





THE CYCLE

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THE CYCLE

(Stage Play in Two Acts)

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To the illusionary cycle, where we come and we go

My thankfulness to the Internet radio station RadioArt
for the inspiration and the company

Cast of Characters

Orestes: 35-40 years old

Thaleia: 35-40 years old

Harry: 35-40 years old

Scene

Orestes' home

Time

The present

Synopsis

A fierce encounter, at a point in time, between Orestes, who is returning, and Thaleia, who is departing. The unavoidable and traumatic separation of two mythically strong human beings, that life, possibly also the gods, appear to move in opposite directions.

Between the two, is their common friend, the uncertain but wise, compassionate Harry, the chorus. He stands in the vortex of the great return of later day Ulysses (Orestes) and the eternal pilgrimage of Alexander (Thaleia). Harry attempts to mediate, to tame and to reconcile the cosmic vehemence of their orbits. He, alone, succeeds in solving the riddle of the rain.

We come and we go. We depart and we return. Like the gods. To the cycle of life, in the shadow of the sun.



ACT 1

Scene 1

We are in ORESTES' living-room. The room is untidy. ORESTES is sitting on a couch. He looks tired, distracted, but also at peace. Opposite him there's a pane of glass. On a coffee-table next to him are a few boxes of pills and a half-full glass of water. There's a clock on the wall. It's stopped, it's not working. In the center of the room are a table and two chairs. In a corner of the large stage is a small kitchen. We can see a few shelves with groceries and a portable gas stove for making coffee.

Someone knocks on the door. ORESTES doesn't respond. Another knock on the door. Again, no reaction. After a while a key is heard turning the lock. The door opens, HARRY enters.

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HARRY

(he stands, looks straight ahead, at Orestes' profile)

Won't you open the door?

ORESTES

(he turns his gaze momentarily and sees Harry. He then turns his gaze back again to its original position)

You have a key... why do you knock?

HARRY

(he approaches him, steps forward and stands between the window and Orestes)

Yes, I have a key. But... just in case of an emergency. I thought it would be perhaps indiscreet to come in without knocking.

(he looks at the stopped clock. There's a hint of irony in his voice)

I think you should set your clock.

ORESTES

(he looks at the clock, shakes his

head and smiles)

Did you fear you might interrupt something, is that why you didn't use your key? Come... sit.

(Harry approaches a chair, then changes his mind and sits next to him; he turns his head and looks at Orestes)

HARRY

I would have preferred you open the door for me. Perhaps that's why I knocked. I know I wouldn't interrupt anything.

How are you today?

ORESTES

(speaking slowly)

I'm well; I'm better.

HARRY

(softening his attitude)

I'm glad to hear that... would you like me to make you something to eat?

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ORESTES

No, I don't want anything. Thanks. I look weak, huh?

HARRY

No, it's not that...

ORESTES

No, I'm not hungry. If you like, we could go for a walk later, that's all I would like to do.

HARRY

We certainly will. Besides, they told us at the clinic it would be good for you to walk.

ORESTES

To walk, yes... that's what they said at the clinic, I should walk...

(he shakes his head, turns and looks
at Harry, his tone abrupt)

When will I be able to work again, to live again...? I'm so far away from all that, don't you think? When will I cover the distance... by walking?

HARRY

(he looks at him and replies confidently)

You'll walk the distance... regardless how long it might be. You're getting better by the day. You're making progress. That's what counts.

(he looks at him attentively)

Did you take all your pills today?...

Perhaps it's time to begin your therapy. I think you're ready for it.

ORESTES

You're right, it's a long distance. And I must walk its full course.

I must return...

HARRY

(he reassures him, his tone is confident)

Of course you'll return. You'll return to work and to life and to everything else.

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ORESTES

Don't worry, I took them all...

...the pills

And I'll begin my psychotherapy, yes!

(his attitude changes, he appears to
buckle)

I don't know how to thank you...

HARRY

(he looks baffled, he answers him,
he reassures him)

There's nothing to thank me for. I found you again, we
found each other again, that's what counts...

I'm the one that should thank you, my dear friend!

ORESTES

(slowly)

We found each other, how aptly put! I was lost, trail-
ing unfamiliar, dark paths, for a long time. But now we
found each other again. I like the way you put it. We
found each other!

(he looks at him)

Before that, though... you stood by me. Even if I didn't
always see you...

(he seems to remember something,
he becomes agitated)

And now we've found each other, I... I realize I've missed
out on everything. Look at you; you have a family, a job,
friends... I have nothing; I'm a wreck, I'm burned-out.
You're all I have.

(he glances towards the door)

That's why I want you to enter without ringing the bell,
Harry; please feel free to enter whenever you want...

HARRY

(he smiles, his tone is nostalgic, en-
couraging)

You're being unfair to yourself! The spark is getting
stronger, day by day. Your flare begins to resemble...

... your old one.

ORESTES

My flare, yes...

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HARRY

(decisively)

Yes, Orestes, yes! Step by step... you're coming back...

I still remember your flare... with affection sometimes.

ORESTES

With affection...

HARRY

(he gets up, turns to the window;
there's a pause)

You followed a different, uncharted, course. You were cruel in your life... very cruel, sometimes. But we all admired you, I more than others. Perhaps I was a bit envious.

ORESTES

(he shakes his head, his calm attitude turns to sadness)

The flare, the flare my spark endows me with...

(then abruptly, and strongly)

But if my flare was so great... why did she leave, Harry, why did she leave?

HARRY

(he turns and looks at him)

I don't know... you might never find the answer to that.
Perhaps you'll have to live without an answer...

(he turns his gaze elsewhere, like
he thought of something)

You were under a lot of pressure. You sought to escape
things that would've made everyone else, any one of us,
happy. You kept tempting your fate!

(looking at him)

Who knows what she saw and left... I wish that you...
not only find the answer to your question...

...but also that you may find her again.

