

ISMENE
Second developmental workshop
April 5th, 2025

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performed by Alexa Moore

Performed in no particular order.

Listed in alphabetical order.

*performed last

Bliss
Crisis
Conversation
Did You
Dirt
Fantasy
Him
If
One Day
ReAction
The Wound
Young
Forever*

Bliss

Hands touch

Lips meet

Breath

(catch)

Us

Alone

How I long for him

for

Fire

Flight

To Savor

Shatter

Stare

Crash into him

I am no one else

I am nowhere else

My body

My soul

My thoughts

Are in our hands

I want to leave this world

No guilt

No shame

Just us

Crisis

Who am I without her

Without death

Without tragedy

Without pain

Without my trauma

Is there a woman outside of all that?

What makes me?

What am I made of?

What are my ingredients?

How much proofing time do I need

Before I can rise

So that I can rise

These fingers once held her

Held all of them

This mind danced circles around them

Dreamt nightmares of them

Grew dark

Fell dormant

Tired of erupting

//

I am ash

The result

The outcome

No phoenix can rise

From such destruction

I am flesh

Hung on bones

Cross contaminated

Bred in filth

I am weak

I am small

I am second

And third

And fourth
An afterthought

I AM NOTHING

How can the **remains** of such a lineage amount to anything?

Our fates were written
Tragedy etched into our skulls
I am destined for misery

I shall lay
And pray that I never wake

I shall become the earth
Become dust

My whole
Broken down
Into that which is swept away
Catching on wind
Or sinking into the soil
Feeding a volcano
Erupting once more
My body broken and spanning the empire
I will be **everywhere**

Don't breathe me in
Discard me
Do not think of me
I am not worthy of your thoughts-

Maybe I'll be pulled into the heavens
And I'll rain down on you
On all of you
Ruining your day
Encouraging your harvest
Flooding the streets

I may be nothing
But my destruction and ruin will continue after my death
I have no other purpose
But to feel pain
And cause pain
To be hated
And scorned
And

I came back and buried you
If you'd like to know

Conversation

Why did you leave me?

I wasn't thinking about you

I should have buried him with you

You weren't meant to

Why did you stay? With father? After everything he did

It was my duty

Why did you bury our brother?

It was my duty

Was it not your duty to obey the law?

It was my duty to obey the gods

I miss you

No, you don't

You miss life before regret

You miss life when you weren't alone

But I was alone

I was second to you

In father's eyes

In everyone's eyes

You will always be the hero

I will always be the one that didn't do anything

*There is action in silence
Don't forget that*

I knew what I was doing at the time

*But you doubted it
You questioned it
In order to trust yourself
There needs to come a point
where you stop questioning yourself*

Is that always true?

You're questioning again

You can't answer a question unless you ask it
There's always more than one way to get things done
We would not be human
Without questions
Without doubt
That is how we know what is right for us

We can't always rush into the fire
There **was** a fire burning inside of me
You never knew

I'm still here

Did You

Did you ever stop and think
Am I as defiant as I think I am?
Or am I merely fulfilling my work as a woman
To bury my brother
To **sacrifice** my life to honor his

What if following Creon's order was defiance?

Then we could have pointed to him
Shown the world that it was HE who forbade our duties
HE was wrong
Perhaps others would have buried him for us
In solidarity
In support of **our lives**
Of our faith
Of our duties
Did you?

If I were a man don't you think I would've gotten more respect?
Recognition?

I yielded
I surrendered

I did what man was supposed to do
I did what men did

They followed law
They kept the dirt near the roots of trees
They kept the water at bay
They didn't displace the rocks or weeds

Or did you do what men should do?
Standing up
Fighting back
Risking your life
For what is right

Were we both wrong?
Were we both right?
Must it be one or the other?

Did you think of me
Before the eternal night overtook you
Was I a fleeting thought
Or did I **possess** you
Strangling your ego
Did you regret your actions then

Did you ever stop and think
What are the possibilities
Or did you only see red

Dirt

A handful
So deadly
It cost a life //
Crumbles slipping through fingertips
Hitting his chest
Most of it stays
Torn from the streets
Tough against her palms
A lifeless substance
Atop a lifeless body
How long had it waited for **glory**?
Did it know of its fate to be a weapon against the king?

Once his body turns to ash
The dirt remains
The dust of an eye clinging to the cracks
His limbs catching wind never to see that dirt again
A heart sprinkled amongst weeds
The last of the earth to be held in her hands
Purposeful
A rite of passage
A protest
I walk in circles around it.
Dare I step into the last of her
Dare I crush the dirt that buried our brother
And changed our lives forever
again

Fantasy

Help me lift Polynices

Bury him?

