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**TOM DIXON'S
BAMBOO FUTURE**



Ich Bin Ein Mulcher

When, at cocktail parties, the conversation turns from the fleeting news of the day to the subject of sublime beauty, I often find myself smiling, for soon, I will speak of mulch. Although I like all kinds of mulch—pine needles, straw, leaves, shredded tires—I think most highly of double-ground hardwood mulch. Hardwood mulch is humble, which is ironic because it comes from trees, and trees are quite proud. Trees, in fact, make fun of mulch as they flail about dramatically in the breeze. Trees can be jackasses.

But trees fall down, and then who's laughing? A fallen tree is no longer

quite a tree: It's a disappointed, tree-shaped collection of wood that's suddenly out of options. Not quite ready to be dirt just yet, it makes a last-minute, desperate deal with the earth: Grant me a couple more years before you take me back completely. I'll sacrifice myself to the cause and perform many beneficial tasks in return. I'll keep you tidy and free of weeds. I'll control erosion and keep you moist. I'll stop being a jackass.

Like the lone survivor of an airplane crash, hardwood mulch finds priority-shifting energy in its new life. Pride eroded, it learns to suck it up and get

to work. Like Ernest Borgnine, it sets up the drama so that others can shine. We can learn much from mulch, just as we can learn much from Ernest Borgnine. We should honor and respect mulch, for we too shall one day fall down. We should buy large quantities of it, fall to our hands and knees, and spread it around with great care and heartfelt words of thanks. Later, when the subject of sublime beauty comes up at cocktail parties, we should smile knowingly. Embracing our inner Borgnine, we should stand up straight, limbs outstretched, and start taking the conversation down a notch. ■

Story by Dan Maginn
Illustration by Mike Perry

Trees, cocktails, Borgnine—we're all in this together, cycling in and out of our earthly existence. Living, dying, intermingling our little atoms. That's neat.