ORESTES

The flare, my flare...

(bitterly)

But I didn't always have flare. I was cruel, like you said.
And you're right... Where do I begin...

How do you account for all the harm I've caused in the
past? Where was my flare back then?

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HARRY

(he approaches and sits)

It was a force beyond control that you had. That's what caused all you're referring to. You didn't intend them to happen; you didn't realize the harm you caused.

...But that's all over, now, over and done with; you have returned, you're back for good.

And, you've paid the price; you've been through so much these past four years. You've been devastated, brought to your knees; you suffered, and went from clinic to clinic. You've been through a lot of pain, you've paid for the past. It's over now. It's finished... you have returned.

ORESTES

(he shakes his head)

I haven't returned, Harry...

If I don't find her, I haven't returned. I'm still on the way back.

(he looks intensely at him, he grabs him by the arms)

I must find her; you must help me find her. Only then

may I return! That's all I ask of you!

HARRY

(he shakes his head, pulls away,
gets up, walks around, stands with
his back to Orestes. Some time
passes)

I have news...

ORESTES

(he lifts his gaze slowly)

You have news?... What news?

HARRY

(he turns and looks at him)

I have news about Thaleia.

ORESTES

(bewildered, there's a brief pause)

And?

HARRY

She's in Africa...

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ORESTES

(he goggles, astonished)

Where?

HARRY

I think she's no intention of coming back. Or so I'm told. She's doing well there. She has a large corn plantation. Cooperative... she is odd, too... I guess that's what brought you two together, for as long and as much as you were together.

They say the natives down there adore her. Like a goddess.

ORESTES

(stunned, speaking slowly)

How long has she been there?

HARRY

She's been away as long as you're gone.

ORESTES

(his attitude alters, his tone is harsh)

Gone?... I, gone?

HARRY

I don't know the details, my friend, she appeared to be the one to leave, but I'm not certain... I can't be certain that it wasn't you who really left.

ORESTES

(he looks at him in bewilderment)

Do you actually believe I could have left, Harry? Could such a thing ever happen?

HARRY

(looking away)

I don't know. I never really understood what happened. You didn't follow her; you didn't even fight for her.

(he looks at him)

Why didn't you follow her? What stopped you?... You were enraged, but did nothing. You were furious. Soon after, you were in and out of clinics. No-one understood why she left, no-one understood why you didn't try to stop her.

I don't know exactly what happened, which one of you left. No one does.

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ORESTES

(staring into space)

Who told you? About Africa?

HARRY

A mutual friend... She went to see her. She told me, when she came back. Thaleia had no objection. In fact she gave her permission to pass me her local phone number. That's how I came to know...

It appears she wants to build a bridge...

...She has a child, you know...

(Orestes' attitude changes, he seems upset; Harry senses it, he turns and looks at him, then comforts him)

HARRY

But...she lives alone, her friend tells me.

ORESTES

(shaking his head)

So she has a child...

What else have you heard? Hasn't she had enough?

Doesn't she want to come back?

HARRY

(slowly, hesitantly)

My friend couldn't say. It seems Thaleia couldn't make up her mind. She altered her decision every other day.

She spoke of you occasionally. It appears she thinks of you sometimes.

Nothing more, though; only that.

ORESTES

(calmly)

How long has she been there? Do you know?

HARRY

(he approaches and sits)

You asked me already, I told you. Shortly after you left... or after she left... about four five years ago.

ORESTES

(his attitude changes)

Like a goddess, then!

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HARRY

(he agrees)

Yes, like a goddess.

ORESTES

(shakes his head)

Like a goddess!

HARRY

(his attitude changes)

One more thing, my friend.

ORESTES

(he looks at him without a word)

...

HARRY

I'm going to visit her. I'll go on vacation, stay two or three weeks. I'll go ask her. I think all this might be due to a misunderstanding, a whim... a clash between the excess of force and pride both of you had...

...that tossed you to opposite ends of the world.

ORESTES

(he shakes his head and speaks
slowly, disjointedly)

You'll go to Africa?

HARRY

(he nods affirmatively)

...

ORESTES

So you're going to Africa...

Yes, do go, Harry... do go... go, and tell her what I've been
through; tell her also, I want to return. I want to return
to her.

I wish I could come with you... But that's impossible at
the present. But it will happen... it will be done...

(his attitude changes)

Like a goddess, then...

HARRY

(abruptly)

Yes, like a goddess! In five years she's multiplied the
crop production tenfold. The locals are thrilled, they

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adore her. And they're afraid they might lose her.

(he looks away)

Gods come and go. That's what the locals say; that's how it always was, they say...

And so they fear they might lose her.

ORESTES

(he shakes his head)

The gods come and go...

(looking at Harry)

You should go, my friend, you should go and tell her I'm coming... I'm on the way back. I don't know if she wants to leave or stay there. Tell her, I don't care. Tell her, I'm coming back. I'll journey to find her.

(he smiles)

Perhaps the locals will make a god of me, too.

HARRY

Come back, my friend. Return. That's exactly what I expect of you. That's the reason I'm visiting her.

ORESTES

It's going to be the last; I don't want any more journeys.
Day by day, I'm finding the strength I need.

I'll do it...

HARRY

But don't you think you've put off this journey too long?
What if she doesn't want you anymore? What if she
doesn't want you to return?

ORESTES

(he seems distressed at Harry's
question, there's deep sadness in
his voice)

If she doesn't want... if she doesn't want me... if she
doesn't want me, then I don't know... I've put it off too
long, you're right, something kept me... selfishness, I
guess... you're right...

(he buries his head in his hands. He
looks sad; then he speaks without
changing pose)

I don't have the strength today; let's postpone the walk I
asked you...

ACT2

Scene 2

Some time later, in ORESTES' living-room. ORESTES looks a little better. The room is less untidy. The clock on the wall is working. ORESTES is sitting on the couch; he is deep in thought and seems to expect something. Opposite him, the large pane of glass is covered in moisture. We hear the door open; it's HARRY. He enters the house.

