

A Tale of Two Bottles

Once upon a time, two plastic bottles sat on the top shelf of Whole Foods organic market. They had come from the same factory, wore the same shiny labels, and been delivered on the same day. In fact, so far their lives had been identical, but this would all change when they were purchased.

As the first bottle was picked off the shelf, he cried a fond farewell to his plasticky brethren. He thought to himself, "This is the start of an exciting journey." He imagined quenching the thirst of a teenager and then he imagined the wonders of being recycled and starting life over. But this was not to be his fate; his cap was unscrewed and the life-giving liquid poured out. He felt much lighter and a bit nervous. He was not sure what awaited him in the recycling process. As the last drop left him, he felt the hand carrying him open and he fell. Looking down, he suddenly realized something was wrong . . . this was not the welcoming blue of the recycling bin, but the hard black metal of a trashcan. With a thud he hit the bottom, and let loose a great cry of anguish as the lid slammed closed. After a long time the lid was lifted and a gentle light shone down, he thought "This is it! I am going to be recycled now," but to his dismay only more junk was poured on top of him.

He lay in the dark for what seemed like hours. At last the bag beneath him lifted, and then arched through the air into the back of a truck. The rumble of the engine and bumps in the street were all the telltale clues he needed--soon he would arrive at the dump. An assortment of other objects joined him in the back of the garbage truck. Tin foil, paper, cans, and even some fish bones. They all told him that the dump was not such a bad place to be left. Deep down he knew, despite all that his newfound friends had told him, that he was missing many opportunities by not being recycled. The dump was where he would stay for hundreds of years instead of starting all over again as perhaps a fleecy jacket to keep a child warm, or a Whole Foods shopping bag proudly announcing, "I used to be a plastic bottle." Sadly this might never happen to him; but maybe in the future he could be an archaeological key helping to unlock the secrets of the past.

The journey of the second bottle was completely different. A student of the Waldorf School of Baltimore picked him up. He arrived at the student's house, was packed into a brown paper bag along with a sandwich and many healthy snacks, and then set in the fridge for the next day's lunch. All night he wondered what would happen to him. What was the school like? Were the stu-

dents nice? And the most important question of them all, did they have recycling bins?

Finally morning came, and the lunch bag was taken. School started and the bag was placed in a locker awaiting the return of the studious pupils. It was not until snack time, when his cap was unscrewed and his contents were emptied into a thirsty mouth that, much to his relief, he was placed in the recycling bin. He met many interesting bottles and cans. He saw the compostable plates and cups in a different bin--could it be true that they would become dark brown earthy compost that would one day grow plants?

As the students argued about whose turn it was to take the recycling out, he thought about what might have happened to his friends from Whole Foods; he hoped the all had reached the gentle caress of a recycling bag.

This is where we shall leave him, safe in the knowledge that he will be reshaped and reused so he can serve to quench the thirst of another student, remembering that the recycling of a single bottle is just the first small step to preserving the world and making it better.

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