

Waking Nightmare
The Myth of Phaedra Retold
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CHARACTERS:

PHAEDRA - A woman, married off, 20s-30s

THESEUS - Her husband, 60+

HIPPOLYTUS - His son, the same age as PHAEDRA, 20s-30s

OENONE - A personification of PHAEDRA's mind, ageless

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE:

This is a play based mainly on movement. The sections of dialogue are punctuations, but the majority of this play should be focused on movement suited to whatever the director's vision is. Regardless, the movement should flow into the dialogue and the dream sequences seamlessly.

The other thing that I must stress is that any of these characters can be played by any gender as long as the age ranges are respected.

PUNCTUATION GUIDE:

Any - at the end of a line indicates the continuation of a thought that gets cut off by another character.

A / indicates a line overlapping wherein the next character to speak should begin their next line.

A set of () around a word before a - indicates the possible continuation of a thought should the cutoff not happen right away.

Waking Nightmare

SETTING: War in some time. A hollow place.

AT RISE: We are witness to a dream.

The (First) Dream

The light is passionate and haunting; up-tempo instrumental music swells.

PHAEDRA and HIPPOLYTUS enter in a fever dream: the unfolding of a friendship turning into something more.

Laughter, wanting, need, but overwhelming it all is lust.

At the pinnacle of the dream when the passion is at its highest, HIPPOLYTUS is on top of PHAEDRA and all of a sudden everything freezes, except her.

OENONE's voice is heard all around her.

OENONE:

It's not real.

(And just like that PHAEDRA is alone and turns on the floor, sleeping fitfully. She suddenly sits up, awake and gasping for air. She takes a few moments to slow her breathing as OENONE comes closer to her.)

OENONE:

You can't do what you're thinking about doing.

PHAEDRA:

I know.

OENONE:

You know it's wrong.

PHAEDRA:

I know!

OENONE:

Nothing good can come of this.

PHAEDRA:

I. Know.

OENONE:

Then why are you still thinking about his body?

PHAEDRA:

Ohhh don't you have somewhere to be?

(She moves away. OENONE smiles.)

I - I don't know how to handle this.

OENONE:

You can't control your dreams, Phaedra.
But you can't ignore them either.

PHAEDRA:

The merry-go-round goes around and around -

OENONE:

Don't be so cavalier, this is serious.

PHAEDRA:

Ok then, what am I supposed to do?

OENONE:

I'm not sure if there is anything that can be done.

PHAEDRA:

And so we're back to the beginning...

OENONE:

Can you remember when it started?

PHAEDRA:

I remember everything.

OENONE:

Then think back.

PHAEDRA:

There is no point.

OENONE:

You know that's not true.

PHAEDRA:

Ok then, why?
Honestly, tell me why.

OENONE:

You need to feel it again so that you can understand.

PHAEDRA:

Won't that only make it worse?

OENONE:

Perhaps.
But you won't know until you try.

PHAEDRA:

You are impossible.

(Beat. A reluctant breath.)

(Ok, fine.)

(She closes her eyes, a preparation.)

OENONE:

What's the first thing?

PHAEDRA:

I was given away...
I was given to Theseus.

(THESEUS appears.)

That was how it went.

We were all given away, just waiting for our time.
It was an inevitability.

OENONE:

But before that?

PHAEDRA:

I didn't know him before that.

OENONE:

But he existed. Hippolytus existed.

PHAEDRA:

I know they existed, I just didn't know (them yet) -

OENONE:

The world does not just exist inside your head.

PHAEDRA:

I am aware.

OENONE:

Sometimes I wonder.

(PHAEDRA looks away.)

This is not just your story.

PHAEDRA:

I am not saying it's - !

OENONE:

But that is how you're acting.

PHAEDRA:

I know it's not just my story, I'm not - you make me sound like I'm self obsessed.

OENONE:

Aren't you?

(They exchange a look.)

PHAEDRA:

I just...

I don't know how to tell their story.

I wasn't there before, I didn't even know Hippolytus existed when I was promised to Theseus.

OENONE:

Nobody is asking you to tell it.

PHAEDRA:

Then what do you (want from me) - ?

OENONE:

Just...let it happen.

PHAEDRA:

What? How do - ?

(OENONE points. HIPPOLYTUS has entered and is standing opposite THESEUS. PHAEDRA moves to her and they watch.)