ORESTES

(he gets up, and slowly moves in his direction to greet him)

Well done, Harry, well done! No doorbell...

You're right on time!

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HARRY

(he hugs him, then steps back a bit)

I'm on time, yes, but the weather is rather bleak; do you still want to go for a walk? Do you feel strong enough today?

ORESTES

(cheerfully)

Yes, we'll go for a walk. But first, let me make you a coffee; we can go out later. OK?

HARRY

(joyfully)

A coffee, yes! Any kind will do, as long as it's black.

ORESTES

(he heads to the corner of the room, to the small kitchen and starts making coffee)

I'll make you a double coffee, black, no sugar.

HARRY

Yes, please; like in the old days...

(he moves closer to him)

I leave in two weeks for Africa; for Livingstone, Zambia, to be precise. I've made all the necessary arrangements.

ORESTES

(he stands impassive over the coffee-pot and speaks without looking at him)

So, you're leaving... are you going alone?... How long do you plan to stay?

HARRY

I'm going alone, yes. My return ticket is for three weeks. Georgia can't take that much time off. She's joining me later, though. We plan to make the most of it, see as much of Africa and its wilderness as we can.

ORESTES

(he turns and looks at him)

Have you spoken with her? Have you told her?

HARRY

(slowly)

Of course; she's delighted, she's picking me up from the airport.

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ORESTES

(his attention at the coffee)

So, she's picking you up...

HARRY

(he goes to the counter)

I'll get the water..

(Orestes serves the coffee, Harry fills two glasses of water. They both sit on the couch. Harry sips his coffee. Then Orestes speaks, slowly)

ORESTES

What will you tell her? Rather, how are you going to tell her? Have you thought it over?

HARRY

(he turns and looks at him)

I've given it some thought, yes.

ORESTES

(their eyes meet)

And?

HARRY

(calmly, resolutely)

I'll tell her what you've been through, how you were lost to the world, how much you've suffered. I'll tell her about the mental clinic, how you cried out.

ORESTES

You'll tell her that, too...?

HARRY

Yes, I'll tell her; it was mostly her name you cried out, after all, that's what the doctors said, even though you might not remember, so why not tell her?

ORESTES

(reflectively)

Every now and again, some such memory flickers inside me. I don't remember much, though.

What else will you tell her?

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HARRY

I'll also tell her about the day you recovered.

ORESTES

(surprised)

What will you tell her about that day?

HARRY

I'll tell her how abruptly you suddenly recovered. The doctors saw you screaming one day, and decided to leave you to it. Next, you were on the mend. That's what they told me. That's what I'll tell her.

ORESTES

Yes, why not...

(he appears to vaguely recall something; he drinks a sip of coffee)

Tell her one more thing; something the doctors didn't tell you, something I'm going to tell you now for the first time. Something I recalled recently. Tell her that, too.

HARRY

(surprised)

What is it? What have you recalled?

ORESTES

(he stares blankly at the floor, and slowly says)

I was alone in the room, looking out the window. I watched some kids play in a backyard, opposite the clinic. I skipped lunch that day; I must've sat there for hours. I was alone all day. No one came to visit. Later, in the afternoon, it got cloudy. Thick clouds gathered in the sky. The kids scattered hastily, soon the yard was deserted. Lightning tore across the sky. And then... and then, it began to rain.

The rain poured down without a break. And as it rained, I kept looking... at the empty yard, at first. Eventually the window grew hazy, and I couldn't see through it anymore. So my gaze shifted from the blurred and desolate yard and focused on the window pane.

(his gaze turns to the blurry pane of glass opposite them)

I remembered all this one day, looking at this window pane here. It was as hazy as that other one, back then. And as I looked at it, I remembered. It all came back to me...

HARRY

(slowly)

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Exactly what was it you remembered?

ORESTES

That window at the mental home, trickling with rain-drops. I watched them for a while. Then I remember I began to scream. I began to scream as if what I saw weren't rain-drops, but something else.

(pause)

The doctors rushed in, someone prepared to give me a shot. Then I remember someone else, the head of department I think, say: 'Leave him, no sedative'. So they sat there with me, watching as I screamed and writhed. And all the while, my eyes were fixed on the rain-drops trickling down the window.

(he looks at him)

That's when it happened, that's when I returned, that's when I saw. You remember how I was the next day, how drastically I had changed...

The rest, you know first-hand.

HARRY

(he hugs him)

Welcome, Orestes, welcome my friend, welcome back

to the light.

ORESTES

(he draws back a bit)

I'm not back yet, I'm not back.... I have... I still have something important to settle.

(Orestes shakes his head, still trying to comprehend the song of the rain that day)

HARRY

What was it you saw in the window? What did you remember?

ORESTES

(he shakes his head, he looks preoccupied, his words come slowly)

That, you'll have to wait to hear from her, when you see her, when you meet. Tell her about the incident, and she'll tell you the rest of the story...

She knows it, I'm sure.

HARRY

I will, my friend, I will.

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(slowly)

Anything else... I should tell her?

ORESTES

That should be sufficient.

(his attitude changes, he remembers something,
he looks at him)

Tell her, also, I want to return. At her side, wherever she
may be. Here, there, mortal or goddess, I don't care. Tell
her that.

HARRY

(he nods)

I'll tell her everything Orestes, exactly as you told me.
I'll tell her everything and wait to hear the rest of the
story about the rain-drops from her. Let's see if she
knows it...

And I'll wait for her answer, also.

(looking at him)

Are you ready, shall we go for that walk?

ORESTES

(he calms down)

She knows, she knows...you'll see...

(his attitude changes)

Yes, I'm ready. Let's take a long walk today; I've so much to tell you.

HARRY

(they sip some coffee)

Perfect! So have I. We have a lot to talk about, after so many years of absence!

