

Oedipus

A Short One Act Play

by

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Oedipus

The Characters

*Narrator

*King Laius

Jocasta

*The Oracle

*Guard 1

*Shepherd

*Shepherd's Wife

Oedipus

*Manos

*Dragos

*Guard 2

*Guard 3

*The Sphinx

*Teresias

* These parts could be shared among the cast. One person could play 2 or more parts. Some male characters could be played by females

Oedipus

Introduction:

This play is based on the Greek myth and could be performed in a 'double billing' with the author's play, 'Antigone'.

Scene 1-The Palace of Thebes

The stage is empty.

Laius enters R holding a goblet. He crosses L and drinks wine.

Laius: I cannot rest; all I do is seek solace in drinking more and more wine.

Jocasta enters R carrying a new born child in her arms. She crosses RC. Laius has his back to her.

Jocasta: Why do you not rejoice in the birth of your heir?

Laius: My mind is in turmoil. I fear for the child and the future of Thebes.

Jocasta: You should have nothing to fear. Thebes is strong under your leadership. Why should it not be strong under the future reign of your son?

Laius: We must seek the advice of the Oracle.

Jocasta: But, why?

Laius: *(turning on her)* Questions! Questions! Why do you ask so many? I feel we must obtain the blessing of Apollo on the birth of our child.

Jocasta: I'm sure the gods are rejoicing his birth. Why shouldn't they?

Laius: *(turning away from her)* I'm not so sure. We shall go to Delphi in the morning.

Lights down

Scene Two –The Temple at Delphi

The stage is bare of furniture. The Oracle stands UC with his back to the audience and with his hands held high making an offering to Apollo.

Laius and Jocasta, carrying the baby in her arms, enter DR.

The Oracle turns to them.

Oracle: What brings you here King Laius?

Laius: I'm concerned about the birth of our child. I've had strange dreams about him.

Jocasta: Huh! Your dreams have been fuelled by too much wine.

Laius: Jocasta!

Oracle: Are you not troubled by the prophecy?

Jocasta: Prophecy? What prophecy?

Laius: Be quiet woman! Please continue.

Oracle: Did you not know of the curse upon this boy child?

Laius: We know nothing about it. No one has mentioned a prophecy or a curse, but I had a feeling all was not as it seemed.

Jocasta: A curse? How ridiculous.

Oracle: I assure you it is true. It is said that he will seek to kill his father and marry his mother! You must, of course, appease the Gods by taking steps to prevent this from happening.

Laius: (aghast and slowly crossing DL) I must seek appeasement.

Jocasta: How could the child, my child, marry me? (*Turning to Laius*) And why would he kill you? It is you who has cursed my son! Your wild dreams and speculations have angered the Gods!

Oracle: Remember where you are my queen. Do not incur Apollo's wrath!

Laius: (*Turning on Jocasta*) Also remember whom you are addressing! I'm the King of Thebes. Do not forget that Jocasta.

Jocasta: And I hold in my arms the future King of Thebes. Do not forget that.

Laius: If you continue in this manner you'll have nothing more to do with the child!

Jocasta: You will never take my child from me!

Oracle: Please, please I must insist that you both behave in the proper manner. I can do nothing more. You must hope and pray to the Gods that the child shall not cause you any harm my lord.

Jocasta: How could you possibly fear this beautiful child?

Laius: Its beauty hides the curse! Come, we must return to Thebes.

He crosses DR and exits followed by Jocasta

The Oracle turns to make another offering, as the lights go down

Scene 3

The Palace at Thebes

The stage is bare of furniture. Laius enters R and crosses to C. He sighs deeply and strokes his brow and face.

Jocasta enters R

Jocasta: My son sleeps. (*Sarcastically*) I'm sure he will not seek to harm you.

Laius: If you continue to bait me, harm will come your way!

Jocasta falls at his feet

Jocasta: Oh please, I love him so much; you cannot make my son an orphan!

Laius: In order to protect the Theban dynasty, the child shall be banished from my kingdom!

Jocasta: (*on her knees*) No! I beg of you please do not do this.

Laius: Enough! The child is no longer mine or yours!

Jocasta: He shall always be mine!

Laius crosses DR and calls

Laius: Guard!

Guard 1 enters DR and bows

Laius: Bring the child to me.

The Guard bows and exits DR

Jocasta cries out and attempts to follow Guard 1, but Laius grabs her and she hammers his chest with her fists.

Laius and Jocasta freeze as lights go down and a Spot comes up on Narrator RC

Narrator: Laius has the infant's ankles pinned together and gives orders for it to be sent from Thebes. A servant leaves the child on a ledge in the mountains. A shepherd attending his sheep hears the baby's cries and takes the child home to the shepherd's poor surroundings.

Lights down

Scene 4 - A Shepherd's hut.

Lights up. There is a rustic chair at LC upon which the Shepherd's wife sits holding the child which is wrapped in a shawl. The shepherd stands at C

Shepherd: Should we keep the child?

Wife: Much as I love the boy, we've no right to keep him.

Shepherd: But he's obviously been abandoned and you've always craved another child ever since our own son was taken from us.

Wife: You forget our son died because we couldn't afford to feed him.

