

An excerpt from

**OEDI** (from **HA!**)

a comedy in one act

by Rich Orloff

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*Place:* Ancient Greece

*Time:* Around 4 p.m.

*Characters:* OEDIPUS, King of Thebes, early thirties  
TIRESIAS, a blind, old seer  
CREON, Oedipus' advisor and brother-in-law  
JOCASTA, Oedipus' wife, among other things  
THE TOWN CRIER, heard off-stage

In this excerpt, OEDIPUS has just learned bad news from his trusted aides, CREON and the blind seer TIRESIAS. But there's more bad news to come.

OEDIPUS

Oh, woe to me and those who dwell in my house! I've slain a king, and I promised the people I'd put the killer to death. I even said, "Read my lips." But wait! One thing isn't clear.

TIRESIAS

Here comes the messy part.

OEDIPUS

If I'm Laios' son, and if Laios was married to Jocasta, who is now my wife, that means, that means, *that means* – Laios must've had a previous wife, right?

CREON

I'm afraid not.

OEDIPUS

Did he ever fool around on the side?

CREON

Never.

OEDIPUS

Sperm donor?

CREON

Nope.

OEDIPUS

Are you saying my wife is also my, my...

TIRESIAS

Bullseye!

OEDIPUS

Oh my gods! Oh my gods! I've married my mother!! No wonder she always knows what I want for breakfast. Oh my gods! I've murdered my father and married my mother!

TIRESIAS

It could be worse. You could've murdered your mother and married your father. Then you'd be in real trouble.

OEDIPUS

Who else knows?

CREON

Don't worry. Only the staff of the Creon Commission, all of whom are completely trustworthy.

We hear:

TOWN CRIER (o.s.)

Hear ye, hear ye! The King is shtupping his mother, details at 11!

OEDIPUS

Oh, wretched day! Oh, cursed life!  
How can I expunge the evil deed  
from my soul? There is only one way!  
I must pluck out my eyes immediately!

Oedipus tries to pluck out his eyes, but Creon holds his arms back.

CREON

Don't do it!

OEDIPUS

Let go of me!

TIRESIAS

Don't do it! You'll have a moment's satisfaction,  
and a lifetime of wondering if your toga's on straight.

OEDIPUS

Okay, let go... Does my beloved wife  
know about this?

CREON

Not yet.

OEDIPUS

Oh, how can I break this news to her? How can  
I tell her without breaking her heart? Her face is  
too lovely for tears. Her soul is too pure for grief.

We hear:

JOCASTA (o.s.)

Yoo-hoo, oh, Oedi!

CREON

The queen approaches.

OEDIPUS

(calling out:)

In here, snookums!

JOCASTA enters. She's easily thirty or more years older than Oedipus.  
If she happens to be short and speaks with a slight Old World inflection,  
so much the better.

JOCASTA

Oedileh, I was wondering if –  
Oh, am I disturbing something?

Simultaneously:

OEDIPUS

Yes!

CREON

No. We were just leaving.  
Right, Tiresias?

TIRESIAS

Oh, right. It's time for me to  
practice my musical instrument.

JOCASTA

Lyre?

TIRESIAS

No, honestly.

Creon and Tiresias exit.

JOCASTA

I didn't know you were in a meeting.

OEDIPUS

It was the most important meeting of my life.

JOCASTA

More important than when we met  
and you became my blintz of bliss?

OEDIPUS

Jocasta, I must tell you something most horrible,  
worse than the most terrible news you could imagine.

JOCASTA

You didn't like my brisket last night?

OEDIPUS

That's not it.

JOCASTA

What a relief. I was afraid I used  
too many bay leaves.

OEDIPUS

Oh, I cannot bear to tell you.

JOCASTA

My toga's too short, isn't it?  
You think a woman my age –

OEDIPUS

Your toga's fine.

JOCASTA

Are we having problems I'm unaware  
of in the horizontal department?

OEDIPUS

No, everything's fine in the –...  
Jocasta, I just received the preliminary  
report of the Creon Commission.

JOCASTA

Oh, good. As soon as we name the murderer  
of Laios and make him drink some seltzer  
with a shpritz of hemlock, I know your  
approval rating will bounce right back.

OEDIPUS

I don't think so.

JOCASTA

Why not?

OEDIPUS

Jocasta, my beloved...

JOCASTA

Oedipus, my Corinthian column of love...

OEDIPUS

Jocasta... The murderer of your  
late husband stands before you.

JOCASTA

You killed Laios?

OEDIPUS

Yes.

JOCASTA

Oh, no! Horror of horrors!  
I suddenly feel like plucking –

OEDIPUS

Don't pluck your eyes out!

JOCASTA

No, I feel like plucking a chicken. I'm so  
stressed. How are we going to put a spin  
on this so the public doesn't hate you?

OEDIPUS

Don't *you* hate me?

JOCASTA

Nah.

OEDIPUS

But I murdered your first husband!

JOCASTA

How can I hate you for something I thought of doing every single day of our marriage?

OEDIPUS

I thought you loved him.

JOCASTA

Feh.

OEDIPUS

You didn't love him?

JOCASTA

What's to love? The man snored, he had bad breath, and when I think of the things that man made me do...

OEDIPUS

You mean, in the bedroom?

JOCASTA

Worse, in the kitchen. I'd make him a nice roast chicken, and he'd make me melt some feta cheese on it. The man had no class.

OEDIPUS

But when I first met you, you were in deep mourning.

JOCASTA

My press people insisted. I wanted to go sunbathing on Crete.

OEDIPUS

I didn't know.

JOCASTA

So you see, my darling, the news is not that bad at all.

OEDIPUS

But I have not told you all of it, and the news that remains is so horrendous my lips can barely form the shapes to say the misbegotten words.

JOCASTA

Can it wait? In fifteen minutes, I have my belly dancercise class.

OEDIPUS

Jocasta, do you remember the prophecy of Tiresias that your husband would be murdered by your son?

JOCASTA

Yes. I also remember he prophesied THE ILIAD would never make it as a novel.

OEDIPUS

Jocasta, I... I cannot tell you. The shame is too deep.

JOCASTA

Don't feel ashamed, my beloved.

OEDIPUS

Please say no more. Your words of affection only make it more difficult.

JOCASTA

Why?

OEDIPUS

Because... Because there's reason to believe that, by some ferocious folly of the fates, you married your own son.

JOCASTA

So?

OEDIPUS

Did you not hear me? I'm your son!

JOCASTA

So tell me something I don't know.

OEDIPUS

You know I'm your son?

JOCASTA

From the first moment you came into town. I took one look at those eyes, that smile, that -- oh, wait a second, you have a little shmutz on your forehead.

Jocasta licks her fingers and begins to wipe Oedi's forehead.

OEDIPUS

Stop that! How could you know I was your son and not tell me?

JOCASTA

I didn't think it was significant.

OEDIPUS

You married me!

JOCASTA

You asked.

OEDIPUS

I know, but –

JOCASTA

I would've been happy just dating; but you said, "Marry me, Jocasta, and I'll be the happiest man on earth." What mother could refuse such an offer?

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