OENONE:

Just watch.

Father & Son

THESEUS and HIPPOLYTUS turn to face each other.

A father and son play.

The father leaves and comes back.

Each time he is more beaten, ragged, less spry, but starched.

Whereas the boy - a young boy wanting to be like his father slowly grows up, wanting to be like him less; he's more rigid, angry, introverted.

Distance. Hurt. Absence. Formality.

The death of a mother and wife and the need of each other that neither of them can express. A new beginning and an argument -

and HIPPOLYTUS is gone while THESEUS slowly drifts in the opposite direction.

PHAEDRA:

Is that really how it happened?

OENONE:

What do you think?

PHAEDRA:

...

ONEONE:

It doesn't matter if that is exactly what happened, that is what you saw, what you see.
It's written all over them.
Can you deny that?

PHAEDRA:

No, it's painfully obvious.

OENONE:

That was the beginning.
Before you.

PHAEDRA:

Why would you show me that?

OENONE:

There are things you need to know in order to see more clearly.
You can open your eyes as wide as possible, but there are still things behind you that you won't see.

PHAEDRA:

So in order to understand I have to...turn around?

OENONE:

Exactly.
So now that you know all that happened before you can start off at your beginning.

PHAEDRA:

The day of the wedding.

OENONE:

The day of the wedding.

(PHAEDRA closes her eyes; OENONE hands her flowers as she opens them.)

How did you feel?

PHAEDRA:

I was happy.

The Wedding(ish)

THESEUS enters in wedding attire.

PHAEDRA sees him, almost as if for the first time and is thrilled.

She is half his age, but it doesn't seem to matter.

He is madly in love with her and she with him.

They smile at each other before -

OENONE:

You know that's not how it was.

(The scene fades.)

That's what you wanted people to see.

PHAEDRA:

It's all I knew how to do.

OENONE:

How did you really feel?

PHAEDRA:

I - I can't.

OENONE:

It's just us.

PHAEDRA:

I really can't.

OENONE:

If you don't you won't be able to let it go.

PHAEDRA:

I know, but - but if I say it out loud it's real.

OENONE:

But it's already real.

(Beat.)

PHAEDRA:

I - I was terrified.

(OENONE takes her hand.)

The Wedding

THESEUS enters in wedding attire.

PHAEDRA sees him, almost as if for the first time.

She looks to OENONE who gives her an "it's going to be ok" look.

She is half his age, but it doesn't seem to matter to him; he is madly in love with her and though she is obviously terrified, he doesn't notice.

They perform a simple handfasting ceremony.

THESEUS extends his hand and pulls her to him.

They dance a waltz, boring PHAEDRA almost to tears.

HIPPOLYTUS enters and stands across the room, watching them.

As soon as PHAEDRA sees him, time stops.

She steps out of the dance and walks toward him.

HIPPOLYTUS unfreezes and walks towards her.

They have their moment, their dance; a moment of longing that only happened in their heads.

At the end they fade back to their original positions and reality snaps back.

They can't keep their eyes off of each other, but suddenly HIPPOLYTUS storms off.

The waltz ends and THESEUS kisses her goodbye.

She wipes the spot almost unconsciously.

PHAEDRA still feels HIPPOLYTUS' presence though he has left the room.

OENONE:

How can you ignore that?

PHAEDRA:

I don't think I can anymore...

(Upbeat wedding dance music starts to play.)

OENONE:

And then there is this bit which you never seem to remember -

(She pulls her over to a corner and they watch as HIPPOLYTUS and THESEUS enter in the middle of a conversation.)

HIPPOLYTUS:

You're not listening to me!

THESEUS:

Hippolytus/, please -

HIPPOLYTUS:

You can't do this!

THESEUS:

It's too late.

You were there, you were a part of the ceremony -

HIPPOLYTUS:

Then get it annulled!

THESEUS:

Hippolytus.

HIPPOLYTUS:

Please.

THESEUS:

Why is this coming up now?

HIPPOLYTUS:

I - I've just had time to think about it, really think about it.

THESEUS:

Well it's not yours to think about.

HIPPOLYTUS:

But you said that / I could have a say in this -

THESEUS:

I know what I said, but you know this is my decision.

HIPPOLYTUS:

But you promised me - !

THESEUS:

I can't keep having this conversation -

HIPPOLYTUS:

Father.
Please.

