

The Road to Thebes:
or An Unofficial Epilogue to Medea by
Euripides
Written by Spence Logan

© Spence Logan 2024

Characters:

M. (she/her)

J. (he/him)

C. (they/her/him)

A few notes from the writer:

- This play intentionally has very little punctuation and design description. Such details as well as specific optional stage directions are almost always just a shell. The purpose of this is to allow each new team who takes this play on to make their own decisions and create their own interpretation.
- There is a content warning in effect for this play for violence, adult language, and graphic imagery.
- This play runs roughly 21 minutes.
- In the original production of this play we made the decision to have the cadavers represented by two small pairs of shoes. This is a perfectly acceptable substitute if your theatre would rather not place dead children on stage.
- This play draws from the play but also the myth.

Lights up. The suggestion of a quiet county road. C stands center, a scrapper, a rogue, a traveling punk. They are holding a small shovel.

C.:

I wasn't there when it happened

But I heard it

I imagine everyone heard it somehow

I imagine the nobles sleeping soundly

I imagine beggars on the street suddenly stealing bread with
much greater ease

I suppose I imagined the gods weeping from the top of the mound
Golden tears

Tears of a calming glint for those gone

Tears of a piercing defamation for those fled

But then oh but then

I heard rumors

Rumors of not tears

But a golden chariot

A presidential motorcade of an escape

A complete and luxurious escort for the cunt with nothing left
to win

And on that day I first considered the sins of the gods

It's a terrible thing when a city falls

It's an even more terrible thing when a great city falls

A fallen city somewhat resembles a broken puzzle

A puzzle made up of all the lost pieces from bigger puzzles

In one corner there's a fire

In another an ocean

In another a circus

In the center a jobbled mess of ash and corn and clouds and
hallowed out chess pieces

And there's not a singular person on the face of the earth who
can make sense of it

Some people try

Some people say "oh if only she'd been taught the right values"

Others wander the street wailing for children they've never met

"Oh if only I had been their mother" they shriek

"Oh if only I had met him first I would have kept him" they
exclaim not understanding that when a man is named a hero he no
longer sees any value in the good

Others simply sit in their homes and wait for the noise to stop

No matter how you try, one thing is true

Corinth has fallen

Corinth has been dragged through the mud

Corinth exists in a void where all facts are known but it is not
possible for justice to be served

What do you say to a people with no authority who plead for
justice

That's what the city now faces

The question of reality and courtesy

Decorum and the accusation

How close you are and how close you actually are

We are lucky however

Because we're not in the city

We're far away

So far away it almost feels irresponsible

Its been a week

A week since several different puzzles went uncompleted

A week since four people died and two people disappeared

A week since a city has fallen

M. enters carrying a large, heavy, blood-soaked package on her back. She has been traveling for a week and wears a white cloak that doesn't even appear white anymore. It appears broken, dirty, stained, almost brown, and bloody. She is armed with a single knife.

C. (continued):

This is one of them

I won't tell you not to judge

How could you not judge

Just remember

She doesn't care

She's been traveling for a week

And she's the only one who's been carrying them

C. takes a seat in the front row of the audience, M. places the package on the ground and then sits down to rest for a few beats.

M.:

I escaped in a chariot

A glorious chariot

I had never seen anything like it

I wish I had taken full stock

But I didn't

I fell asleep

And when I awoke we were all on the ground

Not a vehicle in sight

I had a dream I was a coin

A great big coin

Shining

Newley pressed
With the ability to redirect the sun itself
I've never thought about it
But I suppose a coin actually has three sides
The two flat sides
And the center
The diameter
Who holds it all together
Both of my flat sides were pristine
So pristine that you'd think not one person alive would spend it
My diameter was strong
So strong that you'd think not one person alive could break it
But someone did
Spent and broke and spent again

At this moment, J. enters in a black cloak and hood. At first, M. does not notice him. When she finally notices him, she does not recognize him at first.

