

The Fall

by Bart Lovins

(adapted from Chapter 8 of Bambi by Felix Salten)

Note: The source material is in the public domain.

The Fall

CHARACTERS (*in order of appearance*)

- FIRST LEAF – yellow and withered with age.
- SECOND LEAF – larger and brown, with yellow streaks

SYNOPSIS

High on the last branch of an oak tree, two aging leaves cling to one another on the last day of autumn. As others have already fallen, they reflect on warmth, beauty, and the terrifying mystery of what comes next. Their quiet conversation becomes a meditation on life, love, and loss.

DRAMATURGY

Felix Salten's *Bambi* (1923) is an allegorical work that uses the natural world to explore impermanence, loss, and emotional connection. Adapted from Chapter 8, *The Fall* focuses on two leaves facing the unknown as fall gives way to winter. Like much of my work, the piece explores how intimacy and memory sustain us in moments of inevitable change.

STAGING

Minimal staging is urged, in keeping with the dialogue's simplicity. Two performers standing on the end of a very long bench, for example, may be more than enough to express the setting.

CONTEXT (*Not for Program Use*)

Felix Salten, a Jewish writer in early 20th-century Europe, wrote *Bambi* during a period of escalating antisemitism and political violence. The novel has frequently been interpreted as an allegory of Jewish persecution, displacement, and survival, with the natural world reflecting forces beyond individual comprehension or control. In this context, "winter" is not merely seasonal but existential—an approaching annihilation that cannot be reasoned with or escaped. While *The Fall* does not depict these events literally, performers should understand that the fear, uncertainty, and sudden disappearance at the heart of the scene echo a world in which people vanished without explanation and did not return.

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Setting: The leaves are falling from the big oak tree at the edge of the meadow. They are falling from all the trees. One of the branches of the oak is much higher up than the others, and it stretches a long way out over the meadow. At its tip, two leaves sit together.
At rise: The sound of wind rushes through before dialogue. Lights up.

FIRST LEAF: *(Shivering.)* Things ain't like they used to be.

SECOND LEAF: They ain't. There were so many of us last night who... *(Looking about and then timidly downward.)* We're just about the only ones left here on this branch.

FIRST LEAF: You never know who it's goin to 'appen to next.

SECOND LEAF: No, you never know.

FIRST LEAF: Even when it was nice and warm and the sunshine gave you some heat, you'd get a storm or a cloudburst sometimes, and lots of us got torn off then, even them that were still young.

(SECOND LEAF coughs painfully.)

FIRST LEAF: *(Smiling sadly at the SECOND LEAF.)* No, you never know who it's goin' to 'appen to next.

SECOND LEAF: *(Sighing as they gaze skyward.)* You don't get much sunshine these days. And even when the sun does shine, there's no strength to it. *(Putting on a brave face.)* You've got to get your strength from somewhere else.

(As the FIRST LEAF speaks, the SECOND LEAF becomes distracted by their anxiety about the impending weather.)

FIRST LEAF: In the early summer, the trees stood still under the blue sky; they held their arms out wide and received the power of the sun as it streamed down. The bushes in the thicket were coming into bloom with stars of white or red or yellow.

(A cooler than normal breeze blows through, interrupting the conversation.)

FIRST LEAF: *(Pondering.)* Do you think it's true...

SECOND: *(Being slightly hard of hearing.)* Hum? What's through?

FIRST LEAF: *(Articulating.)* Is it true that other leaves will come along and take our place once we've gone, and then another lot, and then another lot...?

SECOND LEAF: Course, it's true. *(Whispering.)* Only, we can't work out how...

(The FIRST LEAF looks bewilderedly at the SECOND LEAF, who then smiles and looks skyward in reply.)

FIRST LEAF: Oh!

SECOND LEAF: *(Nodding with a smile.)* It's above what we can understand, that is.

FIRST LEAF: *(Shaking their head as they look downward.)* It'd make you really sad, and all if...

(They both look downward and remain silent for a while as the wind rushes through.)

FIRST LEAF: *(Quietly to themselves.)* What do you have to go away for, anyway?

SECOND LEAF: Who? Me?

FIRST LEAF: *(Covering.)* What? Oh! No, me. Yes, well, us, rather.

SECOND LEAF: *(Nodding gravely.)* What 'appens to us after we've fallen?

FIRST LEAF: We sink down...

SECOND LEAF: *(Seriously, almost frantically.)* And what is it, what's down there?

FIRST LEAF: *(Almost frightened.)* I don't know. Some say one thing, others say something different...

SECOND LEAF: *(With dread.)* D'you think you feel anything, d'you think you know anything about yourself when you're down there?

FIRST LEAF: *(Smiling. Trying to lighten the mood.)* Who can say? None of them who've gone down there has ever come back to tell us.

SECOND LEAF: *(Confused.)* What?

FIRST LEAF: I mean...

(The FIRST LEAF tries through gesture to explain the difficulty of a leaf falling upwards.)

SECOND LEAF: *(Getting the absurdity of the idea.)* Oh!