(He finally looks at his son and sees the pain on his face. A rare softening.)

THESEUS:

My son.

(He pulls him into an embrace. This does not happen often, if at all.)

I understand.

It can't be easy for you; I know she'll never replace your mother, but -

HIPPOLYTUS:

That's not -

THESEUS:

But I love her, I do; that's all that matters now.

(An attempt to be jovial.)

Come on, don't you want your old man to be happy?

(HIPPOLYTUS can only stare at him.)

It'll be ok.

It will, I promise you.

Now go, enjoy the party.

(THESEUS pats him on the shoulder and exits. HIPPOLYTUS abruptly exits; he is conflicted, pained, not totally honest with himself or his father. PHAEDRA's eyes follow the direction in which HIPPOLYTUS exited.)

PHAEDRA:

I had forgotten that I heard that.

ONEONE:

I know.

(Beat.)

I know what you're thinking.

PHAEDRA:

You can't possibly.

OENONE:

Well you know that's not true.

Come on, Phaedra.

Can't you see the look on his face?

Can't you see his broken heart?

PHAEDRA:

Shut up!

You don't -

You don't know what's in his mind or in his heart so don't even presume - !

OENONE:

I'm not blind.

Neither are you.

(Beat.)

PHAEDRA:

Is it really that obvious?

OENONE:

It is.

But you can't act on it.

PHAEDRA:

I can't act on it...

OENONE:

He's your step son.

PHAEDRA:

Don't call him that.

OENONE:

But it's true.

Can you deny it?

(Beat.)

PHAEDRA:

No.

OENONE:

Then you can't.

PHAEDRA:

Then what is the point of reminding me of all of this?

Of showing me these things?

Do you understand how confusing this is?

How *painful* this is?

OENONE:

Life is pain.

(A long breath.)

PHAEDRA:

I know.

(She sits. OENONE touches her shoulder and exits. PHAEDRA turns to say something else to her, but she is gone.)

A BEAUTIFUL, DARK, TERRIFYING THOUGHT¹

“I am trapped.”

(PHAEDRA takes a deep breath and drifts away.)

The Routine

THESEUS enters in his underclothes.

He carries his starched pants, shirt, completely shined shoes, and moves through his routine of dressing himself.

This becomes a series of movements that repeats over and over that show how regimented life is.

PHAEDRA drifts in and out of this routine.

HIPPOLYTUS appears in corners and watches.

The whole thing moves as if it's a machine several times over and over.

Folding. Undressing. Redressing. On and on.

You can see PHAEDRA and HIPPOLYTUS tiring and THESEUS thriving.

Suddenly OENONE enters and hands THESEUS a letter, a jam in the movement.

The machine has stopped.

PHAEDRA:

No...

(THESEUS is packing a bag. He is shipping off. PHAEDRA is panic-stricken. She knows what will happen if he leaves. HIPPOLYTUS enters unseen and watches the exchange like he always does.)

PHAEDRA:

Please, there has to be another way -

¹ A choreographed movement of suicidal intention. This repeats several times throughout the play, getting more severe every time and is always referred to as “A Beautiful, Dark, Terrifying Thought”.

THESEUS:

Phaedra, love we talked about this -

PHAEDRA:

But you already served!

THESEUS:

One's service is never really done.

PHAEDRA:

You were wounded in action, they can't just -

THESEUS:

It's my duty to -

PHAEDRA:

What about your duty to your family?

THESEUS:

Phaedra -

PHAEDRA:

Don't we mean anything to you?

THESEUS:

You and Hippolytus are my world.

PHAEDRA:

Then stay.

(HIPPOLYTUS leaves.)

Please...

THESEUS:

It's just for this one mission, my love; just one small mission and I'll be home.

PHAEDRA:

How long?

THESEUS:

Too long for me to be without you.

PHAEDRA:

Don't do that...

THESEUS:

I'm sorry.

I'm sorry I have to do this to you and Hippolytus, but I'll be home soon.

I promise.

PHAEDRA:

I wish I believed you.

THESEUS:

Hey.

(He pulls her chin up to look at him.)

I promise.

PHAEDRA:

Ok.

THESEUS:

That's my girl.

(He kisses her forehead and moves to leave. She unconsciously wipes the spot, numb and now alone.)

A BEAUTIFUL, DARK, TERRIFYING THOUGHT

"If he leaves the worst could happen...or the best."

