

Synopsis

Isabelle is stunned when she arrives home for the weekend to discover her father has been three days dead and buried. Weirdly, her mother cannot understand why she is upset, nor can Isabelle make sense of her mother's alarming fascination with the new neighbors.

Long Synopsis

Isabelle had been estranged from her parents since she came out to them but is now driving up to introduce her girlfriend, Catherine. Cell phone service is lost as they arrive in the burnt-out forest town of St. Etienne.

Isabelle's mother, Thérèse, had forgot that she was to visit. She also neglected to tell Isabelle her father, Maurice, had died suddenly three days earlier. His ashes were buried at the foot of the old tree Ancestor. Also, the family dog, Fiston, had disappeared. Isabelle fears her mother is not well, for being so unemotional relating all the bad news.

Dr. Toupin had served the community for many years before taking off to travel the world then return to live in the house next door with his botanist wife, Maria. They set up a lab in the cellar to pursue secretive research.

Maurice had some time earlier sought Dr. Toupin's treatment for pain, which proved to be effective. Isabelle visits her uncle Emile to learn his son Charles recently died, after being under Toupin's care. Emile urges Isabelle to leave St. Etienne right away; and Thérèse is panic stricken when Isabelle sees Catherine off and stays on to take care of her.

Therese sleepwalks and is generally detached during the day. One afternoon, she drops her garden hose to dart over to the doctor's house, as if in trance. Isabelle follows her.