ORESTES

Well put, we have a long path to cover... And I hope you'll be able to open that other path for me, my final one... I hope you'll succeed in that, too.

HARRY

(resolutely)

I'll try, dear friend. But that's all I can promise.

The will of the gods is inscrutable.

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ORESTES

(he nods)

Inscrutable, yes. But I ask you to tempt them.

HARRY

(he shakes his head in disagreement)

Not tempt them, no! To beseech them, Orestes! Only that. I won't tempt them. That's your way! I don't have that kind of strength.

ORESTES

Alright, Harry, so be it. Beseech them... I believe you might be more successful that way.

Come, let's go...

(Orestes drinks some water and gets up. Harry follows. They walk to the door, Orestes with some difficulty. Harry arrives at his side and opens the door for him; Orestes exits first, then Harry closes and locks the door behind them)

ACT 2

Scene 1

We are in a clearing in a vast corn plantation. There's a little house- one of the many shacks for administration of the large plantation. On stage, there is a jeep. Outside the small cottage are two wooden armchairs. There's also a table with a jug of water. HARRY is seated. Thaleia is leaning on the jeep, looking at HARRY from a distance. In the background, the huge African sun is setting. Both appear cheerful.

THALEIA

(her tone is cheery and nostalgic)

You should've seen what happened when I told them I'm going to leave for a while, I'm going back to my first home-country. Initially... there was a cold silence, they

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stared at me sullenly, refusing to believe my words. Then, some burst to tears, others shouted, imploring me to change my mind. Others, still, predicted at the top of their voice that I'd leave for good, that I'd never return.

(she smiles)

It was absolute mayhem!

HARRY

(smiling also)

So what did you do, how did you persuade them?

THALEIA

(solemnly)

I stood up and asked them a question. I asked if I'd ever lied to them.

They quieted down. And then, someone at the back of the room, a man in the colorful local dress, shouted. He shouted that master Talia, that's how they call me, won't return. He repeated it a few times. Then he began murmuring and lamenting something about the gods, who come and go. And kept saying over and over that this was always the case with the gods...

They come for a while and then they go...

So there was commotion again. This time they were shouting in unison –it was true chaos- that, in my absence, work wouldn't be done the right way! Now their concerns were more down to earth... Only I could make the workers work properly, they said!

(she approaches, sits, looks at Harry, and slowly says)

At that point, I lost my temper, and so did Ayinzini, my assistant, who was sitting beside me and who would replace me in my absence.

HARRY

(puzzled)

What did you say then, how...

THALEIA

(she cuts him off, and adds slowly, in a solemn tone)

I said that one day, some distant day, not now but later, that too would happen! There would come a time in the future, I said, when I wouldn't be with them any longer. Now I was shouting at them, and asked what would they do then, if they would abandon the crop. I forced Ayinzini to his feet, I pointed him out to them, and said that he would take over during my absence. That he's

one of them, they know him as well as he knows them and he also knows all the secrets of the corn. I pointed out that he too is a hard worker, his name meant "machine" during the time of slavery. It still means "machine" today, in the time of freedom.

HARRY

(he looks at her)

Did you convince them?

THALEIA

(smiling bitterly)

For a moment there, I nearly did, I had almost pacified them.

But referring to the distant day when I'd leave was a mistake. They started shouting from the back of the room, they began moaning again. 'It's the end of the plantation, the end of the crop, what can Ayinzini do...!', things like that. Ayinzini attempted to stop me, but too late... he poked me, but too late.

HARRY

What then?

THALEIA

Then I got really angry, and shouted that if they don't like Ayinzini, whoever doesn't like Ayinzini, should take a step forward, introduce himself and take on the job.

(smiling)

And that's how I resolved the riot. Make them accountable in any way and they immediately descend from heaven and the gods down to earth. In a flash!

That, then, quieted them up for good.

Then I thanked them. That put an end to all discussion. We all calmed down. The choir took over, and they started to dance.

(smiling)

And that was the end of it.

HARRY

Are you coming to Greece, then?

THALEIA

(she looks at him)

That's the plan, yes; I'm going to visit my native island,

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Amorgos.

HARRY

(pleased)

When are you coming? How long will you stay?

THALEIA

I don't know; I haven't actually made up my mind yet, to be honest. But I will come, yes; I'm considering it, more every day.

It's been five years since the last time...since I left.

HARRY

This summer, maybe?

THALEIA

Probably. I'll leave... if I leave, at the most critical time of the year for the crop, at harvest. Deliberately. I want to shake them up, all of them, but mostly Ayinzini. The estimate for this year is twenty thousand tons, we never had such a large produce before. There will be difficulties.

HARRY

Ayinzini... won't he manage? Don't you trust him?

THALEIA

(she pours some water and drinks)

Ayinzini is praiseworthy! Rather, almost praiseworthy!
He'll be truly praiseworthy only when he stops calling
me master Talia, master Talia...

(she smiles)

That has proved impossible so far, though!

HARRY

(smiling)

He too considers you a goddess, then?

THALEIA

(surprised)

Me? A goddess? Ayinzini? No... rather, not anymore.

(she laughs)

When he realized I got pregnant without a man, he
was shocked! He nearly believed I was a goddess then.
He'd never heard of things like in vitro fertilization, of
course. I had a very hard time explaining it to him!

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HARRY

(his attitude changes)

Come to mention it, how is your son? How old is he now?

THALEIA

(nostalgically)

My son, my sweet little boy... He's fine. He's three already. You'll meet him shortly. He's visiting with a friend for a few days.

HARRY

(earnestly)

Is this where you plan to raise him? On the other side of the planet?

THALEIA

(she looks at him)

The other side? The other side as opposed to what?

HARRY

As opposed to your country and your loved ones, Thaleia; as opposed to Amorgos.

THALEIA

(almost angry)

This is where my loved ones are now! And this is my country! I carry Amorgos inside me, I don't need to visit it!

