

[THESEUS INTERRUPTED]

CW: Consensual cannibalism & religious themes.

By Theodore-Elizabeth G. Brennen

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Originally Titled *Theseus Interrupted*

Cast:

ISKRA – A young woman, a cartographer, who went to hell to map it. She has failed. She is trapped.

ENEAS – A young man, a scholar, who went to hell to save his sister. He has failed. They are both trapped.

Setting:

Hell. Or a sealed cave.

Ideal casting:

A transgender man and a transgender woman, siblings ideally (possibly twins), with correlating amputations ideally.

A man and a woman of any kind will suffice, though. Tethers like this exist anywhere. Putting cisgender actors in drag and having them play roles of the opposite sex is encouraged.

Notes:

On the Matter of the Passage of Time – When a stage note says something to the effect of “time has passed,” the scene preceding should be separated from the next by a stage blackout.

On the Matter of Amputations – In the case of able-bodied actors, red nets of knots meant to mimic shibari rope art truncating the limbs.

On the Matter of Soliloquies – When either character is about to begin a soliloquy, they will turn to the audience, wide-eyed, and be bathed in a cold spotlight.

Extra Reading:

Plato’s Symposium – Within the lecture of Plato’s symposium, he proposed the idea that at the very beginning of the world, humans were eight-limbed creatures, and were struck in half. Since then, we have been searching for our proverbial other half. This concept is typically meant to refer to romantic

soulmates, but I wanted to expand the concept to refer to any major tethers in one's life.

The Ship of Theseus - The thought experiment of the ship of Theseus poses this question: if a ship's parts are gradually exchanged for new ones, at what point is it a different ship? Or are these parts adopted into the mere concept of the first ship? I have decided to advance this question further: if two ships, carved of wood from the same tree, were to begin exchanging their parts, at what point would they become one another? Are they the same ship in two different forms? Are they the tree? Are they one ship? Or are they different entities?

Open. Lights up. Cave interior.

Our two characters stand together, looking around. ISKRA holds a torch, ENEA carries a bag. They look posed, incredibly still, as though in a diorama. Lights turn red suddenly. It lingers for a beat. Lights out. Voices come from the dark, so unified that they sound like one.

BOTH:

How much of you within me
will make me become you?

A small pause. Lights up on the pair of them, noticeably dirtier and worn-down. Time has passed. They sit on the floor, facing each other.

ENEA:

It's easily been a month now, hasn't it?

ISKRA:

I suppose so. For you.

ENEA:

You've been down here longer, right.

ISKRA:

Just by half your time.

ENEA:

Half?

ISKRA:

Half

ENEA:

Month and a-

ISKRA:

Half, yes.

Beat.

We're not getting out of here, Enea.

ENEA:

We need to. Are you hungry, Iskra?

ISKRA:

My provisions ran out, Enea. I've already taken yours, too, since you found me. You know this.

ENEA:

I know that is so. I only asked in hopes it would be true that my sister never be hungry.

ISKRA:

And now that you remember I am human, too, as well as your flesh and blood?

ENEA:

You can trust in my aid, Iskra. There's nothing else around. I will give what I can spare.

ISKRA:

What do you mean?

ENEA:

Facing the crowd, wide eyed.

He would give anything for her, gracious sister who he would happily have living in his stead. Firecracker. Younger of them, precious and strange. Anything at all. His heart, his sweat, his tears, his blood. Blood and flesh. Flesh and blood.

ENEA's left arm is amputated. ISKRA is holding raw meat. A cloth tourniquet covers the stump's tip.

ISKRA:

I'm so sorry.

ENEA:

I've given it to you. Intentionally.

ISKRA:

That does not destroy my guilt.

ENEA:

I know. But I also know that is because you'd do the very same
for me.

ISKRA:

We are the same, in that way.

*Time has passed. ISKRA' mouth is wiped, but still dirty.
They both look increasingly ragged.*

ENEA:

Do you remember when we were small, and I used to convince you
to take my chores?

ISKRA:

You mean how you used to push all your duties off on the sister
of the house?

ENEA:

The only people that saw it that way were you and I. It's the
brother in me from the beginning that put things on you.

ISKRA:

But it was you that sacrificed first when we finally came to
hell.

ENEA:

If it was hell, truly, I would not have you.

