

## The Tree

### *Characters*

The TREE: Three actors whose intertwined bodies create the TREE and who share the TREE's lines.

FATHER: A charcoal burner. Later an old man.

GIRL: The FATHER's daughter, who grows up during the story. She appears first as a little girl, then as a teenager and finally as a woman in her late 20s/early 30s — an environmental activist.

BOY: The GIRL's boyfriend when she is a teenager.

JOURNALIST: Foreign (?) journalist who comes to the forest to interview the GIRL when she has become an environmental activist.

HUNTER: An assassin.

LOGGER: A man whose job is to clear-cut the forest.

### *Setting*

The Amazon rain forest. 25 years ago and today.

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Scene 1.

*Three actors stand upstage, intertwined. The TREE.  
The TREE sways a little.*

TREE.

This is a story about a girl and a tree. I am the tree.

In the forest there are many trees. There are so many of us reaching for the sun that, from above, it looks as if we are one giant tree.

That is what the birds say, anyway.

One day a girl does something special to save me. That is a long way off. Well, it is long for her. Trees do not think about time.

But when you fall in love, time happens to you and you must think about it.

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Scene 2.

*FATHER enters with GIRL (a young child). They set  
out a picnic under the TREE.*

TREE.

A man takes a girl deep into the forest for the first time. She is small. He is a charcoal burner. Charcoal is made from trees.

GIRL.

[Looking up.] Tree! Tree! Big tree!

FATHER.

Big tree.

GIRL.

Chop down?

FATHER.

No. Not this tree.

GIRL.

?

FATHER.

We do not chop down all the trees. Only what we need. So we do not chop down this tree. Or that one [points to another tree, off].

GIRL.

Not chop down?

FATHER.

This forest is old.

TREE.

“Old.”

GIRL.

Older than you?

FATHER.

Older than me.

GIRL.

Older than grandpa?

FATHER.

Older than grandpa.

*The FATHER and GIRL eat their picnic under the tree. FATHER drinks a beer. When he finishes the beer, he sets it on the ground.*

TREE.

I do not know “old.” The man tells the girl about the forest and about the trees. He says, the trees are old. He says, we have been here a long “time.” He says, charcoal burners chop down trees, but only what they need. He says, from above the forest looks like one giant tree.

How does he know this? Do the birds talk to him?

Now he tells her a big word.

GIRL.

“Preh-zer-vay-shun?”

FATHER.

Preservation.

Preservation. GIRL.

Taking care of the trees. FATHER.

Not chop down. GIRL.

Not chop down. FATHER.

*The GIRL looks at the tree.*

My tree. GIRL.

*Your* tree? FATHER.

I take care of my tree. GIRL.

*GIRL looks around. Sees her FATHER's empty beer can. She picks it up and puts it in their pack.*

Good girl. FATHER.

I am a tree! GIRL.

*She stands like the TREE.*

Wind! GIRL.

*The FATHER pretends to be the wind and the GIRL sways in the breeze. The TREE sways, too.*

I love my tree! GIRL.

*The GIRL runs to the TREE and gives it a hug. The three actors playing the TREE separate and the girl*

*runs through and around them, weaving a path and laughing as the TREE's individual parts take her hand and help her move through and around them.*

*After a little while, the GIRL climbs up the TREE (with the TREE's help) and sits looking down at her FATHER.*

GIRL.

**Look, Papa! I am a jaguar! Rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!**

FATHER.

You are a monkey!

GIRL.

Silly Papa.

FATHER.

It is time to go.

GIRL.

[Still up in the TREE.] Can I come back?

TREE.

[Echo.] Come back!

FATHER.

Of course you can.

GIRL.

Thank you!

TREE.

[Simultaneously.] Thank you.

*The GIRL climbs down from the TREE.*

GIRL. [To TREE.] I will see you every day. You are my tree and I will take care of you!

FATHER.

## Are you my tree?

GIRL.

Yes!

FATHER.

Then I will take good care of you.

GIRL.

Yay!

*She runs to him and gives him a hug. They pack up their picnic and exit, holding hands.*

TREE.

She comes when the sun is up. She goes. She comes when the sun is up. She goes. I know it is her because I can breathe her. Every day, I breathe her and she sits in my shade. She climbs my branches. We dance.

This happens for a long...time.

*The GIRL re-enters and stands looking at the TREE.  
She is older.*