(PHAEDRA is facing upstage, unaware that HIPPOLYTUS has entered. He lays down across the floor. PHAEDRA turns and sees him, suddenly startled. For a moment she doesn't know what to do and panics, adjusting herself and trying to think of something to say that doesn't sound completely ridiculous. The whole exchange is weirdly formal and awkward.)

PHAEDRA:

Hippolytus.

HIPPOLYTUS:

Phaedra.

PHAEDRA:

Still no word from him.

HIPPOLYTUS:

I know.

PHAEDRA:

He'll be home soon!

HIPPOLYTUS:

You don't need to do that.

PHAEDRA:

Do what - ?

HIPPOLYTUS:

It's ok.

PHAEDRA:

But I just wanted to (help make you feel better) -

HIPPOLYTUS:

Really, don't panic.

Because I can see that you're panicking and I can't -
I'm not trying to be difficult, but I can't handle it right now.

PHAEDRA:

I'm sorry.

HIPPOLYTUS:

It's ok.

(Beat.)

You must miss him.

PHAEDRA:

I do.

HIPPOLYTUS:

I do, too.

PHAEDRA:

Of course.

HIPPOLYTUS:

Why wouldn't we?

PHAEDRA:

(Searching.)

How are you...otherwise?

HIPPOLYTUS:

(Finding true joy at the ridiculous question.)

Otherwise?

PHAEDRA:

Oh I just (wanted to change the subject) -

HIPPOLYTUS:

Are you trying small talk on me?

PHAEDRA:

I'm so sorry I'll just go -

HIPPOLYTUS:

Phaedra, Phaedra - I'm fine.

I am.

How are you, *otherwise*?

PHAEDRA:

Oh, um - I...have been getting a lot of reading done.

(They both laugh at this. A release.)

HIPPOLYTUS:

It's quiet, don't you think?
Around here.

PHAEDRA:

I hadn't noticed.

HIPPOLYTUS:

Really?
I did.
It's almost deafening.

PHAEDRA:

You need distraction.

HIPPOLYTUS:

What?

PHAEDRA:

Oh, I just - sometimes noise is the best distraction.
And then when it's gone you can't help but focus on the thing you were trying to avoid
focusing on.

HIPPOLYTUS:

Huh.
I never thought of it that way.

PHAEDRA:

Nobody notices until you really think about it.

HIPPOLYTUS:

And what would I be distracting myself from?

PHAEDRA:

You tell me.

(Beat. Oh no.)

I mean, if you want, I didn't mean - sorry.

HIPPOLYTUS:

No, it's - you know, you apologize a lot.

PHAEDRA:

Do I?

HIPPOLYTUS:

A. Lot.

PHAEDRA:

I didn't realize -
I'm so -

(HIPPOLYTUS points at her - gotcha!)

I don't know how to *not* apologize, I guess.

HIPPOLYTUS:

Well you haven't done anything wrong.

PHAEDRA:

Let me know if I do, will you?

HIPPOLYTUS:

Heh, I will.

PHAEDRA:

I was always just - I was raised to apologize, you know?

HIPPOLYTUS:

I don't know.

PHAEDRA:

I guess you wouldn't know, would you.

HIPPOLYTUS:

I mean, I basically raised myself, so...

PHAEDRA:

I'm sor -
Ah, I can't stop!

HIPPOLYTUS:

Heh, it's ok, really.
It's endearing.

PHAEDRA:

Oh, thanks.

HIPPOLYTUS:

I mean it.

PHAEDRA:

Yeah, but I just - I was raised to believe I had to apologize for how I was born and I really - I don't think I need to do that anymore.
I mean I shouldn't.
I don't know...

HIPPOLYTUS:

No, I don't think you need to apologize for anything, honestly.

PHAEDRA:

Thanks for saying that.

HIPPOLYTUS:

Sure.
I mean, I do mean it, so...

PHAEDRA:

My grandfather was famous, did you know that?

HIPPOLYTUS:

I think I did, yeah.

PHAEDRA:

Well I was saved for a *war hero* because of that.
Just because of my blood I was promised to the Great Theseus.
But I had to make sure that I was good enough, nobody ever let me forget that...
Blood wasn't everything, no matter how golden it was.
So I had to make sure that I was worthy, and being worthy meant being subservient and apologizing goes with that.
I always hated it, I always resented it.
But I never said anything to anyone about it because who knows what would've -
That's not how I was raised.
And no matter how hard I try I can't get that way of thinking out of my head.
And I try every single day.
Some days it's almost so much that I want to...