Shepherd: But that was long ago.

Wife: We are forever struggling to make ends meet. (*She fondles the shawl*) This shawl is of fine quality. He's obviously a nobleman's son. I don't want the stress of bringing him up and the possibility of handing him over to his rightful parents.

Shepherd: You talk about possibilities. As I've said he's obviously been abandoned by his parents. I'm thinking of your happiness as well as my own. We deserve to have this child.

Wife: The child needs the care we can't give him.

Shepherd: What about the love we could shower upon him?

She stands and hands her husband the child.

Wife: You are a fine man and I know you'll make a wonderful father but much as it hurts me, we must take the practical course; go to Corinth and find a good family who'd be able to care for him properly.

Shepherd: I've always craved a son.

Wife: I know my love and I'm deeply sorry. Please take him with you and go quickly.

The Shepherd is at first reluctant to go, but he shakes his head and exits DR with the child. The Wife buries her head in her hands and weeps uncontrollably and exits quickly L.

The Narrator enters UR and crosses to DC

Narrator: The shepherd learns from a soothsayer named Teresias that King Polibus and Queen Merope of Corinth would gladly adopt a child. The shepherd takes the child to the royal couple. The shepherd and his wife are rewarded and everyone appears to be happy. The child is named Oedipus, which means swollen feet, caused by the earlier act of pinning. As an adolescent, conflict enters Oedipus's life.

The Narrator exits DR as the Lights go down

Scene 5 - The Palace at Corinth

The stage is bare of furniture.

Oedipus enters R. He has a slight limp. He crosses C as Manos enters DR

Manos: You are an oddball, Oedipus. You do not look a bit like your Mother or Father.

Oedipus: Manos, why do you continue to insult me?

Manos (*laughing*): Hobble home to your parents Oedipus!

Oedipus draws his sword.

Oedipus: I could have you hanged for your insults Manos, but I'd prefer to deal with you myself.

Manos: I meant no offence to our King and Queen. (*He draws his sword*), but as for you, you're just a mongrel!

Oedipus: You're the dog Manos and a mangy one at that!

Oedipus lunges at him and their swords clash.

Dragos the High Priest enters R

Dragos: Stop! Lower your weapons! Manos you forget that Oedipus is a skilled fighter. Unless you wish your screams to ring through the Palace, I would advise you to withdraw and leave.

Manos: I'm as skilled as he and I would beat him. Yes, I shall leave, but I make no apology to you Oedipus.

Dragos: You're becoming a bore. Just go without any passing comment.

Manos is reluctant and is about to approach Oedipus.

Dragos: I said go!

Manus stops and quickly exits L

Dragos: Manos is a fool and a hothead! Try not to be coaxed by him. You're a far better individual.

Oedipus: Manos remarks suggest that I'm not the king and queen's son?

Dragos: Ignore him. He's a jealous oaf and he envies your skills. Don't lose your dignity; you must never forget that the king and queen adore you. Forget this incident, my prince.

Oedipus: But the dreams I've had concern me and have placed doubt in my mind concerning my parentage.

Dragos: You must learn to dispense with such nonsense and dwell in the light of day. Such preoccupation will cause you great anxiety.

Oedipus: I appreciate your concern, Dragos.

Oedipus exits L. Dragos watches him and smiles before he exits R

Lights down and up on Oedipus who enters from UL in dim light. He crosses slowly to DC. He shakes and scratches his head.

Dragos enters DR

Oedipus: I'm so restless and my dreams haunt me? Am I losing my mind? Do I belong here in Corinth?

Dragos: Sleep my prince; do not concern yourself with prophetic dreams and nightmares. You must accept who you are. Corinth is your home.

Oedipus ignores him and exits UL. Dragos watches him, shakes his head and exits R

The Narrator enters

Narrator: Oedipus ventures outside the walls of Corinth in the hope his mind clears. He travels far in search of...well, something he does not understand. He stops at a crossroads.

Lights down and up into the next scene

Scene 7: The Crossroads

The stage is bare of furniture

Enter Oedipus DR. As he speaks Guard 1, enters R and listens from a distance.

Oedipus: My head is bursting! The voices I hear are a cacophony of noise. I cannot return to Corinth in my present state of mind. What is to become of me?

Laius and Guards 2 and 3 enter R

Laius: Who are you?

Oedipus: My name is Oedipus.

Laius: Oedipus? You are not from Thebes. Where are you from?

Oedipus: Thebes? Why, no.

Guard 1: I heard him talking to himself my lord. I'd say he's either drunk or of unsound mind.

Oedipus: My mind is troubled, but I am neither drunk nor unsound.

Laius: Talking to oneself is a matter of concern young man. Perhaps you prefer your own answers to your questions, since I'm certain none other would be bothered.

He and the other Guards laugh

Oedipus: I do not seek to be the brunt of your humour sir!

Laius: A challenging response young man. Next you will be threatening me.

Laius chuckles and he and the Guards unsheathe their swords. Oedipus draws his.

Guard 2: The odds are in our favour young fool! One against four is somewhat unhealthy don't you think?

Guard 3: We'll have your eyes for the crows!

Laius: And I want you skewered and slowly cut into pieces for the jackals!

