

# A TREE STORY

by

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I wake up in my room and I am surrounded by a grove. Wherever I look I see trees—each of one of them with its own story. They are living organisms like human beings. They may not talk or walk, but they breathe, and we people breathe along with them. These plants are in our houses. The frame of the very bed I lie in is a tree, since it is made of wood. The same goes for the boards I walk on, the wardrobe where I hang my clothes, the desk I work on, the bookcase I put my books on, and the door I walk through. A great many materials such as paper are derived from wood. It follows that the pages of my books and notebooks, which are called leaves, were once trees and so was the pencil with which I write. I open my door and I take a walk in the woods. More doors, window frames, mirror frames, another bookcase, tables, chairs, cupboards, sofas, coat racks, toilet paper, kitchen rolls, sketchbooks, and newspapers. When I go to the grocery store, some tree in the form of a paper bag keeps me company. I see paper packaging, such as cartons of milk and juice and the like. When I return home, I bring back more trees with me and the wood becomes automatically a forest. I look at them and wonder what kind of tree the wood comes from and try to guess their story.

I open the shutters and the wind blows through the balcony door and suddenly I hear every tree in the garden complaining. I ask them to talk to me about their past. They start crying, watching their fellow trees that were turned into household furniture. However, industries cannot hear them, and they cut them down for the sake of profit because they claim they make our lives better and easier. The dead trees in the house tell me that they do not belong there, but in their natural environment with the plants that have not been destroyed, yet. They emphasize that animals as well as we people need living plants to survive, since they produce oxygen. They passionately argue that plants are not only absolutely essential for our physical, but for our mental health as well. They ask me if we have noticed that nothing can make us feel almost miraculously relaxed and curiously calm more than a walk in the park, in the woods, or wherever there are trees. They advise us that most of the time what we need is such an excursion. People that have trouble with their sleep click on videos with leaves blowing in the wind and they achieve a solution to insomnia. They tell me that when people who do not live in the country see grass, flowers, bushes, and trees from their balconies or through their windows, they should consider themselves blessed and truly lucky.

The trees bluster and gust: we are trapped. While someone from a city who is lost in the countryside says, “A house. At last,” the person from the countryside would say under the same circumstances in a city, “A tree. At last.” Whoosh. Poets and writers draw inspiration from forests, which become their favorite muse.

Papers are blown off my desk; the doors rattle. They are angry and mad at people, who treat them with disrespect. They pose a question to me. How would we like it if someone killed us accidentally, on purpose, or accidentally on purpose and used our bodies for whatever purpose?

They know for certain that our answer is positively inhumane. Our planet will not be abounding with trees any longer if their genocide continues. If it is considered a crime when we are violent towards one another, why is not deforestation, which basically means “tree killing” or the reckless use of earth’s resources and materials? To make their point perfectly clear, they provide me with a classic example. They see us every day tearing off or tearing up a piece of paper every single time we make a mistake. They tell me that most of us remain completely unaware that such acts are terrible insults to trees. They think to themselves, why do humans not think twice and use an eraser or correction fluid. Then, they see us throw them in a waste container. Why? They are not garbage but recyclable materials. They are convinced that we can’t help but misuse them.

The air settles. Our conversation comes to an end. I sit on the edge of my bed, pondering the grain of the wood and waiting for the breeze to ripple through the trees.

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As my creative project I chose to write a short story, entitled “A Tree Story.” The story owes its inspiration to four of the assigned readings from the literature course “Studies in American Culture: American Literature and the Environment,” specifically Alice Walker’s “Everything is a Human Being,” John Burroughs’s “Nature Near Home,” Frederick Law Olmsted’s “Review of Recent Changes, and Changes Which Have Been Projected, in the Plans of the Central Park,” and Jane Jacobs’s *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

“A Tree Story” takes place in the narrator’s house. He is an average person who lives an ordinary life. He seems to have achieved perfect harmony with his surroundings. What is considered distinctly unusual for his type is the fact that he demonstrates an extraordinary ability to feel a spiritual connection with every product that is made of wood and paper found in his home. For most of the story he is deep in a conversation with the items of furniture in his room. Essentially, they wish to convince all people, via the narrator, of the great importance that trees have in their lives. Later they voice their complaints against people as well as express their criticism centered on their supreme indifference and the misuse of natural materials. In the end they kindly offer constructive advice about people behaving acceptably towards trees. The narrator deems it necessary to share this valuable experience with the readers.

### Works Cited

- Burroughs, John. “Nature Near Home.” *American Earth: Environmental Writing since Thoreau*, edited by Bill McKibben, Literary Classics of the United States, 2008, pp. 168-171.
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