

Oh, Tannenbaum  
by Mark Harvey Levine

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A living room, decorated for Christmas. A Christmas Tree is featured prominently, with lights and ornaments. A man, Liebowitz, enters and stares at the tree.

LIEBOWITZ

This is so weird.

CHRISTMAS TREE

You're telling me.

Liebowitz screams. The Christmas Tree screams.

LIEBOWITZ

You talked!

CHRISTMAS TREE

What are you screaming about? I nearly dropped all my needles, here.

LIEBOWITZ

You talk! You can speak!

CHRISTMAS TREE

Yes, yes, I can talk. I can talk. What do you want to talk about? How's things at work? The family's good? Can you take me back to the forest?

LIEBOWITZ

You're really talking.

CHRISTMAS TREE

I'm talking, but I don't seem to be getting through. Would you mind terribly taking me back to the forest. I hate to ask, but I don't have a car.

LIEBOWITZ

Wha-- what?

CHRISTMAS TREE

The forest? Big place? Lots of trees? Delightful little woodland creatures?

LIEBOWITZ

The forest.

CHRISTMAS TREE

It's where I'm from.

LIEBOWITZ

Yes. I know. You're a tree. A talking tree.

CHRISTMAS TREE

He's catching on. I want to go back there.

To the forest.

LIEBOWITZ

Very good.

CHRISTMAS TREE

I can't.

LIEBOWITZ

Why not?

CHRISTMAS TREE

Well... you... you're a Christmas tree...

LIEBOWITZ

(*sarcastic*) Really? I just thought I was horribly overdressed.

CHRISTMAS TREE

No, those are...ornaments.

LIEBOWITZ

Yes, thank you. Count my rings, I wasn't born yesterday. Look at this, really. Ornaments, lights... what are these, popcorn strings?

CHRISTMAS TREE

The Christmas Tree munches on one, then spits it out.

CHRISTMAS TREE (CONT'D)

Pffauh. Stale. But seriously. Have you ever seen a tree dressed like this? It's a little... uh... gaudy. We usually go for simple. Classic. Leaves on, leaves off. Or, in my case, stylish needles. Can you take all this stuff off of me and bring me home? I've got some important photosynthesis to get back to.

LIEBOWITZ

Look, I can't. You're a Christmas tree. You're our Christmas tree. You're my Christmas tree. Oh God, I have a Christmas tree.

CHRISTMAS TREE

What's wrong with having a Christmas Tree? As long as it's not me, I mean.

LIEBOWITZ

I'm Jewish.

CHRISTMAS TREE

Really? Me too!

LIEBOWITZ

You're Jewish?!

CHRISTMAS TREE

My branch to God! The name's Tannenbaum!

The Christmas Tree holds out a branch, Liebowitz shakes it.

LIEBOWITZ

Liebowitz.

CHRISTMAS TREE

Your branches are really dry, you should get some water. It's important to stay hydrated.

LIEBOWITZ

I can't believe I'm talking to a tree... a Jewish tree, yet.

CHRISTMAS TREE

I know! Do you know how hard it is to find a minyan in the forest? In Oregon?!

LIEBOWITZ

I bet...

CHRISTMAS TREE

So if you're Jewish, what are you doing with a Christmas tree in your house?

LIEBOWITZ

Well... uh... I just married this nice Italian Catholic girl...

CHRISTMAS TREE

Mazel Tov!

LIEBOWITZ

Thank you. So, y'know, she celebrates Christmas...

CHRISTMAS TREE

Sure, sure. Hey, I'm in a mixed marriage, too. I'm a Noble Fir, and I'm married to a Douglas.

LIEBOWITZ

How're you raising the kids?

CHRISTMAS TREE

We don't care, as long as they're evergreen.

LIEBOWITZ

Right... but... having a Christmas tree... it's a little weird for me...

CHRISTMAS TREE

Weird for you?! Tell me something. How would you like it if an alien race arrived on Earth one day. And once a year they capture a whole bunch of Earthlings, strap them to their spaceships, take them back to their alien homes, dress them up in strange objects and lights, and display the dying corpses as part of their festive holiday celebration?

LIEBOWITZ

Well, when you put it like that...

CHRISTMAS TREE

I mean, really.

LIEBOWITZ

It seems odd to me too. But it makes my wife happy.

CHRISTMAS TREE

Great. Your wife's happy, meanwhile I'm slowly turning brown.

LIEBOWITZ

I'm sorry... I didn't know you could talk... I feel horrible.

CHRISTMAS TREE

Alright, I don't want to make you upset. And around the holidays and all. Now I feel guilty.

LIEBOWITZ

Wow, you really are Jewish.

CHRISTMAS TREE

Of course I am. There's lots of Jewish trees. And Christian trees and Buddhist trees, and on and on. There's still a few trees that are Druids. They worship themselves. Very annoying.

LIEBOWITZ

Oh, God. I cut down a tree once.

CHRISTMAS TREE

Oh boy. Confession time. Look, I don't want to know.

LIEBOWITZ

It wasn't you. We got you at a little lot down the street. But... Last year. My wife... well she was my fiance at the time... she took us to one of those places where you cut down your own Christmas tree?

