



MEDEA KID

by harold lehmann

© 2021



dedicated to Sasha A

my pain's a fair price to take away your smile,
Medea by Euripedes



start

i read about the plays in ancient greece
they had this special crane
called The Mechane

it lifted up the actors playing gods into the sky

Medea was the first non-god
to ride in this crane

>

when this whole thing started
i was living on campus
i didn't have a name back then

i still don't have a name but you can call me Os
or Osmium

it's the densest material in the whole universe
i need weight to exist

somebody gave me a letter
i never got mail
i was so excited

i ran to my secret spot
tore open the envelope
and read these words



My Dear Son

*sorry i murdered you
please forgive me
and come see me sometime
so we can talk about it*

Love Mom- Medea

what?

there were tears on my face
i fell backwards

i kept falling
for it seemed then
the earth
or wherever i was
dis-appeared

was i still on campus?

i heard somebody ask

“Hey - You Okay?”

i tried to answer
but i couldn't

i came to in the Nurse's Office
The Nurse was all business
she shook her head and explained

“you are de- hydrated
and need to rest”

i heard myself answer Ok

i did not mention the letter

for when people talk about time
what are they saying?

*that everything moves in time
but still...*

you see it's all about circumstances
the time it takes for a cut to heal
or explain a terrible mistake

situations stretch like rubber bands
you have to be careful where you step
and then *SNAP*

i heard Medea recommended
to Love Your Fate
no matter what
but im getting ahead of myself

these bodies leap out in front of us
and all we can do is run to keep up

after i blacked out
and came to
they sent me back to the residence

the others were staring at me
nobody said a word

What Are You Assholes Looking At?

that's what i would've said
but i didn't speak

i didn't dare

i wasn't going to let anybody know my true thoughts

i asked myself then
is this place a graveyard
is everybody here Dead?

they called it **the campus-**
so was it a school

and if so what were we studying?

i heard the words
sorry i murdered you

and i passed out
again

>

what happens
when time snaps its jaws on you

what 's your next move

>

do not ever tell people what you actually think

the one place i felt safe
was the kitchen
i always ate
even when i wasn't hungry

and i never was
so that was a clue

the cook had these goofy eyes and a wide smile

i loved him
or at least could we could talk
we were close

what was his name?

the cook told me stories about his life
before the kitchen
he had a motorcycle and
roared around everywhere
without limits

i wanted to live like that
you know
reckless and out of time

my head hurt from too much thinking

it was the letter's fault
i never thought before
time never weighed upon me

i was a regular fool with the others

we played cards
we smoked
we took walks
we played video games
we stared into space
we were always bored
but so what



“they” kept us busy

for now

i was obsessed with the space outside the gate
i wondered to myself

the people out there
probably face all kinds of problems and chaos

but

what if it makes em more alive
or at least feel that way?

behind the gate
we were preoccupied and dull

suspicious moved in on me
and hypnotized by such thoughts
i went to see the cook

he was a true goofball
cracking jokes and cracking eggs

it was insanely hot in that kitchen
a happy hell

with the cook laughing
he was a friendly devil

floating through steam
broken plates
and silverware encrusted with sauce

i guess the dead ate constantly

the cook did seem more real than the others

“ HiYa Pal!”

he flipped an omelette
and gave me one of his true goofball looks

i held up the letter from Medea
“ what can you tell me about this?”
i demanded in a voice that was too whiny and too serious

he dropped his giant spoon
grabbed me by the collar
and shook me

“why are you showing this to me?”

“ i don’t know- sorry “

“be out by the dumpsters in 15 minutes!”
he commanded

his look was so mean
i thought i ruined everything
but i followed his words

i went out
paced in circles
turned back
and crept behind the kitchen

i sat on one of the dumpsters
the sky was so heavy
i could barely breathe

i knew my situation was about to shift
the way you sense weather about to change

i lit a cigarette
attempting to be casual
and fell back inside the dumpster

the cook walked out
and dumped 3 bags of garbage on me

“don’t move, stay where you are”
he whispered

“i brought you something to read”

he tossed a book down to me
The True Story of Medea

“Read it and Weep”
he laughed

so there i was
drowning in garbage

my head spinning
and a new thought came to me

if this situation is a movie
i can’t keep up

the frames are moving too fast

amor fati
Love Your Fate-
for it is garbage and it stinks hahahah

is that how the philosophers might speak to us now?

the cook whispered down to me

“there’s only one way outta here now
thru the **garbage**
stay hidden
read that book
cover to cover
and don’t you dare move

the truck will pick you up
and carry you out
beyond the gate

so be cool
whoever you are”