*It is my choice, not Creon's
Will you help me?*

No

Do not attempt to call on me
I am not your sister

Reset

Help me lift Polynices

Bury him?

It is my choice, not Creon's

It is forbidden

He is our brother

It is wrong

I don't want to hate you

I'd rather you hate me than die

Will you help me?

No

Reset

Help me lift Polynices

Bury him?

It is my choice, not Creon's

It is dangerous

The dead will welcome me

Perhaps if I help you

Yes

We can escape before Creon finds us

*He will brush off the dirt
He will invalidate the burial*

Then let's take the body

And let Creon win?

Must there be a winner?

*The gods will smile upon us
They'll grant us a reward in death*

Must we die?

Will you help me?

No

Reset

Help me lift Polynices

Bury him?

It is my choice, not Creon's

Oh let us live Antigone

Must we die again
I don't know how much life I have left
I lose a heartbeat
Every time our blood is shed
I don't think I can take it
Life is not all about death

*Life is not all about petals
There are thorns*

Then be the thorn in my side

*I will be
When I am honored
And you are left for dust
The gods will smile upon me
They will mock you*

You would rather be honored than alive?
You would rather risk everything for the dead than the living standing in front of you?
You stab me with words

It makes goodbyes easier

Reset

Help me lift Polynices

Bury him?

It is my choice, not Creon's

Where's the body

In the square

We must hurry

You're not scared

I'm scared of losing you

Ismene

Must we die
Let us live our last moments together

*What did I do
To deserve such a sister*

You smiled upon me when no one else did
You welcomed me
After I left you and father

I love you

*Let us not waste another moment
I love you*

Him

Our eyes met across the agora

I was hidden

How did he see me?

I don't parade myself

I am a parasite

But he smiled

Did he know who I am?

Perhaps that smile brushed it all aside

And he saw –

He **wanted**

Me

...

I don't know what he thinks of me

But I want to know

I stumble and backtrack

I share too much

I hold back

I panic

I don't know If I am myself around him

Or If I am too busy

Figuring out what I think he wants me to be

I don't want to mess up

I don't know what I'm doing

I'm fine on my own

So I say

What could **he** possibly bring?

Friendship?

Companionship?

Courtship?

Worship?

I'm tired of waiting for answers

I tell myself he hates me
Dislike me
Ignore me
That I talk too much
That I am **too much**
That I overstep
That I want something he can't give
I'm tired of being alone

I have no one
I have nothing
I am nothing
I **tell** myself I am nothing
Therefore I seek something in him
If I don't know who I am alone
Maybe I can be something
Because of him
For him
By him
With him

I want so much
So much of him
I think I want what I can't get
I am so used to having all I want out of reach
Am I wasting my time?
Tell me what to do.
I am tired
Of waiting

I have told myself I would rather die
Then be alone
Everyone has left me
And I don't think I have it in me for another deserter

I don't want to be alone anymore

If

If you hadn't buried Polynices
Or if Creon had not outlawed it
Or if he had let you go
Or if you had waited just a little longer

You would have married Haemon
You would have had children
Reya
Orion
You always liked those names
You would have been queen
Such a queen you would have been
Haemon admired you
Loved you
Saw you as an equal

You would have left the weaving to someone else

You would have left the house alone
Greeted those who crossed your path
People would talk
Others would look up to you

You would have led the festivals
Dancing in the name of Dionysus

You would have had all of this
If you were not so headstrong
So tied to your duties
So...

If you were not yourself.

One Day

One day I will have lived most of my life without you

One day I will be asked about you for the last time

One day, I won't know how to answer

How far I should go

How honest I should be

One day I'll wake up and forgive myself

For what I've done

And what I haven't

One day I'll forget you when in a moment of bliss

One day I'll forget to remember your name

One day I will love who I am

What I've done

What I haven't

I'll climb mountains

I'll fall

I'll get up

I'll drop into oceans

I'll sink

I'll pull myself to the surface

I'll breathe

One day I'll start over

Go somewhere new

Meet new people

One day I'll introduce myself as Ismene

Nothing more

Nothing less

One day I'll look back and not be scared

One day I'll greet darkness like an old friend

One day I'll be buried

and One day I will see you again

ReAction

Am I allowed to feel this?
All of this?
Am I allowed to even think
Against the state
Against the government
Against my family
Against myself?

I can't speak of this
Oh, No
No one must know
I could be next
I could be a heretic
I could be the enemy

Why do I care what others will think
Of my thoughts, of my feelings, of my questions, of my pain?
Must I stay inside
Hiding away from a society that rejects the curses of my family?