(She wipes her eye subtly and takes a breath. HIPPOLYTUS just watches her.)

I've uh...never told anyone that before.

HIPPOLYTUS:

Really?

(She shakes her head.)

Thanks for telling me then.

PHAEDRA:

That was a lot to just dump on someone though, so I don't know...
I shouldn't have said anything, but it -

HIPPOLYTUS:

I'm glad you told me.
Really.
Seems like a lot to carry for so long.

(She looks up at him and smiles.)

PHAEDRA:

Yeah...
Yeah, it really was.
Thank you.

HIPPOLYTUS:

You're welcome.

(Beat.)

You know I wanted to be him so badly, or be just like him.
Theseus, I mean.

PHAEDRA:

You did?

HIPPOLYTUS:

I did.

PHAEDRA:

Wow, I - you don't seem the type.
No offense -

HIPPOLYTUS:

Oh, I will take that as a compliment, trust me.

(PHAEDRA smiles.)

He was just so brave, strong, what a "man" should be.
And I thought that if I could become that maybe he'd be there.
So I waited for him.
Every time he shipped off, I waited like a puppy at the door.
And I believed his promises of "one more mission" and I kept just...waiting and waiting
and waiting for my father to come home and then I just got tired of disappointment and
caring and waiting so damn much...
So I stopped.
Just like that.
I was barely a kid when I figured it all out.

And I've never told anyone *that* before.

So.

I guess we're even now.

(Pause.)

PHAEDRA:

Do you resent me?

HIPPOLYTUS:

Whoa, what?

Where did that come from?

PHAEDRA:

I just need to know.

HIPPOLYTUS:

Why would I - ?

PHAEDRA:

Because I - just tell me.

HIPPOLYTUS:

I - no, of course not.

PHAEDRA:

Are you sure?

HIPPOLYTUS:

I don't resent *you*, no.

PHAEDRA:

But?

HIPPOLYTUS:

But, what?

PHAEDRA:

There was another thought in there.

HIPPOLYTUS:

There wasn't, honestly.
There's nothing else to say.

(She looks at him.)

There's no - !
It's nothing.
Really.
It's nothing.

(Small beat.)

Don't worry about it.

(Another small beat. He tries not to look at her.)

It's - you're just so young and he -

PHAEDRA:

Ah!
So you do resent me.

HIPPOLYTUS:

No!
I could never -
No you're -
This isn't your fault.

PHAEDRA:

I could have said no.

HIPPOLYTUS:

Could you really have though?

PHAEDRA:

Wow.
I - No, I guess not.

HIPPOLYTUS:

So how could I blame you for something that was clearly not your choice?

PHAEDRA:

But I could be worse off!

So many girls in my situation are given to horrors of men and I - I'm lucky.

Theseus is kind.

He hasn't asked me to -

He is kind.

HIPPOLYTUS:

But do you love him?

(Oh no.)

Oh I'm sorry, I -

PHAEDRA:

It's ok.

HIPPOLYTUS:

I shouldn't have asked you that, it's not -

PHAEDRA:

No, no, I - honestly?

I don't know.

I'm sure I will, but right now - it's just still new.

I mean, how can you really love someone you don't know?

HIPPOLYTUS:

I don't know.

(Long Beat.)

Do you think you know me?

(Yikes!)

PHAEDRA:

I don't know.

(They sit in silence for a moment.)

But I'd like to.

(Dear gods...)

HIPPOLYTUS:

So would I.

PHAEDRA:

Good!

Good.

HIPPOLYTUS:

My favorite color is purple.

PHAEDRA:

So is mine.

(They laugh.)

HIPPOLYTUS:

It begins.

(She breathes him in. He breathes her in. OENONE appears behind them and watches, terribly annoyed at the situation.)

Friendship/Moments of Beautiful Mundanity

Thus begins a series of moments.

Small moments of getting to know each other over a passage of time - the development of an actual friendship.

Slowly they get closer and closer as time moves on.

The feeling of joy is overwhelming them both.

Several times they stop the movement to have innocuous conversations.

For example they could (and really should) begin with the following:

"It's going to rain today."

“Did you put extra spice in this?”

