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The tragedy Long Day's Journey Into Night, a play written by Eugene O'Neill, tells the story of a small middle class family in the early nineteenth century. All of the characters have numerous tragic flaws that eventually lead to the family's collapse. The man of the family, James Tyrone, is an extremely frugal individual that is consumed with pride. His wife, Mary, suffers from a morphine addiction acquired from long term medication after a painful childbirth, and is in denial. The eldest son, Jamie, was ejected from several different schools and is without a job due to his lack of motivation. The fourth and youngest member of the family, Edmund, suffers from Tuberculosis. As a result of his excessive pride and his parsimonious ways, James Tyrone is the main cause for the disintegration of the family.

One of James Tyrone's prime tragic flaws was his obsession with thrift. Everyone in his family tried to keep him from being so frugal, his son Jamie even said (talking about taking Edmund to a sanatorium), "Well, for God's sake, pick out a good place and not some cheap dump!" When James originally found out that Edmund was sick, he took Edmund to an inexpensive doctor that was incompetent. If he would have spent a bit more and gotten a qualified doctor, Edmund's sickness would not have been as so severe. Also, throughout the book, the family complains about the poor condition of their house, saying that it is "a summer dump in a place she (Mary) hates and you've refused even to spend money to make this look decent." Clearly if James Tyrone would have been a little bit less economical, Edmund would not be as sick and the family would be a lot happier.

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Another one of Mr. Tyrone's tragic flaws is his hubris, or excessive pride. Though self pride can be healthy, in James' case it injured him profoundly. Instead of accepting his family's problems and dealing with them directly, James chose to ignore them and either forgot about his family's many problems by getting drunk frequently or blocked them out of his mind. For instance, James's wife, Mary, had a constant battle with an addiction to morphine. Though James sent her to a rehabilitation clinic to help her get rid of her problem, they were never fully put to rest and she continued her abusive habits throughout the play. Rather than try to stop his wife's downfall, James refused to accept the problem and knowingly allowed her to use the addictive pain reliever. I think that if James would have just "swallowed his pride" and actually addressed his wife's problem and helped her stop, she could have overcome her addiction and become a constructive force in her family.

As a result of his excessive pride and parsimonious ways, James Tyrone is the main cause for the disintegration of the family. If he were to remedy these flaws early in the play, he could have helped or maybe even prevented two of the most important problems in the play, Edmund's sickness and Mary's addiction. If he were a little less miserly, he could have paid for better healthcare for his son. If James would have been less prideful, he could have helped defeat Mary's heartbreaking addiction, but then, of course, Eugene O'Neill's play would not then be a masterpiece of tragedy.

Works Cited

O'Neill, Eugene. Long Day's Journey Into Night. Yale University: Yale University press,  
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