HARRY

There's no return for you then?

THALEIA

(hesitantly)

No, there isn't. There's no return.

HARRY

You don't sound very certain...

THALEIA

I am certain; I have no doubts.

HARRY

It's cruel... don't you think?

THALEIA

(she looks at him)

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Cruel? Cruel for whom? Not for me it isn't; no, it's not cruel!

HARRY

(he answers quickly, in one breath)

What about for those who love you and wait for you?

THALEIA

(surprised)

Such as?

HARRY

Such as Orestes, for instance.

THALEIA

(her attitude changes, she speaks slowly)

What about Orestes?

HARRY

I told you already, didn't I?

THALEIA

(surprised)

You told me he collapsed, that's what you told me. And

that he was resurrected, that he recovered, that he's returned to the world.

(she smiles meaningfully)

HARRY

Orestes wants to return. To you, Thaleia... only then will he return to the world.

Only then will he recover.

THALEIA

How do you know that? Is that your assumption or did he actually tell you?

HARRY

Both. It was my assumption and he confirmed it.

THALEIA

(she shakes her head)

Is that why you ask me to come back... for Orestes' sake?

HARRY

(he turns his gaze elsewhere)

You don't have to come back, he can join you here.

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THALEIA

That bad...

HARRY

(he looks at her)

Is that a sneer?

THALEIA

Quite the contrary! It's a very long journey he intends to undertake. Isn't he weary of traveling all these years?

HARRY

He's weary, Thaleia, he's weary. He's weary and he has made many others weary, too.

THALEIA

Join me here... well, how about that.

(she gets up and walks to the corn, with her back to Harry)

I like wandering off in the cornfields. I come here with Ayinzini, and often tell him to stay behind. And I wander off.

Last time I wandered off for so long that he was

alarmed, poor man, and came looking for me.

HARRY

He's really devoted to you.

THALEIA

(slightly apologetic)

I chided him, and told him not to do it again. I told him that when I want to be alone, I mean it.

(she turns, looks at Harry and smiles)

You see, I usually don't like people seeking me out...

(meaningfully)

Usually...

(referring back to the incident)

Poor Ayinzini was very upset, he showered me with master this, and master that, and that he wouldn't do it again, and begged my forgiveness.

(smiling)

Then, to humor him, I told him about the brief journey I've been planning, and that he'll be in charge of the harvest in my absence.

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HARRY

Were you successful?

THALEIA

(she approaches and sits)

He was very upset, the poor dear. He started asking where I'd go and if I'd be back. Just like the others a few days later, at the feast.

HARRY

(he nods)

So you told him about Amorgos?

THALEIA

(looking him in the eyes)

I told him I'll be going to an island, to my first home-country.

HARRY

(awkwardly)

And he was distressed that you might not return from your first home-country?

THALEIA

No, it wasn't like that at all!

HARRY

(puzzled)

What, then?

THALEIA

He was fascinated by the concept of an island, the word struck him; we never got to home country.

(smiling)

He asked me... what an island is...

HARRY

(half-smiling)

Has he never seen or heard of an island?

THALEIA

(looking away)

No, never. There are vast lakes and waterfalls here, but the sea is very far away. Hardly anyone here has seen it.

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HARRY

I see... so you told him what an island is?

THALEIA

(looking at him again)

Yes. I told him an island is a stretch of land that rebelled and escaped from the mainland and set out to find... to find new worlds; that's what I told him.

HARRY

(nodding slowly)

So he understood what an island is?

THALEIA

(confidently)

Of course he understood. He understood perfectly. In fact, he replied that the island, then, is like me, since I too rebelled and set out in search of new worlds. That's how well he understood...

He couldn't have understood better...

HARRY

(he gets up and walks; he stops, facing the sun)

And have you found those new worlds, Thaleia?

THALEIA

(confidently)

I've found them...

...I've found them and they've made me happy.

HARRY

(he turns and faces her)

What have you found, Thaleia? What is it you've found, what is it you've loved so much that you broke away from your world, like an island from the mainland?

THALEIA

(calmly)

My dear Harry, it's so difficult to describe. If you haven't experienced it yourself... It runs so deep, this thing that burns and melts everything inside me, that wants me to push ceaselessly forward, without looking back.

It's taken me over; it controls me all, body and soul.

HARRY

Is it so cruel, then? So cruel that it asks you to break

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away from your past, from your previous life?

THALEIA

No, it's not cruel; the past lives inside me, breaths in my being, rest assured.

(slowly)

That's enough for me, I need nothing more.

(she gets up, approaches him, changes attitude and subject)

Here, look at the sun, have you ever seen such a red disk before?

(she turns to the sun)

HARRY

(he looks at her)

And where does it end, this chase after the new, with no looking back?

THALEIA

(she turns and looks at him)

It doesn't end anywhere. It's like the sun, it doesn't stop anywhere.

HARRY

(he pauses a moment, then continues confidently)

The sun doesn't stop, but it doesn't change position either! Every day, at the same time, it's in the same position!

Even the sun returns, Thaleia! It's constantly on the move! And constantly returning!

THALEIA

(amazed, smiling)

Well, how about that, I guess you're right! I never thought of it that way...

(she appears to recollect something)

You know, sometimes I hear you speak and it's like hearing Orestes. The choice of words, the references, the mindset, I feel certain I've heard them before from Orestes.

You two were best friends so long, it seems you developed a common language.

(she laughs, then abruptly adds)

Did you also share the same women?

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(she sits, and looks in his direction)

HARRY

(bewildered)

Where did that come from?

THALEIA

I just recalled how alike the you of two were, how you used to share everything...

HARRY

(staring off into the distance)

Orestes was different. He was very strong, unyielding, more than he should' ve been. He exceeded the limits, his own as well as those of others.

THALEIA

(puzzled)

How much should he have been, then Harry? What limits did he exceed?