>

>

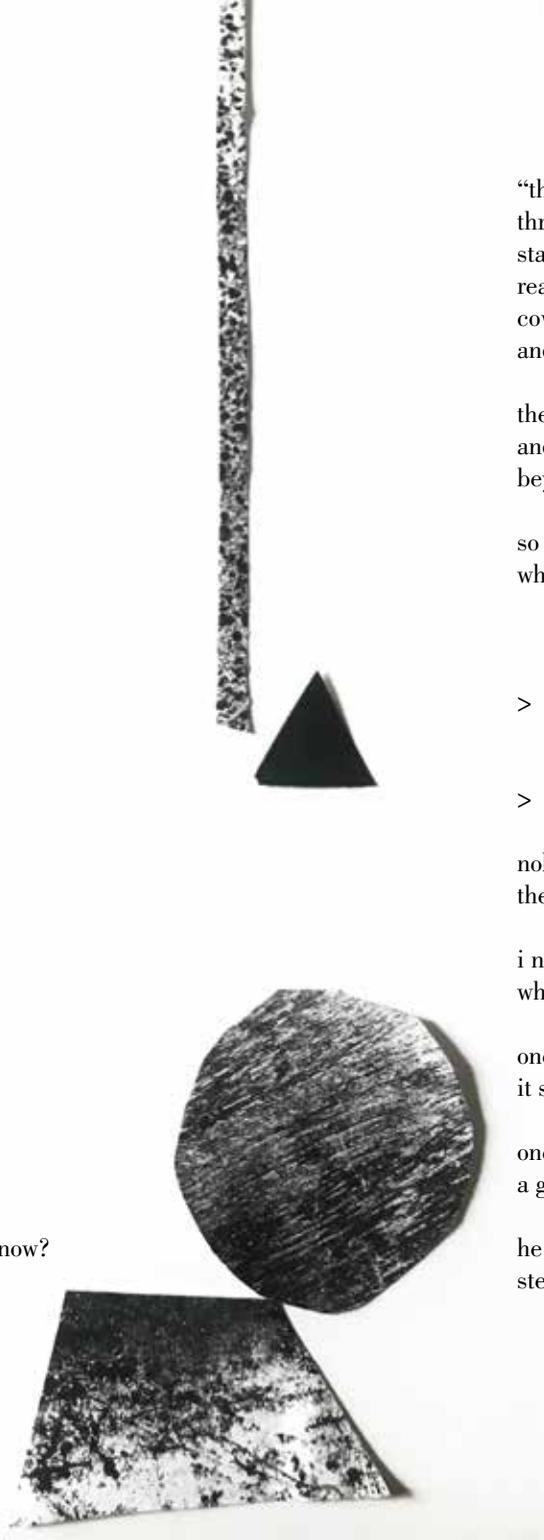
nobody ever said we were dead
they just said we were on *campus*

i never questioned the situation
why would i?

one time we were kicking a ball around
it smacked the gate

one of the guards flew out
a giant with no neck

he moved so fast
steam shooting out his ears



“who do you think you are?”
he sneered

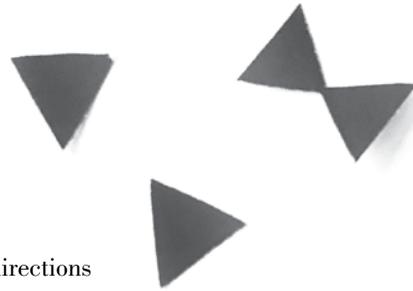
“never approach this gate
avoid this gate at all costs
this gate exists to protect you”

i looked down
muttered i was sorry
picked up the ball
and backed away

i never went near the gate again
though it was in my mind constantly

fear and curiosity pull you in opposite directions
this can make your brain shake

it was all the letter's fault



in the dumpster

underneath the garbage
i read about Medea
there was little else to do

i learned that Medea was a powerful princess

she fell in love with this sailor named Jason
helped him to steal this golden fleece

a fleece is not a sweater

she gave up everything
home friends family

all to be with this dude
a fantasy romance
or maybe the will of the gods
who can say

but Jason had his own ideas
he took off with this other chick
chasing wealth sex and power

at that point Medea lost it
spitting blood and curses

she lured their kids back into their house
and stabbed em to death

then flew up into the sky in a magical chariot

her grandpa was the sun so they say
it was one hell of an exit

so what's the message

that Medea in the book
was the same who wrote me the letter?

mom kills kids
and becomes instantaneous celebrity

what did that make me
nameless blameless invisible?

