TREES ON BROADWAY
By Michael R. Jackson
(Winter. Three oak trees stand in a small grove with their empty limbs outstretched and covered and shivering with icicles and snow.)

OAK
It’s so cold!

MOTHER
It’s winter. It’s supposed to be cold. Stop complaining.

OAK
I’m not complaining, Mother. I’m just stating a fact.

FATHER
Think warm thoughts, Oak. Think of the spring when the snow has melted and we have buds again. Think of summer when our leaves are leafy and green.

OAK
I am thinking of spring, Daddy. I’m thinking of summer too. But that’s not all I’m thinking about.

MOTHER
Oh, I don’t like the sound of that. What mischievousness has gotten into you now, Oak?

OAK
No mischievousness, Mother. Just a dream. I had the most wonderful dream last night.

FATHER
What was your dream about?

OAK
You promise you won’t laugh at me?

FATHER
I promise.

OAK
Mother?

MOTHER
I promise not to laugh but I don’t promise not to judge.

FATHER
(chiding)
Mother, be nice …

MOTHER
Father, I will not lie.
What was your dream, Oak?

(takes a big breath)
I dreamt that I was on Broadway.

Oh!

Broadway?

Yes, Mother, Broadway.

Well, that’s a nice dream.

I think it’s ridiculous. Trees can’t be on Broadway.

And why not?

Because we have to stick to our roots! Which are planted in the ground!

Are they?

(With great effort, Oak pulls their roots from the ground.)

Oak, what are you doing??

Oak, you replant yourself this instance! One of the neighbors might see!

Mother? Father? I don’t think it was just a dream. And I don’t care what you say. I want to sing and dance and show the whole world who I really am inside! So I’m leaving!

Leaving! And where do you think you’re going?

I’m going to New York … tonight!
(Spring. Oak enters an audition room. A few buds have sprouted on Oak’s limbs. A cigar smoking director sits behind a table. Oak is very nervous. An accompanist sits at a piano.)

OAK
Uh, my name is Oak Tree and I’ll be auditioning for the role of Treely O’Hara?

DIRECTOR
Thank you, I’ve seen enough. You can leave your headshot.

OAK
But … but I haven’t gotten to sing or dance yet.

DIRECTOR
That’s cute.

OAK
(more assertive)
What’s cute?

DIRECTOR
Oak … honey … I appreciate you coming in but you’re just not what we’re looking for.

OAK
The main character is a tree. I’m a tree. What else could you be looking for?

DIRECTOR
Yes, but honestly, we were looking for someone we could just dress up like a tree, not an actual one.

OAK
Oh, I see. Well, I don’t think that’s fair.

DIRECTOR
That’s showbiz. Good luck.

OAK
Listen here Mr. Director. Ever since I got to New York, I’ve been hitting the pavement harder than anyone else you’ve seen today or will see on any day. I’ve studied everything from Shakespeare to Ionesco. And this part has my name written all over it. Treely O’Hara is a scrappy tree who will do anything it takes to make it to the top. That’s me. And if you give me a shot to read for the part, I’ll prove it to you.

DIRECTOR
All right, kid. You’ve got spunk, I’ll give you that. So let’s see what you’ve got.
**OAK**

Oh, thank you, Mr. Director! You won’t regret it! Mr. Piano Man, can you play “I’ll Plant My Own Tree And Make It A Star” in E-flat?

*(Oak takes center stage and begins to dance and mouth the words to a song we can’t hear. Reporters with microphones appear.)*

**REPORTER #1**

Newcomer Oak Tree makes big splash in Trees On Broadway, bringing a verisimilitude that has critics and audiences raving!

**REPORTER #2**

Treely O’Hara is a character that seems tailor made for the until now unknown Oak Tree who faced stiff competition for the role, though none as stiff as Oak’s wooden bark.

**REPORTER #3**

The streets are humming with Tony buzz for Oak Tree, who’s now flying out to Hollywood to screen test for their first film role, a movie version of Trees On Broadway.

**TONY PRESENTER**

And the winner for best performer in a leading role is … OAK TREE!

*(Wild applause.)*

**ANNOUNCER**

This is Oak Tree’s first nomination and first win for Trees On Broadway.

**OAK TREE**

Oh my goodness! Oh my goodness! This has been the wildest spring of my life! Um, I’d first like to thank the sun, the wind and the rain. I’d like to thank my manager Herb for his guidance and patience. And Mr. Director for taking a shot on a kid from the literal backwoods. This is a dream come true and there’s not a day that goes by that I don’t give thanks that I get to come up here on stage and tell stories to all of you beautiful people sitting in the dark. Thank you.

**REPORTER #1**

It’s Hooray for Hollywood as Broadway sensation Oak Tree lands their first role in the movie version of Trees On Broadway, set to start filming this summer!

**REPORTER #2**

It’s good to be Oak Tree! The young star has landed a lucrative endorsement deal with Evergreen Cosmetics!

**REPORTER #3**

Has the young Trees on Broadway star become too overexposed just as their star has begun to rise? Join me and my panel after the break as we dig in.
(Summer. Oak Tree’s leaves are in full bloom. Cameras are rolling.)

OAK
I’m the biggest star in the world! How dare you judge me?