*“Do you ever think of the origin of words like ‘spoon?’”
and so forth.*

There should be at least three moments of this conversation sprinkled throughout this movement sequence, but there can be as many as is necessary to tell their story.

They should be brief, but important.

Once the final conversation has been had and when things seem to be at the pinnacle of joy, and once they realize with terror that new feelings are coming over them

OENONE walks behind them, sets a letter down, and exits.

The moment slowly melts away.

(THESEUS enters from the opposite side of the stage and stays far from PHAEDRA and HIPPOLYTUS, not looking at either of them, but out across the audience. PHAEDRA and HIPPOLYTUS open the letter and read it together. Military drums begin to play softly.)

THESEUS:

Dear Madam,

We regret to inform you -

(A sharp breath. PHAEDRA shuts her eyes.)

- missing in action and for the time being is presumed -

(They grasp at each other.)

- will continue correspondence if any changes arise or if he is found.

Our deepest sym -

(PHAEDRA crumples up the letter and throws it across the room, sinking to the floor as THESEUS exits. She cries into his shoulder and HIPPOLYTUS slowly puts his arms around her, staying there in that moment for a long while. As they pull apart they look at each other, breathing together.)

OENONE/HIPPOLYTUS:

Phaedra...

Grief/Connection

PHAEDRA pulls away.

She and HIPPOLYTUS both experience building moments of grief over the loss of THESEUS.

At the height of the grief PHAEDRA turns to HIPPOLYTUS and pulls him into a deep kiss.

He is stunned and pulls away.

They both experience regret, sadness, but just wanting the comfort of the other.

After a moment he gives in, wanting her just as much as she wants him.

They are in love with each other in this moment.

They are entwined in the harried nature of it all until the moment when they connect in that most intense way.

Time stops.

When it is over, after a moment of stillness HIPPOLYTUS sits up, confused, upset, terrified, and abruptly leaves PHAEDRA in ignorant bliss.

(OENONE enters. PHAEDRA sits up, smiling. She opens her mouth to speak and OENONE slaps her.)

PHAEDRA:

Why would you do that?

OENONE:

I told you.

I told you you couldn't -

PHAEDRA:

I don't always have to listen to you.

OENONE:

And when has that ever helped you?

PHAEDRA:

Can't you just be happy for me?

Just once -

OENONE:

This was a mistake and you know it.

PHAEDRA:

It was not a mistake - it was *meant* to happen!

OENONE:

Just because it was meant to happen doesn't mean that it should.

PHAEDRA:

That makes no sense!

OENONE:

Neither do you!
You were with your *step son* -

PHAEDRA:

I told you not to call him that!

OENONE:

It doesn't matter what you call him!
He is your husband's son and you have just opened a door to a world of problems that you might not be able to solve by apologizing.

PHAEDRA:

He doesn't think I need to apologize.

OENONE:

He's not going to be the one to save you if this blows up on you.

PHAEDRA:

Well neither will you.

OENONE:

What does that mean?

PHAEDRA:

You're never there for me outside of this room.
You come in here and remind me of pain I wanted to forget, I tried to forget and you force me to just know it all the time!
All of the time it's in my head gnawing at my brain and I just want it to end because it's too much and then you tell me that I have to remember!
Why?!
I don't want to do it anymore; it's all for nothing!

You have done *nothing* for me except hurt me over and over again.
At least he wants to be there, to listen, to...
You're a burden on me.
You always have been.

(Ringing silence.)

OENONE:

I know what I am.
Maybe someday you will, too.

(She exits.)

A BEAUTIFUL, DARK, TERRIFYING THOUGHT

The thought begins, but PHAEDRA stops herself before the end. She breathes through it. She climbs out. She is ok for now.

(HIPPOLYTUS re-enters. PHAEDRA is delighted to see him and runs to him, but he stops her.)

PHAEDRA:

Hey!

HIPPOLYTUS:

I'm sorry.

PHAEDRA:

Sorry?
There is nothing to be sorry for.

HIPPOLYTUS:

You're my step-mother and / we shouldn't have tried to be friends.

PHAEDRA:

Oh, don't call me that - !

HIPPOLYTUS:

The fact of the matter is my father -

PHAEDRA:

Your father is gone.

HIPPOLYTUS:

Missing in Action isn't dead!

PHAEDRA:

You're kidding yourself if you think that's true.