i wanted to believe in the cook
my one true friend in the entire world
or so i imagined

and something kicked on in me then like a motor
maybe the smell

stink of booze banana peels and rotten meat
i experienced all of it
and thought of Medea

she could be my symbol
i would follow her into life
inside the truck

this nasty motoring womb
a fantasy without proof
but it was all mine

the truck rumbled on

i heard voices
were we near the gate?

soon i would be different
with new thoughts

12



and a new body
maybe

and the truck shook

okay i admit it
sometimes i create faerie tales
a bad habit
but hard to break
it's a way to deal

i imagined i was swallowed by a giant

not my idea-
i saw this painting once by the artist Goya

Saturn Devouring his Son
Saturno devorando a su hijo

a blurry figure
a naked giant munching on a smaller naked body
like a chicken wing

i found out it was the god saturn or cronos
god of wealth and war

anyway
what was up with these stories of parents behaving badly?
the gods loved smashing people's lives
it was their favorite past time

i had too much to think about

i kept asking myself
why are you doing this?

you could be back at the campus

13

playing video games

but now this was in motion
for what?

i kept my voice low
in case anybody was listening

i didn't have a name
but i invented one

os or osmium the densest material in the whole universe

the cook gave me this book
and right or wrong

i was going to use it as a map

to find my way to Medea
i needed to land somewhere

it was lonely in there
not a new feeling

i just never noticed before

but the stink of garbage was better than the campus
a black hole

so what
is it a crime now to be lonely?
before i was around people all the time
and i didn't know a single name

i fell out now in search of Medea
who murdered me maybe

a math problem i could not solve
and the more i read the stranger i felt

the character of the Nurse was the only one
who understood what was happening

she seemed to know where things were headed

this made sense as Nurses are skilled
they need to deal with every possible situation

maybe i could locate this Nurse
ask her what to do-

but how?

you can't just walk into a hospital
and demand to see The Nurse

it was time to leave the garbage truck
i couldn't stand the smell anymore

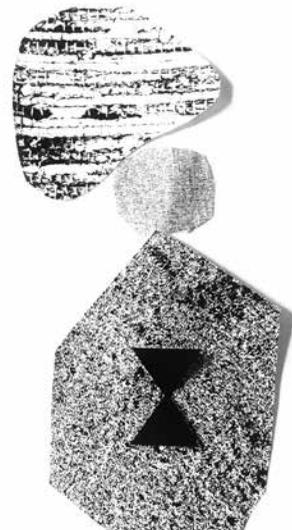
maybe i was becoming more alive?

i crawled out from behind the trash and looked out
we were rolling down this empty road
tall spooky trees on either side

i didn't think
i jumped

a carcass and a movement of time
and in order to keep up with everything

i moved faster than ever i did before
but somehow



i was still too slow

>>

he heard water
and stumbled down below the trees
tried to wash off the muck in a stream

he thought

“well you escaped the campus
congratulations
so what’s your next move?”

are you alive now
or even half-alive?”

this idea of being a ghost
it made decisions feel less complicated

after all
what do ghosts have to do in this world

assuming you’re a ghost with a grievance
you go and haunt people all day long
he did not feel such anger

mostly he was confused
and only required answers about Medea-

were they actually related
and if so - what then?

he wasn’t going back to the campus
not now



and the space between the trees opened up
the wind
the sound of water

he lay back
clothes sinking into the mud
light melting between branches

there was birdsong
and he drifted...

>>

“well are you dead?”

he opened his eyes and saw green boots

“oh - guess not, so how the hell did you get here?”

he saw the old woman’s face-

“aww dang you’re ripe- i can smell you from here”

“are you a Nurse?” he asked

“What? NO- i WAS but not no more.

Who the hell are you and why are you on my property?
Buddy here sniffed you out- though not difficult bein you smell like
ass”

she gestured to the medium-sized dog next to her

the dog gave him a look
sarcastic

as if he was in on the joke

“what kind of mischief you mixed up in kid?”

she seemed to find the situation humorous
as if she possessed additional information

as if she was playing a role and might head backstage
for a costume change

she was tough and imposing like an old bird
the dog watching him with cold eyes

“i’m sorry- i must’ve fallen asleep...”

“where are you from?”

“the campus...”

“oh a STUDENT- well that makes sense-
so what happened- you party too hard
and wander out into the wilderness?”

