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DGM – 4000

**Color Your Story**

Fluffy white clouds graze the peaks of large craggy mountains as a light fog rolls through its hills. A large breaming forest full of trees older than the ages of time sways to the beat of the flowing winds. Here lies an old home battered by the tomes of time washing over its hull. Its foundation built on stone, its supports standing strong creasing the sky, its adornments tattered by nature.

“It’s exactly what I imagined it to be Mr. Tanaka. Although the pictures don’t quite do it justice.”

With a smile on his face, he turns and responds with cheer.

“They certainly don’t do they? This house has stood for generations and never ceases to amaze me.”

Turning to the man he hands him the keys and remaining paperwork to finalize the deal.

“All you need to do is sign here and the house is all yours.”

Giving the house one more look the man turns to the paper pen in hand and hovers over the signature line.

“I just never thought that this would actually happen one day.”

Signing the paper enthusiastically the man stood and turned around toward the house once more.

“It has been a pleasure doing business with you. Up the road, there is a convenience store and some shops if you need anything. It is also getting kind of late but if you head into town there is a motel that you can stay the night if you prefer. Also, one last thing, inside your paperwork is some contacts for contractors if you’d like help restoring the home. Have a good evening.”

With a short exchange of bows, Mr. Tanaka enters his car and drives off leaving the man to take in the splendor of the home. Walking up to its hearth he enters. Inside is a tattered interior with walls dilapidated and tears within its doors. Frayed tatami mats line the floors crunching with every step he takes. With a notebook in hand, he begins to survey the property moving from room to room. Broken beams, broken roof tiles, broken walls. With one big huff and a smile, the man returns to his car and makes his way to town picking up food on the way at the local convenience store.

Upon arriving at the dusty motel, the man enters his room and prepares for bed. A soft ringing can be heard from his phone on the other end of the room. Making his way over he picks up the phone to greet his wife.

“Hello!” The man greets her with a big smile on his face.

“Hey, honey how did it go?”

“It went great! All I have to do is fix up a couple of things and the house will be ready for the kids to come over and check it out.”

“What do you mean you have to fix up a couple things? I thought you were buying a furnished home near the coast like we discussed?”

“Well after a talk with Mr. Tanaka I figured that it would be a great opportunity to go with a more traditional home. It also left some money in the budget to do some renovations and buy furniture that we enjoy. I’m sure I can just do it all by myself anyway.”

With a big sigh, she responds, “HHhhhhhhh… Well, this is your project after all… But I'll tell you one thing! If you don’t get that place looking pristine we are not coming there for the summer.”

“Thanks for understanding Honey! Love you! Bye!”

“Love you too honey Just stay safe.”

The next morning the man set out for construction equipment and supplies. Entering a huge store, the man gapped in awe as the walls were lined with all sorts of tools and wood. Moving from isle to isle he began filling his cart with all manner of tools. Eager to begin work on his new home. Upon arriving at the counter, a cashier woman greeted the man. After arduously scanning each item she read him his total.

“Great your total will come to $7,000. Will you please also confirm the shipping address for the lumber as well?”

Wincing the man looked down at a digital pad and confirmed all the information pressing his card to the machine to pay. As he stood there he left his card over the machine frozen.

“What have I just gotten myself into…”

Arriving back at the home with all the tools and lumber in tote the man began to set up his stuff. Everything lined up and well organized the man starred at the home with an eager but hesitant expression.

“I guess I'll start by tearing out all the broken boards. And replacing them.”

Slowly one by one the man tore out old rotted boards from the home. Amassing one huge pile of wood the man sat on a nearby stump hands arched over his knees.

“I’ve made fantastic progress so far today. Just look at the huge pile of wood. Well, I'll have to come back tomorrow and keep going. It is getting kind of late today.”