M. (continued):

A coin is a coin is a coin
And I'd heard of a man spending a coin on a shittier coin
A coin with only one side
A defective cold contemptuous coin
But I hadn't seen it
I hadn't -
I considered myself a partner of the bank
A curse is a curse is a curse is a curse

Hello sir

Do you need help

There's a town in that direction

J.:

I've been that direction

M.:

Perhaps if you try again you'll have better luck

Good day

J.:

I'm not a lucky person

M.:

I don't care

Good day

J.:

You seem tired

M.:

I am tired

J.:

Any particular reason

M.:

I've been traveling

J.:

The same

By horse

M.:

And where is this horse

Did he get tired of carrying your conversations

J.:

No it's just beyond the trees

M.:

Ah just beyond the trees

I hope he eats plenty of leaves so that when you return he owns
the ability to vomit

Good day

J.:

Where are you traveling

M.:

For gods sake man how many times do I need to say good day to
you

Good day

Good day

Good day

Good day

Good day

Why do you even stand there flapping your mouth and twiddling your thumbs

You are traveling by horse

You have daylight

Good day

J.:

I've already arrived

M.:

I'm sorry

J.:

I no longer need to travel

I've already arrived

M.:

Oh how lucky you are

Great location

Your horse must appreciate his time being wasted

A real hot destination in exchange for the galloping

A dirt road where there's only you and

She realizes, J. removes his hood

M. (continued):

No no no no no no no no no

J.:

Stop

M.:

No no no no no no no no

J:

Stop it

I'm unarmed

M.:

I'm not

She draws her knife and lunges at J. He snatches her wrist and disarms her. The knife clatters to the ground and he throws her off. He picks up the knife and M. stands. A beat.

M.:

That's my knife

J.:

Is it the knife

Alright

M. and J. (at the same time):

Will you just- Can you imagine if we-

J.:

Carry on

M.:

Will you please just go

J.:

No

I don't think I can

M. nods

M.:

Carry on

J.:

Can you imagine if we spoke

M.:

Spoke

You speak of speaking

Why you

J.:

You don't understand

M.:

You miserable servile old traitor

You lowly blind anglerfish

You accursed absolute zero

J.:

Me

You lobby these at me

You look at me and call me low

M.:

That's my assessment

You are low

Lower than worms

Lower than shit

Lower than filth

Lower than smegma

You are low

J.:

I am holding your knife by your admission

That one knife

The blade that you used to destroy everything

If I am low then you must be the god of cruelty

M.:

You spent us

And now you want us to talk

What makes you think we would ever talk

J.:

Because we've done everything else

I'll put the knife down
I don't want to fight

M.:

Prove it prove it

J. grips the knife blade and squeezes until he bleeds. He then drops it and kicks it away. It lands near the packaging and both of them just stare for a moment.

J.:

How are they

M.:

Clean

But their robes aren't
And time is setting in

J.:

Yes

I suppose it would

M.:

Three minutes

J.:

Do you mind

M.:

Please don't

J.:

I don't want the knife

I just want to sit next to them again

M. nods and J. goes and sits. Perhaps he rests his hand. A tableaux.

M.:

What do you want

J.:

I want them to rest

Properly

Why haven't you buried them yet

M.:

You dare ask me

J.:

I promise you I'm only curious

M.:

I didn't have a shovel

J.:

You didn't have a shovel

M.:

You didn't bring a shovel

At this point, if audience members are looking over at C., C. can politely wave them off or give them the "shhhh" gesture with their index finger.

J.:

You said they're clean

M.:

Yes

J.:

There was something else we could do

When you fled in the chariot it was chaos

Occupying, looting, pleading

But not many were in the palace

At least not enough who knew that generous door

Before taking the last horse in the stable

I slipped into that glistening underbelly of the palace

I fought off any other nobles

Many of them hadn't seen the grit of a fight in ten generations

I entered that hall of treasures before the city broke

And before I rode here

I snatched that heavenly cloak

He reaches into his black cloak and produces the golden fleece.