*Time has passed. ISKRA's mouth has been wiped. It is not
clean. It never will be. They sit by a fire.*

ISKRA:

I need to repay you someday.

ENEAS:

If you think we won't get out, why are you believing there'll be that someday?

ISKRA:

I want to believe that you may see the world again.

ENEAS:

There is no hell that can be escaped.

ISKRA:

But there is one that can be survived.

ENEAS:

Survival is not my strong suit.

ISKRA:

No, you're right, it isn't. You give too much.

ENEAS:

And you wish too much.

ISKRA:

Are you calling me selfish for that which you've given?

ENEAS:

I never would.

ISKRA:

So what is it that I wish for?

ENEAS:

For good things to happen when that time is long past.

ISKRA:

I want to hope, for you. I've been selfish in my recklessness.
You only wanted to save me.

Beat.

You look pale, brother.

ENEAS:

I don't need anything. I'm alright.

ISKRA:

You're a poor liar. I've taken from you. Take from me as well.

Multiple beats pass. ENEAS looks bereft, guilty, and hungry.

ISKRA's left leg is amputated. ENEAS's mouth is covered in fresh blood. ISKRA cauterizes the wound her dismembered leg is bleeding from in the fire. ENEAS begins to cook the dismembered piece over the same fire. Neither looks.

ISKRA:

I miss the weather. I miss light that isn't this,
She peers into the embers. Despite everything, she doesn't sound resentful.

... did you like the weather at home?

ENEAS:

I liked the snow in the cold seasons. Soft, simple, beautiful...

ISKRA:

Like you?

ENEAS:

I'm not simple.

ISKRA:

But you are soft.

ENEAS scoffs. He stares at the stump of ISKRA's leg. He shrinks in on himself, refusing to look at the segment of her leg cooking for him. The word beautiful goes unspoken.

ENEAS:

What about you? Which kind of weather did you like best at home?

ISKRA:

I loved the sun. I loved when I would sweat through my shawl by midday, even if I tucked myself in the shade. When the middle distance wavered.

A long silence passes between them, ENEAS on the verge of tears. He begins to eat her leg. ISKRA watches him.

ISKRA:

Facing the crowd, wide eyed.

Blood and flesh. Flesh and blood.

Hunger creeps like a spectre. If they spend any longer down here, she'll have to eat another one of his limbs. Her brother, her guardian, the boy who took on her life when she couldn't bear—

The lights fade back in.

ENEAS, interrupting the monologue:

It was raining when I left to find you.

Nothing else is said.

A significant amount of time has passed. The two look utterly miserable. It seems it has been far too long for either of them to reasonably be alive, but it also seems that their flesh has sustained one another far longer than any food. There is a wildness in their eyes.

ISKRA:

What will be left of us when we are gone, Enea?

ENEA:

Bones, Iskra. To the next soul, we will be bones.

ISKRA:

We'll be found that soon?

ENEA:

No, you're right. We may only be dust to them.

ISKRA:

To them?

ENEA:

To them.

ISKRA:

The next souls?

ENEA:

Yes, to them.

ISKRA:

But what about to one another?

ENEA:

What do you mean?

ISKRA:

We rend one another's flesh.

ENEA:

When we die, dear sister, we will be the same dust.

ISKRA:

If the end is inevitable, I would not mind that. The very same
blood and flesh. Flesh and blood.

ENEA:

Are you hungry, Iskra?

ISKRA is silent.

Are you, Iskra?

ISKRA:

Are you, Enea?

BOTH:

Wide-eyed, facing the audience.

They brought each other down here. The day they traded their lives was the day they allowed themselves to become lost in one another's truths. But then, there is no start or end to this.

ISKRA:

They are the wine poured of two cups, into themselves, over and over again.

ENEA:

Books fashioned from the pulp of the same tree.

Silence lingers. Without speaking, the two of them lunge at one another, and in the tussle, the other two correlating limbs are amputated.

More time has passed. ENEA and ISKRA are huddled against one another. They are covered in one another's blood. They look as though they may die.

ENEA and ISKRA attempt to stand up together, supporting each other by accounting for their tied limbs. One with their back to the audience, the other facing the audience. They are meant to produce the image of one form.

Voices come from the amalgam-body, so unified that they sound like one:

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BOTH:

The day we met is not one I remember.

But it is the day I met myself.

End.