CO-STAR
Treely, I’m just trying to help you! You’re getting terrible notices in all the papers!

OAK
Oh to heck with terrible notices! I don’t believe one word printed in those phony papers! The whole world loves me!

CO-STAR
Treely, if you don’t straighten up and fly right, they’re gonna cut you from the picture!

OAK
Aw, let ‘em cut me from the picture! I can get top billing in any film I want! I quit!

MR. DIRECTOR
Aaaaaand cut! That was so great, Oak! But we need another take. That one was a little wooden.

OAK
Maybe that’s because I’ve already done twelve takes. Isn’t one of them good enough?

MR. DIRECTOR
This is Hollywood, Oak. It’s never enough. Now do you want to be a star or not?

OAK
Of course but—

MR. DIRECTOR
Then give me another take. Now.

REPORTER #1
It’s Oscar #1 for bonafide movie star Oak Tree whose leaves seem to be getting greener and greener by the day!

REPORTER #2
And Oscar #2 goes to perennial favorite Oak Tree for a riveting performance in “I Never Promised You An Orange Grove.”

REPORTER #3
Oscar #6 for the box office titan Oak Tree who will be returning to Broadway later this summer in a limited engagement to play the role of “Mother” to new Treely O’Hara performer Maple Tree (no relation).

(Lights up on Oak and Maple in a domestic kitchen scene.)
OAK
You’re just a tree. You can’t be on Broadway. They’re all gonna laugh at you and then you’ll coming crawling back to Momma, you mark my words.

MAPLE
Momma, you might not believe in me but I believe in myself. And I’m meant to be a star. You and Daddy might be happy living in these backwoods but not me. I’m gonna get outta here and I’m gonna make it, you hear me?!!?

(Maple runs off the stage. The curtain goes down. Oak confronts Maple.)

OAK
Just what the heck were you pulling out there?

MAPLE
Oh my goodness, I don’t know what you mean.

OAK
“Oh my goodness, I don’t know what you mean.” Don’t play stupid with me, Maple Tree. I’ve been around the block a few times and I know when I’m being upstaged.

MAPLE
I need to change for Act Two.

(Oak grabs Maple.)

OAK
You watch yourself. And don’t you forget whose name is on the top of the bill.

MAPLE
(pulls away)
And don’t you forget who’s playing the old bitter crone in this show and who’s not, Oak Tree. Your time in the sun is almost up. Now if you’ll excuse me.

(Maple exits. Oak takes center stage and performs the Act Two opener as reporters swarm.)

REPORTER #1
A source close to the production shares that backstage tension between the two stars is what forced producers to replace Broadway veteran Oak Tree with TV star Dogwood Tree (no relation).

REPORTER #2
Sources close to the star claim that bad investments and money mismanagement have forced Oak to downsize. There are some rumors a reality show is being shopped around.

REPORTER #3
For a tree once in full bloom, who could have seen this fall coming?
(Fall. Oak stands before their mother and father. All of their leaves are golden brown and beginning to fall off.)

MOTHER
So you’re back.

FATHER
We’re happy to see you.

OAK
Are you?

FATHER
Of course. You’re our child. We’ll always love you.

OAK
But I’m a failure. I’m washed up. I’m a has-been.

MOTHER
No, you’re a star.

OAK
Look at me. My leaves are faded and falling. No one will hire me. I have nothing. And soon it’ll be winter and I’ll have even less than nothing.

MOTHER
You’ll have us.

OAK
Why are you being so kind to me, Mother?

MOTHER
Because seasons change. Why can’t an old crone like me change too? My little Oak had a dream and pulled their roots out of the ground and did exactly what they said they would do. I couldn’t be prouder.

FATHER
Hear, hear!

MOTHER
So why don’t plant your roots right here next to me and we wait for the Winter to come.

(Oak’s cell phone rings.)

OAK
Excuse me, I have to take this. Hello? Herb?

(a beat)
I’m surprised to hear from you. I thought you never wanted anything to do with me again.
(a beat)  
Wait, what?  
(a beat)  
Are you serious? Oh my goodness. Herb! Of course! I’ll catch the red eye to L.A tonight! Thank you, Herb! Thank you!

FATHER  
What on earth was that about?

OAK  
I’m being given a direct offer to play an evil oracle in a Lord of the Trees sequel.

FATHER  
Oh, how marvelous!

MOTHER  
An evil oracle?!? Oh, how gauche!

OAK  
Oh, mother, can’t you please be supportive?

MOTHER  
Of course I’m supportive but a star of your stature is certainly worth something more dignified!

OAK  
There are no small parts, only small actors. And besides, once I’m on the screen, they’ll see. They’ll remember that young tree who came to New York with nothing but a dream all those years ago.

MOTHER  
Well, before you go, wrap those branches around your Mother and Father so we can send you off.

(Oak embraces their parents. It is a glorious tableau of golden leaves.)

OAK  
Goodbye, Mother! Goodbye, Father! I’ll come visit you in the spring!

(Oak exits. Mother and Father hold each other close. Silence.)

FATHER  
Look at that sunset. Beautiful, isn’t it, Mother?

MOTHER  
It is. I think we’re going to have an easy winter this year, Father.

(END OF PLAY.)