“i don’t know”

he did not want to argue with the old woman or explain details
he assumed a pose of ignorance

after all
it felt good talking to someone else besides the cook

he saw in her eyes
mockery and kindness
it was reassuring

he wasn’t a ghost
she was speaking to him without crying

or shaking

she looked him over again and shrugged

“alright cmon- let’s see if we can get you cleaned up
and back to where you need to go”

he followed her and Buddy to a dented blue truck
Buddy hopped in the back without hesitation

“you ride back there with Buddy- I don’t want you stinkin up the
cab”

the truck rolled over a dirt track
his head ached

he took deep breaths of the morning air
like a cure

Buddy watched him with that sarcastic look

as if the dog knew all about him
but chose not to speak

they rolled up to a ramshackle house
she did not ask his name or give hers

“stand over there so we can get you cleaned up”

he stood on a stone slab and she sprayed him down with a hose

>>

for now being alive was all that mattered
she brought him fresh clothes

“these belonged to my husband
i don’t believe you’re the same size
but still
they will do for now”

she and Buddy set him up on a cot in the shed next to the house
surrounded by tools and junk
it was comfortable enough

they watched as he finished a meal of grilled cheese and tomato soup

“you never go inside my house got it?”

he nodded

at times, it seemed the old woman was speaking Buddy’s thoughts
the dog kept giving him this look

he was about to snap and ask the dog,
“what the hell is your problem?”

but he didn’t want to seem rude

was it paranoid to assume a dog was giving you a look?
before
he always found dogs to be straightforward in their opinions

why was this dog so different?
he decided to calm himself and assess the situation further

he tried to sleep

squirming around in the cot
it was the beginning of something

a new association



he needed to gather more details about Medea and her location
he sensed the old woman knew a lot more than she let on

he reminded himself not to be reckless
“be patient Os”

it wasn’t easy
you receive a letter that says “sorry i murdered you”

what was the appropriate reaction?

anger
sadness
the telltale loneliness

it rushed out like water and drowned over him

he jumped out of bed
wrapped himself in a wool blanket

and walked up to the old lady’s house

he took one long breath and knocked

she came out in her bathrobe
hair in all directions
staring down at him from the door

“What’s yr problem- Can’t you sleep?”

Buddy was right next to her watching, but did not growl

“i’m so sorry to disturb i ...”

“ what do you want?”

“i’m not sure
you are so kind and it’s late
but you never told me your name”

“no i didn’t”

“you mentioned something before
it’s embarrassing to ask
but i have to know
for my own reasons...”

“what?”

“you mentioned that you were a nurse...”

“that was a long time ago”

“ but i mean could you-
do you know somebody named Medea
or her location?”

he held up the book

“i got a letter from a person named Medea
i need to know who she is
and why she wrote me this letter...”

she looked at him sideways and broke off laughing

“can you believe it Buddy
he’s really out of his mind

freaking out in the dark
bout some story he read in a book”

Buddy the Dog just watched
she kept laughing

slammed the door
he could still hear her inside

“these fools
they don’t even realize
what they don’t know...”

he stood frozen
staring at the door

then shook himself
and wandered back to the garage

and closed his eyes

>

the next morning the air was bright and crisp

he rubbed his face and settled on a tree stump to wake himself up

the old lady bounded out of the house
dressed in a fancy hunting outfit with vest boots hat and equipment

she looked exhilarated

she and Buddy brought him breakfast and watched him eat
there was no mention of the previous evening

he sat on the tree stump and ate his food as they watched

“Buddy and i have some business today”

When she said the word “business” she held up a rifle and tossed it

with other equipment into the back of the truck.

“We need you to stay here and clean up the yard okay?”

“sure”

she did not mention the night before

his head jumped from current circumstances
making stories and connections

was this the start of a new life with the old lady and Buddy?
and if so
how long would that last?

she supplied him with various tools and equipment
a rake a shovel gloves and garbage bags

he got to work clearing up the junk in the yard
weird how they just stood there watching him

but Os attempted to ignore them and focus

then it seemed like Buddy decided all was okay
the dog barked
jumped in the back of the truck with the equipment

the old lady climbed behind the wheel and called out

“this yard better be spotless- and stay out of my house got it?”

she tapped the horn again and they rolled off

why did she say that?
like a challenge

as if she was daring him to enter the house

while they were away on business...

