

The tree was scared. He could hear the chainsaws getting closer, and he was afraid for his life. He had seen some of his neighbors fall when those screaming insatiable beasts attacked them last summer, and ever since he had been warily waiting for their return. And now, every day they were getting closer and closer. Soon they were so close it sounded like the end of the world. The tree didn't think he could stand it much longer. He was terrified. Then they were here, and he felt their bite, and before he could protest, he was sawn into logs.

The logs felt very strange; there was no fear any more. He saw that the beasts were just saws, and that the men using them took great care over his wood. They may have been making sure they cut only where needed to maximize the lumber, but he felt their care. Soon they towed him to a road and put him on a truck. This was a brand-new experience for him. As a tree, he always stayed in one place. But as logs, he could travel. He found he loved it, and all the fear of just a short time ago just faded away. He watched the world go by, fields and buildings and rivers. It was beautiful.

The truck pulled into a large yard full of wood piles, and the logs discovered he was at something the men called a "sawmill", and when they arrived, the logs were unloaded, and the men took even more care to measure everything until it was just right. The logs liked attention and began to feel special. The traveling was wonderful enough, but at the mill, the logs felt like something great was happening. And soon it did. They cut him into lumber. No longer was he just rough logs. Now he was finished lumber. And the lumber liked how he looked !!

Then suddenly he was loaded onto another truck and was traveling again. Again he had a chance to watch the buildings and fields as they passed. They stopped at a clearing next to the road, and shortly more people carefully looked over all his lumber, and they carried him onto the clearing, put him on top of a foundation, and nailed him together, and turned him into a house !

The lumber did not really know what this new form was, but a few months later when the house was all done, a family of people moved into the house, and turned it into a home. The lumber was astonished. He had never thought of living with a family, and after a few days, watching the love and laughter of the mother and father, and the play and fun of the kids, he found he really liked being a home for this family.

So the home settled into his new life, and he had never been happier. The days passed, and the family kept living with him, and he enjoyed sheltering them. As the days turned to years, his memories of life as a tree, or logs, or lumber began to fade little by little, while the wonderful memories of serving as a home began to fill him completely.

A day arrived that made the home nervous. The family moved out. But the home was reassured when he was quickly occupied by another family, and he found new people to love. The years turned into decades, and he found he loved every minute. Then one day he thought he heard the family talking about something they called a commercial building, and then they moved out.

He was alone again. He was not sure what a commercial building was, but it sounded grand. He was a little scared, but since becoming a house, he realized these changes were scary before they happened, but afterwards, they seemed OK. The next day, some men arrived, and before he could even open the door to welcome them, they took a big machine, and "bulldozed" the house !! What was once a nice home was again just a pile of lumber.. again. He felt sad, was this the end ?

He had already been lumber, and it was sort of lonely. He began to get scared. But the lumber remembered the days long ago when he was a tree, and the chainsaws had attacked him, and how needlessly scared he was. So the lumber took heart, and just waited to see what would happen. Soon they loaded the lumber onto another truck, and the lumber got to go traveling again !! He was excited. What was happening now !! He couldn't wait. The truck pulled into a garden center, and he was put into something called a grinder, and before you could shake a leaf, he was ground into sawdust and added to a compost heap.

Well this was a new experience !! He had never imagined becoming compost. So he began to feel around, and soon found that bugs and worms were joyously eating the sawdust and making it into rich dirt. He felt warm with their joy. Soon other bugs joined in on the feast, and again, the compost had a new family. He found that some bugs were big and would break large pieces of compost to get at the more tender spots, while other bugs were tiny, and just ate the juicy spots around the edges. But all the bugs constantly thanked the compost heap for every meal, loving every minute of it. And the compost felt parts of himself turning into new things like carbon dioxide, and he already knew that this was something the trees liked to eat, and the compost felt great fulfillment as part of him entered into the children of the trees he used to know so long ago.

After a year or two, the compost discovered he had turned completely into rich dirt. And then some people came and paid the garden center to pick up a load of dirt, so he was put into a bag, and they loaded him onto a pickup truck, and again he was traveling. This was a wonderful trip, and he soon found himself in front of another home. There was a family in the home, and they all came out to greet the dirt. They picked up the bags, and spread them around the front of the house to make a nice flower bed, and then the mother came out and planted flowers in the dirt, all the while saying how nice and rich he was and how she loved preparing a garden for her flowers.

The dirt loved hearing the mother speak kind words to him. He tried to tell her all about being a tree, then some lumber, then a home, then some compost, and now some dirt, but somehow she did not hear him, so he wished her well, and said his greetings to the flowers. They wiggled their roots in joy at meeting him, and all the flowers began asking all sorts of questions at the same time. The flowers were just babies, having just hatched from their seeds, and everything was new and beautiful. Since they asked about why the dirt felt so nice, the dirt began to tell them stories of being a tree, and lumber, and finally compost and dirt, and the flowers just sat completely enraptured at all the adventures the dirt had had.

The dirt began to see that every change led to something better. If he had just stayed a tree, he never would have felt the warm love of the mother as she spread the dirt to prepare the flower bed. He found that the family was terrific. They would come out into the yard to play, and he would watch how they loved each other. Then sometimes they would fall into the flower bed, and the dirt would get on their clothes, so sometimes, if he was lucky that day, he would get to go inside the house and see all the wonderful things that happened inside a family's home. He saw that they cared for each other, and helped each other with their problems. Even when someone did something wrong, they all still helped and cared. The dirt loved being part of the family. And he loved especially when the mother came out and planted new seeds.

The dirt would tell the seeds about being a tree, then logs, then traveling. He told them stories about being a home and sheltering a family, about how sometimes he was scared, but somehow always ending up in a better place. The flowers listened and enjoyed every story. Secretly they did not really believe

them all, but they were well behaved and respected their elders, so they did not say anything. They listened and grew and just had fun with the dirt. Days turned to months and years, and sometimes the flowers would turn brown, and the mother would cover them with the dirt, and as the friendly bugs ate the brown flowers, always thankful for the wonderful flavor the flowers had as they turned the flowers into dirt. And the flowers and the dirt lived happy lives together for years and years.

After a while the dirt met all their neighbors by riding along with the family after helpfully dirtying up their clothes or hands as they dug or played in the dirt. The dirt visited the forest where he grew up when the family went on picnics to the park, and when the family needed a new deck, the dirt was able to visit the sawmill where he became lumber. The dirt even visited the garden center when the mother went to get small saplings for the back yard, and found it was still turning compost into new dirt, and the dirt loved talking to the new dirt and telling them about all the wonderful things they will see. The dirt was very very happy.

Sometimes the wind would blow, and some of the dirt would be carried off in the breeze and become dust. It was wonderful floating above the ground and seeing everything. He could see the forest in the park where he was born. Some of the dust got on a sandwich as people were having a picnic in the park, and he suddenly was now part of a person. He loved that too. Some more dust floated inside the family's home through one of the windows and landed in a crack in the floorboards and was able to be a part of the family for years and years, and it was wonderful to live with a family in a house where he could look forward to every change.

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