There must be someone who will smile upon me
Who will welcome my thought
Or not
But won't care what they are
I'll be Ismene
Not Oedipus' daughter
Not Antigone's sister
Ismene

Forget eggshells
And bushes
That I should beat about
And swerve
I will not be careful
I will feel
I will think
I will!

But what if I'm next
What if I'm a heretic
What if I'm the enemy

There must be a right and a wrong
But I'm tired
And I'm scared
And I don't know what to do

And I don't know what I can bring

I've lost everything
So **you** say I have nothing to lose
Is losing everything not enough?

Silence is killing me
Murdering me from the inside
Breaking apart my chest
My ribs weak from battle
My heart on the verge of bursting
My voice scratching my throat
Wrenching itself to my lips
I want to scream

But I can't

Or I won't

I don't know

Maybe tomorrow.

(Ismene screams)

The Wound

I don't know
Which was the hardest
They all caused pain

I was barely a woman
when I first got the wound

The first time
my mother
—found by my father—
a woman who bore life
my life
his life
limp
at the bottom of her bedclothes.
my wound fresh
crimson
a searing pain
my body sliced
the skin would heal
the wound's depths would weep
begging for resilience

The second
came after a bruise
in the shape of a man
gouging his eyes out
my wound
barely healed
bleeding beneath the skin.
Before it could settle
the thunder spliced it open again
I did not see his death
but I bled anyway
drenching my clothes
pools of blood at my feet
both parents gone

The third and fourth
years later
At the end of a war
a civil war
How fitting
Did they pierce each other's hearts
In unison
Watching the light drain from each other's eyes
As their own dimmed?
My hands could barely contain the flesh
Spilling over my fingers
Hands pressing into my sides
Trying to contain the seepage
the tears
the waterfalls
of blood
of muscle
my humors
draining
my body cold
would this be my end?

-

But I had you

-

Beautiful you
Your wound was dressed
Your armor next
Dirt in your hands
As you greeted death
Breath in your lungs
Light in your eyes
a fire
ablaze—

Then you were locked up in that stone house
Buried alive
Behind the walls
Shedding your clothes
Stringing them up
Like mother

I HAD NO TIME TO HEAL

Is it worse to see death or hear of it?

YOU LEFT ME

Like mother

Like father

Like brother

And brother

My sister

The fifth.

Young

Father was father
Mother was mother
You were my sister
I was a child

Brothers with wooden swords
Cracking the silence
With laughter
With splinters

We were wrestling flowers from their roots
Counting the threads that bound them to the earth
Helios gracing our faces with kisses
Your hand in mine

Eternal days
Did we understand our growth?
Age was insignificant
You'd always be by my side

Did we see time as a circle?

It was never a straight line

Until mother died. And father died. Then brothers died. Then you died.

And father was no longer father
He was father and brother
And mother was no longer mother
She was mother and grandmother
And our brothers killed each other
And you followed our parent's example

My line is still being drawn

It feels faint when you feel far
I have to remember to press into the paper
I have to remember my line is my currency

That it is worth something

I may not be queen

I may not marry

I may be forgotten

But I don't want to stop and watch it disappear into the horizon

I want to greet Helios with an upturned face, hungry for sunlight

I want to caress petals between fingertips

Hum songs I'll forget tomorrow

I want to pick up a wooden sword

Whack the trees like I'm begging for it to fight back

I want to laugh

I want to be able to laugh without you

And smile like I mean it

And actually mean it

I want to relish in my line

myself

Like when we were young

Forever

I could replay this
Forever

I could lock myself up

Crawl into myself

And think of nothing else
Forever

I could bring myself to tears

Stab my wound

Drown in doubts
And what ifs

I could refuse sunlight
Refuse kindness
Refuse hope

beat

I could wake up every day
Walk outside
Greet my neighbors
I could sit in the sun
Among gardens
And welcome each thought
One at a time

Beat more of a stay in the garden - flip the switch

I could run away
I could change my name
I could **deny** I ever knew you

I could cut my hair
I could be a man
I could **fight** an **army**

I could have power
I could grow old
I could be an oracle

Like father

I could follow you
I could form a noose
I could gouge my eyes out
I could end it all
I could end the pain
I could –
Feel nothing.

But I am still here
I can reclaim my name
I could live forever

Yes, I will feel pain
Yes, I'll think of you
Yes, I'll cry again

I **can** stay here

I **will** stay here

I **can** find myself

I **can** be alone

(long beat)

I can have all these things
And still hold you with me
forever