlock the door from the inside." he revealed. At that moment, everyone turned and looked at my brother, Christopher, who was standing closest to them. Annette rushed over to him and grasped his hand.

"Will you do it for me?" she begged, "Can you get inside my house and unlock the door?" My brother, who was feeling shy and overwhelmed by everyone staring at him, didn't know what to say - he just burst into tears and stood there!

"Oh, there there," my Mum said softly, "would you like to try to get in to Annette's house for us?"

"I can't!" my brother sobbed, "I don't know how! I don't want to!"

"Oh dear," Mum flapped. At this point, holding Christopher in her arms, she turned to me and asked, "Well... what about you...?"

I looked around at all the grown-ups staring at me. Silence fell over the whole group. Wanting to seem brave, I said, "Yes, I can."

Everyone smiled at me and started moving down the driveway towards Annette's front garden.

"Oh you good boy!" exclaimed Annette, "I'm sure you can do this!"

"Dad," I asked, "How do I get in?"

"We've found a very small window in the kitchen that is open at the top," he replied. "Only you are small enough to fit through it!"

A moment later, we were all standing outside Annette's kitchen windows. I looked up. There was a tiny window - no more than a flap of glass - right at the top.

"That's the way in for you!" my Dad declared.

"Is this breaking-in, like burglars do?" I asked my Dad.

"It is a bit," he replied, "but you've got permission from the owner, so it's fine. You're actually doing it to help someone!"

Kneeling beside me, Annette said, "You need to unlock the back door for me."

"OK," I replied. I took a deep breath.

"I will hold the window open," Dad said, "and Jimmy can lift you up."

Standing on his tip-toes, my Dad reached up and opened the tiny window with one hand. Then, Jimmy used his hands to make a step for me to stand on. As I stepped on his hands, he suddenly lifted my feet and I zoomed upwards towards the opening high above everyone's heads. I felt like a giant! I grasped the window frame and swung one leg through the tiny gap, then I rested my entire body on a cold strip of metal just covering the thin edge of the glass pane below.

"Right. Now slowly squeeze through." My Dad whispered. Moving slowly, I shifted my weight carefully forwards and let one leg dangle into the room. My right foot got gradually lower and lower until it touched the kitchen worktop. Unfortunately, I suddenly slipped and my top leg scraped its way through the window and I crashed down onto the worktop. The pain was intense! The whole side of my leg was burning! But I knew that I had to succeed with my mission to get to the key. I quickly sat up and hopped down to the floor of the kitchen.

"Excellent!" Annette cried, "Now go through my conservatory and unlock the back door for me." I dashed out of the kitchen, through the hallway and living room, and into the conservatory. The back door was ahead of me. It had a green, solid-glass doorknob which looked like a giant sparkling emerald! As I walked over to the door, I could see Annette and all the grown-ups (and Christopher) coming into the

back garden. They were all looking eagerly through the windows to see if I had managed to use the key and unlock the house.

"That's it," said Annette, "try and open the door."

"Here goes," I thought to myself, "you can do this." Nervously, I held the key and turned it. The lock made a click sound. Then I gripped the cool, emerald green glass-handle and slowly twisted it. With a little push, the door opened quietly towards the expectant crowd of people, who all instantly cheered and clapped! I felt so proud and special to have been the one to get in through the window and open the door myself. Everyone was beaming at me.

"Oh, well-done!" said Annette, "You did it! That was amazing! Bravo!" My Mum hugged me and my Dad ruffled my hair.

"Good lad." he said cheerfully.

Just then, Christopher - who was at the back of the crowd - began crying again.

"What's wrong, dear?" my Mum asked him.

"It's not fair!" he spluttered.

"What's not fair?" Mum asked.

"Everyone cheered for Mark but I didn't get a turn. I wanted to go in through the window!" My mum and Dad had to remind him that he had had a chance to go in through the window, and had even been asked before me, but he had decided not to do it because he felt too shy. However, to make sure Christopher didn't feel too upset about the ordeal, Annette and all the other grown-ups decided to set the whole thing up again so that he could have a go. They even pretended to be shocked when he got the back door open on his own - everyone clapped and cheered for him too. We both felt very pleased to do the good deed to help our neighbour!