HIPPOLYTUS:

He may come back!

PHAEDRA:

He won't.

(He stares at her and then the floor.)

Hippolytus, what happened between us was -

HIPPOLYTUS:

It should never happen again.

PHAEDRA:

You don't mean that.

HIPPOLYTUS:

I don't know!

My father might be dead and (we did what we did) -

PHAEDRA:

Did you not feel what I did?

Did you not feel time stop?

HIPPOLYTUS:

I need to go.

PHAEDRA:

Hippolytus...

HIPPOLYTUS:

You know I thought I could trust you.
I've never (done what we did) -
I thought you were actually -
I can't believe you took advantage of me like this.

PHAEDRA:

Do not put this all on me!
I've never (done what we did) - either.
You wanted me just as much as I wanted you.
Hippolytus, I think I lo -

(He starts to leave.)

Don't walk away from me.

HIPPOLYTUS:

I can't - I can't do this.
I'm sorry.

PHAEDRA:

Coward.

(This hits him like a truck. He grabs her, holding her face inches from his. They almost succumb to another moment of passion, but he abruptly lets her go, running out and leaving her to sink into the darkness.)

A BEAUTIFUL, DARK, TERRIFYING THOUGHT

An anxiety attack. Stupid Head, Stupid Heart, Stupid Gut, Stupid Lust. A remedy, a calm sinking and then...numbness.

(OENONE enters. She does not help her, but she watches.)

OENONE:

There is nothing that can save you now, Phaedra.

PHAEDRA:

No, he won't *hurt* me.
He needs me.

OENONE:

You are kidding yourself.

PHAEDRA:

I thought you left...

OENONE:

You need to get out of here.

PHAEDRA:

No, I can fix this - I can fix everything!
Once Hippolytus calms down -

THESEUS (off):

My love!

PHAEDRA:

Theseus...

OENONE:

Phaedra, it's time to go.

PHAEDRA:

No.
Oh god, no, no, no -

OENONE:

Run.
Phaedra, run now, please.

PHAEDRA:

No.
No, no, I can -
I can fix it -

OENONE:

Please just go.
I can't help you if you don't run right -

(THESEUS enters; he looks terrible, as if he has just escaped the middle of a battle. OENONE gives her one final look and exits. PHAEDRA is in shock. They stare at each other for a long time, PHAEDRA terrified, THESEUS relieved.)

THESEUS:

Your face.
Your face brought me home.
You can't imagine what I've...
Phaedra...

(He goes to her and pulls her to him, hugging her so tightly and crying as he does, but PHAEDRA pulls away. THESEUS tries to hug her again, but she pulls away once more.)

You're shaking...

(She can't speak. Terror has taken over her body.)

My love?

OENONE:

RUN.

PHAEDRA:

Theseus...

THESEUS:

What is it?

PHAEDRA:

You were dead -

THESEUS:

I very nearly was -

PHAEDRA:

You were dead and we thought - we thought -

THESEUS:

I'm here now.
I'm here.
Everything will be -

PHAEDRA:

I can't breathe -

THESEUS:

Phaedra, you're scaring me...

PHAEDRA:

I have to tell you - I have to -

THESEUS:

You can tell me anything!
I'm just so happy to see -

PHAEDRA:

Hi - Hippolytus, he and I - we, um - we...

(She can't get the words out, but he knows what they are. He grabs her by the wrists and brings her to her knees. She is sobbing.)

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm -

THESEUS:

Oh - Oh god, no.
No, no, no, my love, I'm sorry.
This - my own son...
You don't have anything to be sorry for...
It's not your fault that he forced you.

(He pulls her to him and tries to calm her, but not letting her get any of the truth out, though she is trying desperately to.)

PHAEDRA:

Wait, no / he didn't for -

THESEUS:

It's ok.
You're still in shock.

PHAEDRA:

I'm not / in shock - Theseus listen to me -

THESEUS:

We will end this now.

PHAEDRA:

Please / wait, it's not what you - !

THESEUS:

You will not have to worry again, my love.
I am so sorry.

(He exits.)

PHAEDRA:

Theseus, wait!
No please just listen to me, WAIT!
THESEUS!

(She is left alone, full of regret and panic. OENONE enters, but just barely. They stand there in silence for a very long time.)

OENONE:

You should have run.

PHAEDRA:

I'm sorry...