Os decided to put it out of his mind and focus on the work

he liked the cleanup work- it felt good to be accomplishing
to be useful however he could

but the warning about the house followed him around
pulling on him like a magnet

and stories kept building in his mind

his own body
not in time and space,
watching himself like a movie

this was the beginning of a bad pattern

Os listened for the truck and heard nothing
so he took a breath and moved up towards the house

the door was open
he passed inside

through a musty hallway
into a big living room
crowded with heavy furniture junk and knickknacks

he was on the hunt
not sure for what
another force pulling on him

but also common sense

*get out of here Os
the old lady will be back any second
she's got weapons you dummy*

and he saw something by the telephone
the old style with a wheel to dial the numbers

there was a pad of paper,
and scrawled in red ink
were the words

Hotel Medea, Room 17, 1000 Kolchis Rd.

he tore the paper off
shoved it in his pocket
and moved to the door
kind of dizzy

he stepped outside
the old lady was there
she swung a shovel and
whacked him in the gut

“what’s the matter Fool
can’t you follow instructions?”

he fell back on the porch
the wind knocked out of him

he saw Buddy on the ground
a smirk in the canine eyes

Os became furious
a rage like fire swept over him
he jumped up
shifted his weight

and tore the shovel from her old lady hands
she crashed backwards into some plants

“LIAR!” he stalked forward holding up the shovel

“ you know stuff you aren’t saying
about Medea
tell me the truth about this hotel
or i smash in your brains!”

she cried out
“ don’t kill me - i don’t know anything
it’s all just rumors
that’s all”

Os jabbed her in the ribs with the shovel
there was a force working on him now
turning him into somebody else

“what is this scheme
you think it’s funny to play around with me
who else is involved?”

“nobody
you mentioned that name
Medea
i heard about a hotel
so i dug up the address
i was going to tell you
i swear....
but Buddy told me not to”

“why are you still telling lies
i bet you never worked as a nurse either”

“Buddy you lazy mutt- HELP ME!”

but Buddy just sat back and watched them scrap
his canine eyes cold

Os threw down the shovel
she blinked and cried

he held out the paper
shook it in her face

“Where is this Hotel Medea? where is Kolchis?”

but she no longer spoke
dumb and blind
blinking up at the sky

Os thought to himself
this story’s made me evil already
Medea from the outside in
working on me
casting spells

i smash this old woman to the ground
i can’t stop

he ran inside
grabbed a pillow and a blanket

he carefully placed the pillow under her fragile skull
and draped the blanket over her body

this location was over

Os climbed into the truck
all the equipment was still there including the rifle

he started up the motor

Buddy just watched

>

in the story of Medea

if only
was the first line

if only

that we may second-guess ourselves back in time
scratch out words and regret

if only

who are these voices
haunting us

making impossible demands
placing bets on what we do

a mistake

mistakes follow their own logic

he knew well
that not every door is an opportunity

that needing to move is a virus
while time seeps in from the outside

suddenly the meaning of things
is obscured by too many words

nature has its own agenda

are you good with that Os?

a letter drops in your lap
you fall in some garbage
make your getaway

now where to?

he did not know
and with nothing to compare to

memories wiped clean

he was numb
and ruthless

in the old stories they told you how to behave
but now the gods were distant voices
to be ignored or dis- obeyed

he gripped the wheel
and yelled out the window

“what do you want me to do with this letter?”

he wasn't expecting an answer

>>

going up into the hills
in the dented blue truck
the terrain mean and boring

from rocks to road to sky

he searched the glovebox
with his free hand

there was a map and a wad of cash
he attempted to identify his location

he crumpled up the map
and tossed it out the window

discipline was not a part of this story
and anyway
it was too late to learn that trick

pictures flashed in his head
Os tried to erase each one

a picture is not a map
a map is not a location

you are in danger
before the campus
and now?

with no established routine

just words on paper

panic cut into him

in the story of Medea
a group of women called the chorus
follow her around

warning about the future

they act sympathetic
but it's just a tactic

to get close
and learn her motives

why?

are they jealous

we despise people who
try to understand

we survive by recording

Medea was exotic

Jason's fantasy
until he decided to “straighten out”

we invite disruption
then act surprised

maybe we are bored

tragedy is instruction
and entertainment

screw these old timers and their advice
we wanna live

as if they know better

dragging shadows
and bad memories

meanwhile reality
twists in on itself

>>

up ahead was a gas station
a busted shack with one pump

Os thought to himself
Ok
it's worth a shot

at least to get directions
or a snack

he swerved the truck sideways
parked
and hopped out

there were two identical weirdos sitting there

one looked Happy
and one looked Sad

they spoke in unison which was pretty odd



HappySad said,

“HEY that truck looks familiar,
where’d you get it from?”

Os looked at them a second
and then he said

“it’s mine-
my truck”

he forced a smile

“well that truck looks like Thena’s truck
she’s got a blue truck just like that one”

the two weirdos moved their heads in unison
speaking with bugged out eyes

“only her dog Buddy’s always in the back
hope that ain’t Thena’s truck

that would be Baaaaad”

“it’s my truck,” he repeated again
trying to make a smile again

then Os changed the subject

“ i have a question...”

“shoot”

“im looking for this place...
the Hotel Medea
ever heard of it?”