

## AN OAK TREE

Chai and Maria were planning to have their small Spring wedding in the beautiful backyard behind their house. They had two brightly flowered gardens in the yard, and a freshly painted white picket fence that circled the deep green lawn. Also, a big oak tree stood in the middle of the yard. In front of the tree was where they had planned to stand during the wedding ceremony(\* 1).

On the day before the ceremony, Chai was checking to see if everything was perfect in the backyard. The next morning, he and Maria would marry. There would be no time before the wedding to make sure the backyard was just right. He walked around the backyard like a careful detective inspecting every part of the lawn and the gardens. Chai didn't find anything in the grass or flower beds; there were no shreds of litter (V1) or fallen twigs to dispose of. But at the end of his search, he did look up at the great oak tree and noticed a plastic bag (V2) which was caught on one of the high branches and swaying in the warm breeze.

“What shall I do?” he asked himself. “That bag up there must not be there in the morning!”

Chai was determined to remove the white and orange bag from the oak tree. First, he took the garden hose from the shed and tied an empty – but heavy – gas can to one end of it. He held onto the hose

and began spinning the can in the air above his head. Then he launched the can and hose into the tree, trying to catch the branch, not unlike a fisherman( \* 2) trying to catch a fish. But Chai lost his grip on the hose and in a moment both hose and can were stuck in the tree with the bag.

Chai shook his head, but he was still determined.

Next, he used a basketball to try and hit the hose, can, or bag out of the tree. –That too got stuck between two big branches( \* 3). The next thing to get stuck was a rake, and then an old shoe. Then a lawn chair, an ice-skate, a pail, a hoe, a sprinkler, a garbage can lid, a bicycle wheel... Half the things in Chai and Maria's shed were hanging all over that big oak tree in their backyard.

When Maria came outside from the house to see what Chai was doing, both of them stood next to each other without saying a word. They both looked up at the oak tree in amazement. Then the white and orange bag became uncaught and blew out of their tree and yard. And then, together, they began to laugh. They laughed like they had never laughed before. And why wouldn't they laugh? –They were in love and would be married the next morning under a strange, but beautifully and colorfully decorated tree!

## TEXT NOTES

## (\*1)

In front of the tree was where they had planned to stand during the wedding ceremony.

この文は、以下の 2 つに分けられます。

1 つ目は、“In front of the tree was the place.” この“in front of ~” は前置詞で、「~の前に」という意味です。ここでは語順が倒置されて、「木の前」ということが強調されています。これを、主語＋動詞の順にすると、“The place was in front of the tree.”(その場所は木の前にありました。)で、意味がとりやすくなりますね。

2 つ目の文は“They had planned to stand (there) during the wedding ceremony.”(彼らは結婚式の時にそこに立つつもりでいました。)です。この 2 つの文において、“the place”と“there”が同じ場所を表すので、場所を表す関係詞“where”で 2 つの文をつなげてすっきりとさせたのが本文にある形です。先行詞“the place”は省略できます。

## (\*2) not unlike a fisherman

“not unlike ~”で、「~と五十歩百歩」。という意味です。“like”には「~に似た、~と同じような」という意味があり、それに反対の意味を加える接頭辞の“un-”がついて、「~と似ていない、~とは違う」という意味になります。さらにそれに“not”がついているので、「~と同じ、違う」となるのです。本文の“not unlike a fisherman”は、「漁師と同じように」という意味です。「寸分違わず、同じような」というときに、“not unlike ~”という表現を使うことができます。

## (\*3) That too got stuck between two big branches.

“stuck”は“stick”の過去分詞。(過去形もこの形)。“be 動詞”と一緒に使うことによって「立ち往生する、行き詰まる、動き取れなくなる」という状態を表せます。状態の変化を表す動詞“get”と一緒に使うことで、「その状態になる」と言えるので、“get stuck”は、「動かなくなる、はまる、取れなくなる」という意味になります。“That”は、前に出てきた言葉の繰り返しを避けるための語、ここでは“a basketball”を指しています。

## VOCABULARY

### (V1) shreds of litter

“shred” は名詞で、「切れ端、断片、破片」など。「シュレッダー」という紙を細かく切り刻む機械をご存知の方も多いのではないのでしょうか。動詞では、「シュレッダーにかける、細かく切る」という意味で使われます。

“litter” は、名詞で「くず、ごみ」。“litter can” で「空き缶」、「litter bag」で「ゴミ袋」という意味になります。

### (V2) a plastic bag

スーパーやコンビニでもものを買ったとき、買ったものを入れる袋を、日本語では「ビニール袋」と言いますが、英語では“plastic bag”と言います。カタカナの「ビニール」につづりが似ているのは、“vinyl”という語ですが、主に vinyl chloride「塩化ビニール」など、化学物質を表すときに使われます。発音も、[va'inl] (ヴァイナル) と発音し、カタカナの「ビニール」とは異なります。

「ビニール」というカタカナが使われる「ビニールハウス」も和製英語で、英語では、“plastic house”又は“plastic greenhouse”と言います。