OENONE:

There is nothing left of reason, Phaedra.
The final pillar is broken.

PHAEDRA:

Wait -

(She exits.)

No, come back - WAIT!!

(HIPPOLYTUS enters, enraged, hurt, shaken.)

PHAEDRA:

Hippolytus...

HIPPOLYTUS:

What have you done!?

PHAEDRA:

I didn't do anything -

HIPPOLYTUS:

You couldn't even admit your sin - look at me!

PHAEDRA:

I - Hippolytus, please -

HIPPOLYTUS:

I am leaving here in disgrace because of you.

I am banished to a place where nobody knows my name because of you!

PHAEDRA:

Because of *us*, Hippolytus; please you have to listen to me -

HIPPOLYTUS:

You were - *we* were supposed to be - now you call me a monster.

How could you do this to me, Phaedra?

How could you even lie about what happened between us?

PHAEDRA:

I never called you a monster!

I never said that, why would I say that?

HIPPOLYTUS:

But my father just accosted me and accused me of -

PHAEDRA:

I tried!

He wouldn't let me tell him the truth, I *tried* to tell him the truth and he just - he assumed the worst.

It's the lie he told himself and wouldn't let me correct it.

Please, I tried.

I tried, I tried, I tried -

HIPPOLYTUS:

He assumed...

Why would he assume that...

PHAEDRA:

I am so scared, Hippolytus I don't know what he's going to do...

HIPPOLYTUS:

I - so am I.

(A moment.)

PHAEDRA:

I - I need you to know I never meant to take advantage of you, you have to believe me.

I would never -

HIPPOLYTUS:

I know, I know, I'm sorry I didn't mean -

I felt so guilty about what we did and just...

PHAEDRA:

Just what?

HIPPOLYTUS:

I just felt guilty about how happy I was.

PHAEDRA:

Hippolytus...

HIPPOLYTUS:

I should have just told you, I should have just been honest...

PHAEDRA:

But what about now?

HIPPOLYTUS:

I don't know.

PHAEDRA:

I wish it could be easy.
But it won't ever be, will it?

HIPPOLYTUS:

I don't think either of us were signed on for easy.

PHAEDRA:

The merry-go-round goes around and around...

HIPPOLYTUS:

But I can't pretend this isn't real.
Gods, it's always been there.

PHAEDRA:

You felt that, too?

HIPPOLYTUS:

Felt it?
Phaedra, it's always been you.
It's always been you, from the first time I saw you.

PHAEDRA:

I know.
Me, too.

(They hold each other.)

The First End

*THESEUS sees them.
He runs up and pulls HIPPOLYTUS off her and pins him.
He strikes HIPPOLYTUS repeatedly.*

*PHAEDRA screams for him to get off of him.
The lights continually pulse as he wraps his hands around HIPPOLYTUS' neck.
Chaos and intensity continue to build and then -
there is a CRACK.
HIPPOLYTUS goes limp.
Everything goes still.
PHAEDRA is stunned.
Shocked.
It rings everywhere.
She runs to HIPPOLYTUS.
She tries to get him to wake up and he won't.
She keeps talking to him, trying desperately to get him to move, to breathe.
THESEUS can't move.
PHAEDRA holds HIPPOLYTUS' body in pure agony.
THESEUS makes a feeble attempt to get her away from him, but she will not budge.
She sings HIPPOLYTUS a lullaby and tells him over and over that she loves him.
She has no idea what to do other than that.*

The Second End

OENONE stands beside her, welcoming, compassionate, ready to fulfil her purpose.

OENONE:

*Come on, Phaedra.
It's time to go.*

*PHAEDRA nods and kisses HIPPOLYTUS on the forehead.
She shakily stands and begins to have one last **BEAUTIFUL, DARK, TERRIFYING
THOUGHT.**
Something about this thought is not as scary as the others.
It's as if she's giving herself over to the darkness completely and there is a relief and
joy in it.
It is for nobody except her.
When the thought ends, she turns to face upstage and OENONE cups her face.
When she turns around her face is covered in blood.
She falls.*

The Final End

*A bell tolls three times as the stage empties, save the body of PHAEDRA.
When she is alone the lights snap back on and she wakes up, gasping.*

It was just a nightmare.

She sits up, relieved, rubbing her face, but feels the blood.

She wipes some off of her face and looks out.

The lights snap off.