M.:

My home

I see

I hear you

They will be buried in my home

J.:

Or something else

M.:

What

Come again

J.:

It is a cloak of the gods

It is has heavenly properties

It is medicine

M.:

No no no no no no no no

J.:

Consider it

M.:

THERE IS NO MEDICINE THAT WILL CURE THEM

THEY ARE DEAD

TIME HAS SET IN

YOU KNOW NOT MY HOME OR MY PEOPLE
EVEN IN SUCCESS
THEY WOULD BE AN ABOMINATION UPON THEIR REBIRTH
YOU ARE LOW
I WILL NOT CONSIDER IT

*A brief pause, then M. sits on the ground, broken. J. Sits
across from her. A long pause passes.*

J.:
An offer then

M.:
An offer

J.:
I offer myself

M.:
Yourself
What do you mean yourself

J.:
Let me prepare them
Wash them
Clean them
Pray and speak for them
And after this, split this glistening curse down the middle
There's more than enough for a city

Let alone our own
Wrap them in this glorious resting cloak
Let them sit a moment
See if anything happens
And if nothing does
The knife is yours

He passes her the knife

M.:
You know not my home or my people
I agree
Because I know the outcome

J.:
Your confidence doesn't deter me

He takes the fleece and approaches the bundle. Then he stops.

M.:
Well

J.:
Give me a moment

M.:
You can't even look at them

J.:

I know I can

He kneels by the bundle. Then he stops. He falters. He fails.

J.:

You said they're clean

M.:

They've been ready for a week

I won't ask you to honor every procedure

The gods will hear your message through this cursed envelope

J.:

Yes

J. wraps the bloody package in the golden fleece and kneels beside it for what feels like way too long. Nothing happens. He takes several deep breaths. M. approaches behind him.

J.:

Promise me you'll bury them all the same

M.:

I promise

J.:

You need not bury me

I knew that stipulation

M.:

I'll decide after

J.:

Fair enough

Do you remember the day we sailed into the harbor of my home

M.:

We stopped at a fruit stand

J:

Yes

I remember that day

M.:

I'll never forget that day

M. kills J. and he falls. Perhaps M. catches him. M. sits. A long long moment passes.

M.:

I had a dream that I lived in a world with no banks

And instead of coins

We were all shells on a glistening beach

We would feel the passage of time through the sand

We would meet all manner of people

And each evening the ocean would wipe away the erosion
While leaving the memory of the day
And then I awoke
And wondered if I would ever comprehend the gods cruelty

C. (entering the scene again):

No

You won't

M.:

What

C.:

You won't

They don't even understand it

M.:

How can they not understand

C.:

Because the gods you know are real

But their omnipotence is not

They can alter the cosmos

But they are not imperishable

They are immortal

But suffer from jealousy, love, pettiness, and the will to
succeed in the same way humans do

And such things lead to madness

M.:

Then what's the point of any of this
If the arbiters of the universe don't understand
What's the point of us people
It's just endless erosion and then what

C.:

It stops

Sound cue: Guitar instrumental of "Cherry Wine" by Hozier. Runs through the end of the play.

M.:

What

C.:

That's all
It stops
And you do the one thing a god can't
You stop
You float in the moment
You cease to be more or less than any version of yourself
And finally
Wonderfully
Time forgets
People forget

Your sum passes beyond all recognition
Your brain takes you to that beach
And then you stop
In that feeling
I know it's scary
But there are ways it can't be scary

M.:
How on earth could it not be scary

C.:
Simple
You earned it
Now you return it

C. trades the shovel for the knife.

C.:
That's it

M.:
That seems woefully simple

C.:
Woefully simple solutions are often derived from deeply
convoluted problems
It doesn't take a god to know that

C. exits. A moment.

M.:

Alright

I will

I'll bury them all

Part of the fleece for each

His horse will take me far

To the end of the earth

Where I'll live

Where I'll have a house on the beach

Where I'll see everyone again

And treat every day like a new lifetime

She begins to dig.

END OF PLAY