

SCENE 2 SCRIPT

FIRE AND THE FIRST PEOPLE *(As Told by an Aspen Stand)*



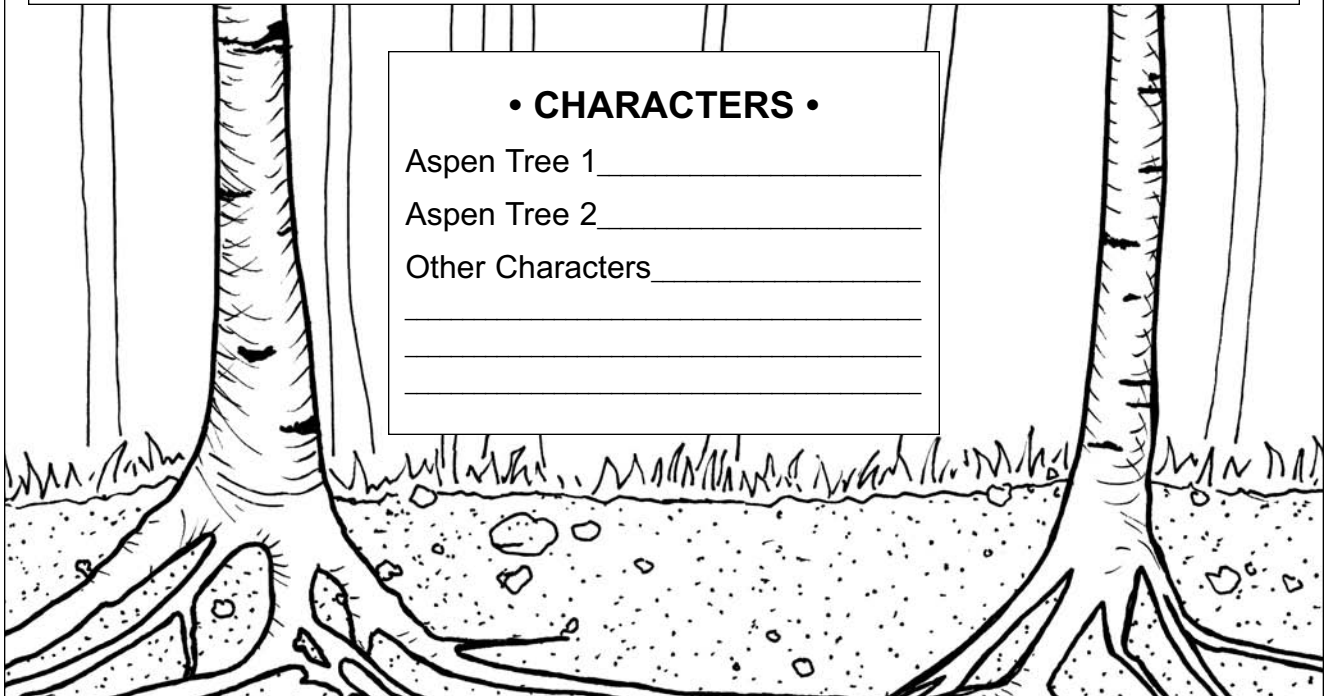
An individual aspen tree can live to be 100 years old, but many aspen trees grow from root systems that have been alive in the ground for thousands of years. In many aspen forests, the trees are all connected to the same root system. Thus, it can be said that aspen forests live for thousands of years. In the following story, it seems that some of the individual aspen trees can remember things that happened thousands of years ago – a time when The First People lived on the land we now call Wisconsin.

• CHARACTERS •

Aspen Tree 1 _____

Aspen Tree 2 _____

Other Characters _____



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Aspen Tree 1Nice day, wouldn't you say?

Aspen Tree 2Yep.

Aspen Tree 1A one in a million day I think.

Aspen Tree 2Yep.

Aspen Tree 1Do you remember what the weather was like a million days ago?

Aspen Tree 2Yep.

Aspen Tree 1I don't believe you.

Aspen Tree 2(*Stands silently.*)

Aspen Tree 1Okay. smarty. How many years ago was that?

Aspen Tree 22,739 years.

Aspen Tree 1Good memory.

Aspen Tree 2Yep.

Aspen Tree 1So, what was it like then?

Aspen Tree 2About the same as today.

Aspen Tree 1Okay. Okay. The weather was the same but what about other things like animals and plants and stuff.

Aspen Tree 2That was different.

Aspen Tree 1Different how?

Aspen Tree 2You are not going to stop asking question are you?

Aspen Tree 1Nope.

Aspen Tree 2Fine. The plants and small animals were about the same back then, but there were a lot more fires – all the time as I recall. There were also a lot of big animals like wolves, elk, cougar, and even bison. We don't sense many of those animals or many fires any more.

Aspen Tree 1Why?

Aspen Tree 2I don't know.

Aspen Tree 1Hah! Something you don't know!

Aspen Tree 2Well, I do know what the little bird told me.

Aspen Tree 1And...

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Aspen Tree 2It's complicated, but it goes something like this. The people of that time, who the little bird called "The First People," used fire to manage the land for the big animals that they liked to hunt.

Aspen Tree 1I like fire.

Aspen Tree 2I know. So do many animals. Many animals, like deer, eat the green, sun-loving plants and shrubs that grow in the clearings after fire. The First People used fire to round up animals for hunting, to provide habitat for animals that they hunted, and to clear land for agriculture.

Aspen Tree 1And the big animals?

Aspen Tree 2I'm getting there. So, what I am trying to say is that the First People started changing the landscape with fire. They did this to provide themselves with food and clothing. They did it so well that their numbers grew and they started forming settlements and planting food crops. They began to hunt more and...

Aspen Tree 1And they killed off all of the big animals!

Aspen Tree 2No. I don't think so.

Aspen Tree 1You don't know or you don't think so?

Aspen Tree 2Well, it is not very clear because a second group of people moved onto the land. And they completely changed the course of history.

Aspen Tree 1So you don't know.

Aspen Tree 2Well, I only know what I can sense from right here.

Aspen Tree 1Obviously.

Aspen Tree 2So, what I am saying is that the little bird hasn't told me what happened since then.

Aspen Tree 1Well, when is the bird coming?

Aspen Tree 2Any year now, I think.

• END SCENE 2 •

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why could one of the aspen trees remember what happened so long in the past?

Who were The First People?

How did The First People use fire?

How did their use of fire change the landscape?

How is the use of fire different now?