

Avenue of Trees/Duncan Trees Only

A One-Act Play

By

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Cast of Characters

MOTHER	a mother, tired and sleepless
FATHER	a father, tired and sleepy
BOY	a boy, ready to take root
OLD LEAFLESS	one of the trees, elderly and dying
OLD LEAFLESS' WIFE	duh, elderly too, not dying
TOWNFOLK	the other trees, of various adult ages, genders, and builds. Lines identified as TOWNFOLK can be distributed among any of the trees (except OLD LEAFLESS AND OLD LEAFLESS' WIFE) as the director sees fit.
TIME:	The Eternal Present

Technical Requirements

As this is an abstract play, the only absolute technical requirement is performance space big enough to accommodate two rows of "Townfolk," probably a minimum of five on each side. With lots of room, the audience members could be seated in two rows to continue the Avenue of Trees, but that's probably not realistic for most theatres. Everything else technical about this play is up for grabs.

SETTING: The "Avenue of Trees" on the old Lincoln Highway in Duncan, Nebraska. The TOWNFOLK are situated on stage as two rows of trees, in closing perspective. They stand "rooted" throughout, though their "trunks" and "branches" may move and sway at will as they speak.

AT RISE: Lights come up to reveal two rows of TOWNFOLK, standing in closing perspective. For a moment they are still. Then they speak.

OLD LEAFLESS' WIFE

It's not that bad of a disease, all in all. Sure, it takes a few, but it leaves more than it takes.

OLD LEAFLESS

It's a clean disease, too. Not all of that droppage of limbs and rot. The leaves wither and fall and then the next spring the leaves don't come anymore.

(looks down at his hands to see if they are still there)

TOWNFOLK

The leaves don't come anymore.

OLD LEAFLESS' WIFE

Still, it's not really dead. Even then. The sap runs through the trunk. From the roots to the branches.

TOWNFOLK

Only, the leaves don't come.

OLD LEAFLESS

Who needs leaves? Really? As long as the sap runs.

TOWNFOLK

I think there's a thing called photosynthesis. Exchanging sunlight for food. Gotta have it.

TOWNFOLK

But isn't the sap enough? Who needs leaves, really?

TOWNFOLK

The sap isn't enough. There has to be new food. New nutrients. Always new. If you don't have the new you have, well, old sap!

OLD LEAFLESS

What's wrong with old sap?

TOWNFOLK

Nothing. It's just - it just doesn't get the job done.

OLD LEAFLESS' WIFE

I think old sap is fine.

TOWNFOLK

Sure, spoken from someone who's married to a tree with no leaves.

OLD LEAFLESS

I have leaves. Just . . . not a lot of them.

TOWNFOLK

They've been shriveling and falling since Decoration Day.

OLD LEAFLESS' WIFE

It's just been . . . it's been a dry summer. Too dry. Some of us are more sensitive to dryness.

TOWNFOLK

More sensitive. Yeah, That's it.

(Some silence.)

(MOTHER and FATHER enter. FATHER is carrying a sleeping BOY, who is motionless throughout.)

FATHER

There it is, the Avenue of Trees.

MOTHER

This is it? We came all this way to see this?

FATHER

Maybe there's more to it. Maybe this is just the beginning.

MOTHER

It ends right up there. This is . . . this is nothing.

FATHER

Well, I wouldn't call it nothing.

MOTHER

But not what they told us it would be.

FATHER

(resigns)

Maybe not. But we're here. We might as well take a look.

(FATHER lays down a small blanket and then sets the child lovingly on it. He brushes his hands on his pants like he's just finished a chore. He starts toward the TOWNFOLK.)

MOTHER

You think he'll be okay here?

FATHER

Why not? What could happen to him?

(MOTHER protests, hands on hips.)

We're only going to be right over there. He'll be in our sight the entire time.

MOTHER

(sighs)

Just so you know this was all your idea. I thought we should stay home.

FATHER

Why? That's what we've always done. Just sit around and stare at each other. We're getting out! Visiting places. Getting fresh air. We're - we're seeing trees, for godsake. Trees!

MOTHER

(looks around at the TOWNFOLK for a moment)

Yeah? Well, I'm not impressed.

FATHER

(sitting on the ground, looking up)

Woah, look at that canopy of leaves overhead.

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