HARRY

(he sits; he looks at her)

I'm talking about before you met. He was cruel then, unnaturally cruel with people. He thought they were

like him, but they weren't. That's why he eventually collapsed, as if the gods cursed him, as if, in his arrogance, they abandoned him. He broke down and wound up wandering from one mental clinic to another.

Of course your story exacerbated the situation... but he began to change earlier, before you met him, when he was perpetually on the move...

(his tone changes)

...like you are now...

THALEIA

(shaking her head)

The gods, the gods again! I'm the one searching to find them, and its Orestes that they torment!

HARRY

(puzzled)

Are you searching to find them?

THALEIA

That's what Ayinzini said one day, when he finally ruled out any chance I might be a goddess myself. He then began telling me I'm searching for the gods! Do you think he's right?

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HARRY

(hesitantly)

I don't know, Thaleia, I really don't know. What do I know about your life here, how can I say?

THALEIA

You have eyes, though, don't you? How do I look?

HARRY

(he scrutinizes her)

You look better than ever...

THALEIA

(she replies quickly, smiling confidently)

And I feel exactly as I look! Better than ever!

HARRY

Therefore...

THALEIA

(she leans toward him, looking intently at him)

There's so much more to this place than what you see as a visitor, Harry! It's not just the sun that's so different, so full. There are other things, too! There's the toil with

the land to make it fruitful, and the struggle against poverty. There's so much water here, which went to waste. And when the land bears fruit, it brings along unprecedented joy and riches.

(she resumes her position and speaks more slowly)

And then there're other things, too; things that come alive inside you, within your soul. That's where you first see them and then hasten to accomplish them; that's where you long for them and then scramble to conquer them!

There're so many things you don't see; don't underestimate them because they're not obvious.

HARRY

(slowly)

I guess there are...

So... there's no return, then?

THALEIA

(hesitantly)

No, there's not. My only concern, at present, is the plantation. Years from now, when I'm gone, I want to ensure

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it won't fall into the hands of the usual scoundrels.
There are parasites everywhere, not only in the plantation.

I want it to remain in the hands of the people that farm it.

HARRY

(nostalgically)

I didn't get to know you well, but this is how I remember you. You always thought this way. Unconventionally, in your own, unique, manner. You're a born leader, but you cared about people.

Yes, I remember this trait of yours; it was one of the many things that fascinated Orestes.

I'm more than certain! I wonder if... earlier... before I met you, if you were also cruel with people around you, as Orestes was...

THALEIA

I don't know what you're referring to. I don't remember what I was like very well, it was many years ago, and I rarely look back. The things you talk about, Orestes, and the people I cared about, they're all very remote. And I don't remember if I was cruel...

(she looks him in the eyes)

They're all so remote, I don't remember what you're referring to.

HARRY

It's only natural you don't remember. They're not only remote. They were also wholly self-evident to you. Everything that seemed superhuman to us was wholly self-evident to you.

You haven't changed. You haven't changed, neither in body, nor in soul.

THALEIA

Everything changes, and so have I. Every time you move, you change. Besides, that's what counts... It's just that you can't see beyond the surface. You see my undiminished charm, and hear what I tell you, which remind you of what you knew of me. These, though, are only a fraction of the whole.

I too have changed.

HARRY

(slowly)

Not that much, though, to want to come back, to return.

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THALEIA

(hesitantly)

No, not that much, you're right.

HARRY

(he looks at her)

What about your trip to Amorgos?

THALEIA

I'm not sure. I think about it, but I'm not sure I'll actually do it...

I'm not sure I really want to.

(she changes attitude and subject)

Tell me more about Orestes' troubles. How long was he hospitalized? What brought him to that point? What was his daily routine?

HARRY

No one knows the details, what brought him there, not even Orestes himself.

But I think the big picture is his arrogance. He was always arrogant... That's what drove him there. First his

arrogance... then your breakup. It acted as a catalyst. He was already falling apart, and it shattered him.

So, at some point, he collapsed. Suddenly, unexpectedly. Like he was defeated by something.

(he looks at her)

He kept calling your name, you know... he cried out, I heard him with my own ears.

THALEIA

(shakes her head)

I see...

(puzzled)

But, defeated? What could have defeated him?

HARRY

(resolutely)

Nostalgia, perhaps...

Nostalgia for you!

You were the love of his life, he never got over you. With all his achievements, one thing he never achieved. Return to you.

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THALEIA

(mumbling)

Return to me...

(puzzled)

Orestes return...?

Is that what you think, then? Is that the way you see it?
That he was who parted from me and then wanted to
return?

HARRY

(uncertain)

I don't know what to say, Thaleia. Who parted from
whom...

There are things that seem designated by some third
party to be inscrutable, incomprehensible. Your break-
up was like that. Incomprehensible to all, even to me.

THALEIA

(with conviction)

Let me tell you, then. Let me tell you what happened,
since I've worked it out.

(keenly and sharply)

I didn't part from him, nor he from me.

HARRY

(he looks at her, he sounds puzzled)

What, then?

THALEIA

When we met... we were moving in different directions. I was moving forward, he was already on the way back. We met, we fell passionately in love, we separated. Each on his own path. We were on a different course when we met. Each remained on his course. Passionately, resolutely.

HARRY

(surprised)

Is that how you'd sum up your relationship? With a couple of verbs?

THALEIA

(angrily)

That's how I'd sum it up, yes. I said we fell passionately in love, didn't I? Isn't that significant? Doesn't it sound significant to you?

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HARRY

I don't know what to say. I don't know.

THALEIA

That's exactly what happened. We met at a point in time. We were moving in opposite directions along the line of time. Orestes was returning, I was departing. How long could such an encounter last?

HARRY

So you think he was returning? I never thought of it that way, nor have I asked him. The more I think about it, the more I believe you're right... But how can you, who didn't know him before, how can you know, how can you be so certain?