Jumping into his rental car the man returned to the motel dirty and exhausted. However, as he began driving off he noticed in the distance some larger clouds had begun to form. Leering over the hills two large grey clouds dominated the sky with their presence. Crashing and crackling they loomed over the valley where the house stood. As he made his way around the final bend he could hear a loud crash break the humming of the car.

Worried the man turned the car around and made his way back toward the house in the pouring rain.

“It shouldn’t be that bad. I didn’t take anything off the roof off yet.”

Bustling around the bend again the man noticed a large plume of black smoke filled the air. Off in the distance, he could hear loud sirens whine toward where his house stood. Panicked the man slowly made his way back toward the house to find it burning with a crimson fire. Struggling to fight the blaze men and women fired huge hoses at the old pile of wood and the new pile the man had bought. After the final trickle of fire got quenched the man stood in silence. Falling to his knees he wept. Concerned for the man one of the firefighters adorned in bright yellow patted him on the back as they packed up and left the scene.

“Why…? I never could have imagined that this could have happened. I spent the last of my budget on the tools and wood that I’d need to fix up the house. Now I can't even call in for someone to help me with it.”

Slinking back into his car he headed to his motel room. He showered in biting cold water and made his way to bed. While starring up at the ceiling he texted his wife. “It’s all over… A fire burned the house down.”

The next evening the man sat in silence eating a cold meal flipping through whatever channel he could find on the television. Suddenly he heard a knock on the door. Slumping out of his chair he came to the door in his smelly pajamas and opened it to reveal his wife and kids.

“Oh, honey I'm so sorry about the house… I booked the next flight out to come to meet you after I got your text. I thought that bringing the kids along would also help.”

With tears welling up in his eyes he hugged his wife and kids as they entered the motel.

“This place is super cool dad! We got to have all sorts of snacks and things on the way over and even got to try some of the vending machines on the way.”

Turning to his son he smiled and responded, “Yes this is a really cool place. That’s why I thought you'd like to spend your summers here.”

Becoming bright-eyed the boy smiled and asked, “Really? So, when do we get to go and see the house?”

Standing up the man looked at his wife.

“Well, we have to go see the house today and make sure that everything is ok. So why don’t you come along?”

With a loud shriek of excitement, the kids jumped the whole way going to the house. Upon arriving the man was stunned by a peculiar sight. At the home, he saw a huge group of people holding various tools and supplies while they swept out the ash from the house. Looking around the man found Mr. Tanaka with a clipboard giving orders to various people and keeping track of things.

Emerging from the car the man and his wife and kids stood in shock as the group of people mobilized. Mr. Tanaka seeing him arrive gave him a short bow and made way over to the man.

“I heard about the fire on the news, so I came right over to see if you were ok. Instead, all I found were a group of locals huddled around the house and its remains. I have to say you really went all out with supplies.”

With a chuckle, Mr. Tanaka lightly grabbed the man’s arm and escorted him over to the group of people working on his house. With a wave of his arm, he notified the group that the owner of the house was here.

“Hello everyone. This is the man who owns this house. If you have any questions about where something should go, feel free to ask him.”

Turning to the man now streaming with tears Mr. Tanaka spoke once more.

“So how should we go about remodeling the house?”

Raising his head, the man spoke in a gracious voice. “I’d love this house to be restored to its original state. It has been my dream for quite some time now to be able to live in a wonderful community like this. I’d have it look no different from the community that it contributed to.”

With a shout of joy, the group of people began working on the home tirelessly. Picking up some tools the man joined in as they moved to restore the home to its former glory.

After a couple months had passed the summer season was coming to an end. Within the hearth of the home, the man stood once more gazing upon the splendor of the house. It glistened with new wooden beams, new floorboards, new doors, new walls. Walking from room to room the man was ecstatic to find the home restored to its former glory. Behind him, his wife could be heard.

“It looks so wonderful! I think you really made a good choice in picking this house. It looks lovely and is in a neighborhood of wonderful people. What do you think?”

With a huge smile on his face, he hugged her and said, “It is exactly as I imagined it to be.”