CHRISTMAS TREE

The Fields of Death and Horror? Yes, I'm familiar with them.

LIEBOWITZ

And it's snowing, and muddy.. and I've got this stupid little saw and I'm trying to cut this tree down, and I'm wet and cold... and I'm thinking... this is why Jews don't do this.

CHRISTMAS TREE

*(bitter)* I'm sure that must've been very difficult for you.

LIEBOWITZ

But... why didn't the tree say something? Why didn't you say something when they were cutting you down?

CHRISTMAS TREE

I didn't want to make trouble. I nearly said something when you strapped me to the roof of your car. But then after a while I got into it... when you drove onto the freeway I was like "Wooooo!"

LIEBOWITZ

I'm really sorry. I didn't even want a Christmas tree at first.

CHRISTMAS TREE

Why not? We're festive! Look at me. Aren't I fabulous?

LIEBOWITZ

You are. You look great. I just feel like... I dunno...

CHRISTMAS TREE

You feel like you've gotten away from your roots?

LIEBOWITZ

Yeah.

CHRISTMAS TREE

Tell me about it. Look, it doesn't matter. You know you're Jewish. God knows you're Jewish. Does your wife celebrate Hanukkah with you?

LIEBOWITZ

Yeah, she does, actually. She makes a mean potato latke, actually, for an Italian girl.

CHRISTMAS TREE

I have friends who are potatoes.

LIEBOWITZ

Sorry.

CHRISTMAS TREE

But see? So you celebrate Christmas with her. She celebrates Hanukkah with you. There's no problem.

LIEBOWITZ

Yeah, as long as you don't put the menorah too close to the tree.

CHRISTMAS TREE

Exactly. Honestly, trees don't have this distinction. Before I told you, did you know I was Jewish?

LIEBOWITZ

No, I thought you were... just a tree.

CHRISTMAS TREE

And I am! In the forest, we're all just trees. It doesn't matter if you're a White Spruce or a Scotch Pine. We're all just trees. Except for Gingko trees. We all hate Gingkos. But mostly, we live together perfectly fine.

LIEBOWITZ

You're doing better than humans are.

CHRISTMAS TREE

Well, we've been on this planet a little longer. But anyway, the forest is where I belong. And I know I don't have a lot of time left, but I'd like to see the forest again before I go. Will you be taking me back there after Christmas is over?

LIEBOWITZ

Um... we weren't... planning on it...

CHRISTMAS TREE

What were you going to do with me?

LIEBOWITZ

Don't ask.

CHRISTMAS TREE

No, no, really, I want to know. It's not enough to kidnap me and light me up like Times Square, what happens next?

LIEBOWITZ

Well, uh... generally speaking... and remember this is all new to me... but if it's what we did last year.... we'll... uh... put you outside by the curb.

CHRISTMAS TREE

That's not so bad... outside is good. I'm a tree, I like outside.

LIEBOWITZ

And then a big truck comes along and... they take you and um...

CHRISTMAS TREE

Yes?

LIEBOWITZ

...Mulch you.

CHRISTMAS TREE

MULCH ME?

LIEBOWITZ

Yeah.

CHRISTMAS TREE

I gotta get outta here! Look, you gotta take me back to my forest. It's in Oregon. I'll show you the way.

LIEBOWITZ

Oregon? That's thousands of miles.

CHRISTMAS TREE

So? We'll do a road-trip.

LIEBOWITZ

I can't do that.

CHRISTMAS TREE

Please? I'm begging you here. I'd get down on my knees if I had knees. I don't want to be mulched! You can hang ornaments all over me, you can put lights on me, you can put a... what is that? Is there a star on my head?!

LIEBOWITZ

There's a star on your head.

CHRISTMAS TREE

I don't care! Just let me see my forest again before I die.

LIEBOWITZ

Look, I wish I could, but--

CHRISTMAS TREE

Where's your forest?

LIEBOWITZ

What?

CHRISTMAS TREE

Where's your forest? Where's the place that you feel... safe? Happy? Home?

LIEBOWITZ

I guess... I guess it's here.

CHRISTMAS TREE

And aren't I a part of that? Aren't I what you'll remember? What you'll take pictures of? Your wife, your children, with the tree and the menorah? Celebrating everything together? Making memories? You're worrying about me and... heheh. You can't see the forest for the tree.

LIEBOWITZ

You know what? You really are a noble fir. *(He sighs.)* Alright. I hear Oregon is lovely this time of year.

CHRISTMAS TREE

You'll do it? Yes! Thank you! Oh thank God. You're a mensch, Liebowitz.

LIEBOWITZ

You're not too bad yourself, for a tree. Hey, I always wanted to know-- When a tree falls in the forest, and there's nobody there, does it make a sound?

CHRISTMAS TREE

Well, I don't know about anyone else, but I screamed like a little sapling. Happy Hanukkah, Liebowitz.

LIEBOWITZ

Happy Hannukah, Tannenbaum. And Merry Christmas.

END OF PLAY



Notes:

The Christmas Tree can be played by an actor of any gender, age or ethnicity. As long as they're not deciduous.