THALEIA

(smiling at him)

Because I experienced it first hand. I had no need to ask or think about it. I sensed it.

HARRY

(deep in thought)

What, then, was Orestes' return? And why was it so intolerable?

THALEIA

(she shakes her head)

It wasn't intolerable. It just didn't last long. We crossed paths, that's what happened. It couldn't be helped. How long can such an encounter last?

HARRY

(puzzled and nostalgic at the same time)

And all of us bystanders, which saw you as well-matched, and madly in love, were we mistaken?

THALEIA

No; you were correct. You bystanders. What you saw was true. But you didn't see that Orestes and I were moving in opposite directions. Opposite, along the trackway of time.

HARRY

(looking troubled, as if recalling something)

So where was Orestes returning to? What was pulling him back?

THALEIA

(quickly, with conviction)

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His need for tranquility, perhaps; the urge to distance himself, to forget what you saw as arrogance. Then, all the things that usually pull you back, memories, nostalgia.

HARRY

(surprised)

And are these so bad, Thaleia? Collectively they're what people call home. Right?

THALEIA

No, they're not bad, my old friend. They're valid, and people call them home. You're right!

(resolutely)

They are valid...

but they're not capable of making me turn back.

HARRY

Do you think about them sometimes?

THALEIA

Think of them! Of course! Now, for instance, I'm thinking of returning briefly to Amorgos. Let's see if I'll manage the trip...

HARRY

If you'll manage it...

Or if you'll really want it?

THALEIA

(she smiles, and takes his hand)

Well put. I'm not sure I really want it. I don't want to opt out, let it defeat me, pull me back.

HARRY

(he takes her hand also)

Give it a try, then, test your strength. Why do you fear it? Accept the challenge!

THALEIA

Fear it! That could be the case. Maybe I fear returning. Perhaps you're right.

(they drop their hands, then she draws away; her attitude changes, she looks him in the eyes)

Perhaps that's what mental clinics were to Orestes. He bound himself there, to keep to his path. To his return path. To ensure he wouldn't turn around. To the direction in which I called him.

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HARRY

(he appears to disagree)

The clinics were Orestes' punishment. That's what they were! He was very cruel in the past, very arrogant. He was punished for the things he did!

THALEIA

(she smiles bitterly, turns her gaze to the distance, and slowly says)

And who says returning isn't a punishment, Harry?
We're talking about the same thing!

(she turns toward him)

But I... I can't bind myself...

HARRY

So you're saying it was you that led him to the clinics?
You that bound him there? You were his sweet siren,
who were a threat to him, who would prevent him from
doing what he really wanted?

Return.

THALEIA

(she smiles, and shakes her head)

I've thought of it that way, too. Those who bind themselves, usually wish to remain on their course, on their path of return. That's why they bind themselves. So that they won't get swept away, won't be lost in the unknown.

The unknown is terrifying; there's nothing more terrifying.

That's why Orestes surrendered himself to the clinics. That's what I believe.

HARRY

Whereas you don't fear the unknown. From what you tell me, it rather sustains you. Instead, you fear returning!

THALEIA

(with conviction)

It terrifies me. That's why I'm so uncertain about Amor-gos. It terrifies me, yes. But, you know what I do when something terrifies me?

(she gets up, takes a few paces, and looks at the red solar disk)

I come here, to the plantation. I marvel at the huge African sun and then race straight toward it. With the jeep.

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I chase it.

(she turns, and looks at him)

And then I feel I transcend returning. It can't touch me anymore, I don't fear it, it ceases to exist. All my fears subside. There is no rearward on the sun's path. Only forward. Only new homes!

HARRY

Only forward for you, only rearward for him... Memories, nostalgia... So what did Orestes wish to return to? What pulled him back? Have you thought of something more specific?

THALEIA

Returning is... how can I put it... your outlook on life, it can't be made specific. Whoever looks back, returns. That's all.

(she looks at him and slowly says)

And Orestes was looking back.

HARRY

(puzzled)

Back? At what?

THALEIA

(she looks him the eyes)

I don't know. The fact he was looking back was sufficient, that was my experience, that's what I saw. That's what returning is. It doesn't matter if at the end of its course stands a woman, a safe harbor, a childhood memory.

What does it matter?

That's what returning is. That was Orestes path.

(she smiles bitterly)

The opposite from mine. That's why he didn't seek me out back then, Harry. Pity...

(there's a brief silence. Thaleia turns and looks at the sun, while Harry looks at Thaleia. Suddenly he gets up, takes a few steps and stands in front of her)

HARRY

Just recently he told me about an incident on the day of his recovery. I haven't told you about it yet.

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THALEIA

(perplexed)

No, you haven't. What happened that day?

HARRY

Something very strange.

He had a severe episode, a fearful screaming fit. A few days later he was discharged from the mental clinic; he was free. Recovered.

THALEIA

(she shakes her head, she seems preoccupied. Harry appears to have something further to say on the matter)

Anything else?

HARRY

Yes, one thing more. It was raining that day. He looked at the hazy window opposite him. With his usual blank stare.

And then, suddenly, he started screaming, as if it wasn't the rain he saw, as if he saw something totally different.

THALEIA

(calmly, looking at him with conviction)

As if he saw something...?

(there's a long pause. Harry lifts his head in her direction, waiting for her to conclude her sentence)

...Or as if he was finally arriving?

HARRY

(puzzled)

Arriving?... arriving where?

THALEIA

(same attitude)

To his last haven, Harry. His scream was his final, proud, salute to his long path. And the tranquility that followed, the tranquility of his final haven.

Our friend has dropped anchor, he has arrived. That's why he recovered. He arrived where he wished to return. That's what I think happened that day.

HARRY

(bewildered)

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And the rain-drops on the window? What about those?

THALEIA

Perhaps... perhaps they were tears of joy for finally arriving, for beholding his harbor.

(slowly, thoughtfully)

Then again, perhaps they were tears of sorrow for what he was leaving behind, once and for all.

