

A Perfect Tree

By
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DEDICATION

“To the Image Express drama team, the Celebration Choir, and the good folks of Bethel Community Church of the Nazarene, Medway, Ohio, who were not afraid to accept a stranger and make him one of their own.”
– *The Playwright, Tim Snyder*

STORY OF THE PLAY

Joe, deeply hurt by his daughter’s rebellious marriage to Mark, has not been able to accept his son-in-law or the child which prompted the marriage. When Mark, sent by his wife, arrives at Joe’s Christmas tree sales lot to give him a hand, the stage is set for a bitter confrontation. Although Joe is known for the gentle Christmas spirit he shares with his customers, he has none to offer his unwanted son-in-law. However, meeting with Miz Wilma, a social worker; Margie, a local bag lady; and others, especially after they’ve visited a nativity scene, start Joe to rethinking his position. Finally, when he sells a beautiful, but slightly imperfect tree Joe is forced to face the bitterness he harbors. His change of heart is delivered by none other than Joe himself. “A Perfect Tree” is a meaningful story of forgiveness and acceptance. An optional children’s nativity scene and opportunities for carols enhance the play.

SETTINGS

A temporary Christmas tree sales lot on a busy street in a large city. The lot occupies much of the stage. The sidewalk runs from left to right in front of it. Two poles connected at their top by a sign announcing “Joe’s Christmas Trees” stand center. A “Closed/Open” sign hangs on one of the poles. A few trees for sale (real ones, if available) stand stage left. An over-flowing trash container with cans and paper scattered around it sits beside the stage right pole.

The nativity scene can be staged simply with a manger and several bales of hay.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 m, 5 w, extras as nativity characters, carolers and shoppers)

JOE: The Christmas tree salesman, an entrepreneur who rents this space every year. In his mid-fifties, he's had troubles aplenty, but manages to keep his good humor, usually.

MARK CASTLEMAN: Joe's son-in-law. Early twenties.

MIZ WILMA: An employee of the city social services department who lives and works in the neighborhood.

MARGIE: A local bag lady.

OFFICER LINKHART: This street is part of his beat.

COUPLE 1: Composed of MAN 1 and WOMAN 1; obviously successful, they know what they want and will accept nothing less.

WOMAN SHOPPER: In desperate need of a Christmas tree.

COUPLE 2: Composed of MAN 2 and WOMAN 2; also shopping for just the right tree.

NATIVITY CHARACTERS / CAROLERS / SHOPPERS:
Nativity characters may be played by children. Number of carolers, shoppers, business people, etc. may vary according to the size of the stage and available actors.

NOTE: Although this is a one-act play, performance time will vary depending on how elaborately the nativity scene is staged.

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(This page for your notes.)

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(JOE enters stage left humming "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing." It is morning, and not much is happening on the street. He flips the "Closed" sign around so that it reads "Open." OFFICER LINKHART enters stage left.)

OFFICER: Hey, Joe! Ready for another day, eh?

JOE: Why, hello, Officer Linkhart. Out early yourself, aren't you?

OFFICER: I drew the early shift today. Good thing, too. It's been getting mighty chilly out here on the street in the evenings.

JOE: It sure has. I'm glad enough to close up at the end of the day. Can't take the cold like I used to.

OFFICER: Getting old's a pain in the neck, isn't it?

JOE: It can be, if you let it. By the way, I've been set up here nearly a month and you still haven't asked to see my license. *(JOE reaches for his wallet.)* I've got it right here

OFFICER: Never mind, Joe. I know you've got it. If all the street vendors I deal with were half as honest as you, I'd have nothing to do but run down bank robbers and clean up after automobile accidents.

JOE: Well, I try to do the right thing. It's just good business.

OFFICER: Good business indeed. I have yet to get the first complaint about you, and on this street, that's something. Well, I better get moving. My feet will freeze to the pavement if I stand around too long. Good day to you, Joe. Hope you make a lot of sales.

JOE: Thanks, Officer Linkhart. Try to keep warm. And Merry Christmas!

(OFFICER exits stage right. JOE returns to fussing over his trees. MIZ WILMA enters stage right.)

MIZ WILMA: Good morning, Joe.

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JOE: And a good morning to you, Miz Wilma. Out mighty early today, aren't you? I guess the city social services department never sleeps.

MIZ WILMA: (*Laughing.*) Oh, I sleep, Joe. Make no mistake about that! I have an early appointment today on Brendan Court and need to get my paperwork at the office before heading over to it. Might even have time to enjoy a peaceful cup of coffee before everyone else comes trooping in.

JOE: A cup of really hot coffee would taste pretty good right now.

MIZ WILMA: Would you like me to get you one? I can pick you up a cup at Harry's Diner on my way back.

JOE: No, no. That would be too far out of your way. I've got a thermos in the truck somewhere.

MIZ WILMA: So, how are you doing, Joe—with your heart, I mean?

JOE: The doctor said it was just a mild case of angina.

MIZ WILMA: Maybe so, but you had us worried there for awhile. What would the season be without Joe and his Christmas tree stand on this corner?

JOE: Well, it was just a little attack, and that was months ago. I'm fine now.

MIZ WILMA: And we're all glad for that. You're a tradition, you know. How long have you been selling trees here, Joe?

JOE: Let's see Maryann was one year old when I got my first license. That was over on Second Street. Got this spot four years later, so I guess it must be about fifteen years now.

MIZ WILMA: I remember when Maryann used to help you out here. She was quite the little salesgirl. How's she doing? Didn't she just have a baby?

JOE: Yes. A girl.

MIZ WILMA: A girl! Oh, how wonderful! You must be quite the proud grandpa. I can't believe you've never shown me her picture.

JOE: Yeah. Say, how did that tree you bought for the office work out?

MIZ WILMA: It was perfect.

JOE: Thought it would be. I saved it back just for you.

End of Freeview

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