Or both, at the same time.

(she appears about to break down)

We can't be certain...

HARRY

(comprehending the meaning of her words)

He has arrived, then, you think?

THALEIA

Yes, I think so... What do you think? You see him from a shorter distance, I only see him in the mind's eye.

So what do you think?

HARRY

(he nods with conviction)

Yes, you're probably right.

THALEIA

(taking both his hands)

You see, Harry, you see! You said it yourself. Our friend has finally dropped anchor. And don't pay attention to what he says about me. He'll never come down here. After the scream you described... he bade me farewell, he's dropped anchor, he gave up. He found what he was searching for. Whatever that may be...

HARRY

(abruptly)

He was returning then, Thaleia, he was on his way back, you're right. He was returning from his perpetual, grueling life's journey. He was returning to port... You saw it as clearly then, as aptly as you put it just now.

But you know something?

THALEIA

(slowly)

What?

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HARRY

Maybe... he has set out again... maybe he still has strength, the strength to press on again.

To come and join you.

That's what I think is currently happening.

THALEIA

(surprised)

He's set out again? You think he still has the inner strength?

HARRY

I think so, yes. Rather, I'm positive! He has the strength to set out again. I saw it, I felt its flare...

Just as you... just as you now have the strength to return... To Amorgos.

(there's silence. Thaleia looks at him in bewilderment. Then her mobile rings. She moves away from Harry)

THALEIA

(talking on the phone)

Hello... yes... I remember... I'll be back in a couple of hours, yes... See you later then, bye.

HARRY

What is it?

THALEIA

(hastily)

We must head back, shortly... The lawyers have come. I must speak with them about the plantation. I must ensure that when the day comes, that day in the distant future we discussed earlier, everything has been properly arranged.

HARRY

(surprised)

Why don't you leave the plantation to your son?

THALEIA

(she chides him)

Because the plantation isn't mine! I own but a fraction. Also, more importantly, because my son might wish

to follow a different path in life, he might not share my love for the corn. But the company must remain as it stands today. And that is something I can ensure only with the aid of good lawyers.

HARRY

(he appears to disagree)

I hope you realize it will be difficult, Thaleia. These things need a strong hand. A leader. Like you. Otherwise, they fall apart!

THALEIA

(she seems to have heard/thought about it before; she shakes her head)

Perhaps; you could be right. Let there be another leader then...

(she smiles)

I can't generate him, or make him, nor anoint him.

Let life generate him...

How one finds his way is up to him. There's nothing I can do about that.

(she looks at him)

But even if there's no leader, it doesn't matter Harry!
Still, something will remain, something always re-
mains of what we build.

HARRY

(he shakes his head in amazement, both at Thaleia's words and the beauty of nature around them.
He turns and looks at the sun)

Time to go, then? Pity, it's so beautiful now the sun is
setting...

THALEIA

We'll come again... we'll do a tour of the entire planta-
tion...

And tonight I'll guide you around the capital. There's
much to see there, too..

HARRY

(smiling)

They won't take me for a god, will they?

THALEIA

(she approaches him)

That's all over now. They've grown wise. Let them

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search for their gods elsewhere, not in me and my friends.

HARRY

(he hugs her and slowly says)

Thaleia... thanks for our talk. Also, I'd like you to think about what I've told you. And when you come, when... you return...to Amorgos, we'll come and see you. Or-estes and I.

THALEIA

(she lets go of him, steps back a few paces and nods her head in condescension)

Yes, do come... if I finally manage the trip, if... , I decide on it, rather!

HARRY

You seem increasingly reluctant! Is it because our talk reduced the possibility? Or did it enhance it?

THALEIA

(thinking)

Increasingly reluctant... You think so? I don't know... let's see if I can get away with everything going on down here. The plantation has boomed, and it's been

a very good year for the crop. There will be loads and loads of corn.

HARRY

So, shall we go? Shall we head back?

THALEIA

(she turns and looks at the sun)

No, let's not head back yet. We still have some time. Look how large is now the solar disk. Climb up on the jeep, let's chase it, let's catch up with it... Something tells me it might hold some surprises for us today... it might have a new path to show us. Remember what I told you earlier?

HARRY

(he looks at her, and slowly consents, puzzled)

I remember what you said, yes.

And as I listened to you, do you know what gradually occurred to me?

THALEIA

(she looks at him, puzzled)

What?

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HARRY

That time isn't linear, as you implied earlier, me dear friend!

That we come and we go...

We depart and we return.

(they look at each other, Thaleia looking perplexed and deep in thought)

That everything moves, the sun also. Upon a cycle.

And that soon, while we chase after the sun, your beloved path, instead of leading us to new homelands, might awaken within us old and familiar things...

THALEIA

...

HARRY

It won't make much of a difference... you'll see, the path will be equally beautiful.

(abruptly)

And I don't mean you should bind yourself! I mean exactly the opposite! You should let loose, consign to yourself and the things you love! Let the sun guide you.

That's all I say!

THALEIA

(she approaches him slowly, her words come slowly as she stands very close to him)

Come, let's go then, Harry...

Let's consider what you say...

Perhaps... perhaps if Orestes is truly setting out, as you say, perhaps the path holds a message for us...

And I won't bind myself... I'll hold out and listen to it... standing.

I promise you... and I promise myself, also.

HARRY

(he hugs her)

Orestes is setting out again and he'll join you. And your new encounter won't be a crossroads... as you implied earlier; this time it will last... that's what I think.

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And there will be tears of joy...

Those he saw then... the ones that pulled him back...
that day when he returned...

When he returned to his new path.

To his path to you.

THALEIA

(shaking her head slowly)

Let's go, Harry... let's go, unbound, like you said... let's go.

(they move toward the jeep, Thaleia in the driver's
seat. Harry climbs in, next to her. They look at
each other. The jeep painted red by the sun. Tha-
leia starts the engine)