

Lycurgus' Labours Lost

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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A version of this play was first produced on Sat. Jan. 19, 2008 as part of the 24/hr.
play festival at Texas Tech University.

Dramatis Personae

(Originally written for specific actors with these names. Please feel free to change character names to the actual actors' names in your production.)

THOMAS

COURTNEY

KATE

Props

(The props were provided by the actors and distributed to the playwrights.)

Inflatable Plastic Raft

Pirate Sword

Wood/Bamboo Parasol

Brown Winter Hat

Green Tiny Christmas stocking

Setting(s)

The stage.

The ocean.

In limbo.

The hereafter.

Notes

There are misspellings in this script. These misspellings are intended – Example: In the “In limbo” section the word “thrist” is used. Please pronounce these as written.

Perhaps consider indicating the scene titles during the production – especially if they are not in the program.

Scene I: The Stage

Actors perform lines under their own name... while content is not them, they are; strangely.

THOMAS

Have you ever forgotten? Forgotten anything you thought you should have remembered? (*Pause.*) Fifth grade, English class, Small desk, sharp pencil, bad grammar, worse spelling¹, atrocious handwriting due to the fact they stopped me from writing in cursive after the third grade because it was illegible and now my handwriting is a ridiculous assemblage of lower and uppercase letters distinguished only by size. (**Pause. Applause?*) “Yet.” A simple word. Three letters. “Yet.” As in: “It hasn’t happened yet.” Etcetera. (*Pause.*) I... couldn’t remember how it was spelled. (*The next word is spit out.*) “Spelled.”

Thomas freezes... kind of.

COURTNEY

(*Next word said very assertively.*) “Fruit.” (*Pause.*) There are many kinds: Apples, Ore-an-ges, Ki-Wis, the Walnut. (*Slight pause.*) But there is one fruit which I forgot for a decade... one perilously grotesque and freakish fruit whose shape and gritty consistency make it difficult to forget once remembered, and makes my initial forgetfulness all the more troubling. This fruit is the pear.

COURTNEY makes a shape like a pear and freezes in that shape... kind of.

KATE

Step forward as others. Stoically.

I’m pregnant.

Pause... She does not make any movement to indicate that something else will be said, but this intention is felt... until she freezes... kind of.

¹this next part said in one breath until actor reaches the *

Scene II: The Ocean

The stage is empty. A seagull sound comes from SL. A moment later the inflatable raft (already inflated) is thrown on from SR. Immediately the three actors run towards the raft and jump in.

KATE

Dumbly.

Lost lost lost. The page is lost in the sea.

THOMAS

Quite astutely.

Perhaps the ocean has swallowed the universe.

COURTNEY

Lycurgus²

THOMAS

“The Boss.”

KATE

Dumbly. Shuffling her hands in the Ocean.

Lost lost lost. The page is lost in the sea.

² Lycurgus, known to Dr. Jonathan Marks as “Boss of Athens,” is the sole reason any play (prior to that point “oral history”) is preserved to this day.

According to this line of thinking:

1. No play that Lycurgus did not record survived.
2. Lycurgus cemented the primacy of the text over the other parts of theatre and cemented the playwright to the page.

COURTNEY

Haiku?

THOMAS

Lost lost lost lost lost,
The page is lost in the sea.
“Swallow. Swallow me.”

COURTNEY

Not written.

KATE

Dumbly. Shuffling her hands in the Ocean.

Lost lost lost. The page...

She stops. Pulls out a Brown Winter Hat. Sees a button: sings

Oklahoma!

Song trails off quickly because she doesn't remember it. Pause.

Zero, Six, Cup, Oklahoma. One.

Pause. The other two are completely interested in the words/letters she is saying.

N, M, Clash, Al, Buq, E, U, R, Que, N, M, Two, Zero

Pause.

Zero, Six, Kick, Off, Fi, E, Sta. Two.

Pause. The other two begin to seizure violently.

Semua Sayang Aku. Three. Red.

Pause.

Circles.

She throws the hat overboard. The other two stop their seizure. They look at Kate. She smiles dumbly.

THOMAS & COURTNEY

Directly at audience.

Lydell's Winter Hat!

KATE

In Texas!

The scene returns to normal – if there was such a thing. Perhaps this means Kate is, once again, doing things dumbly.

KATE

Blue blue blue.

COURTNEY

Melting melting melting.

KATE

Blue blue blue.

COURTNEY

Melting melting melting.

THOMAS

Is now holding the Green Tiny Christmas Stocking, sings.

Christmas Time is here!

ALL

Let's all sing about the cheer of...

COURTNEY

Christmas singing loud!

ALL

Floating on an ethereal cloud

KATE

Of rainbows... ALL Rainbows

Thomas discards the Green Tiny Christmas Stocking overboard.

KATE

A horrible scream. She dives for the Green Tiny Christmas Stocking.

NO!!!

She is overboard.

COURTNEY

Standing.

What do we do?

THOMAS

Normally in a situation like this I would refer to the best estimate of our location in relation to land.

COURTNEY

...and?

THOMAS

Calculate the likelihood that Kate would find the warm Christmas fuzzy thing before drowning and then calculate, accordingly, whether we would find land before having to either bury her body at sea, a simple but uncomfortable position to be put in, or rescue her by risking our own lives, which of course involves another calculation but at this point the variables are so numerous that any justification of any kind based on such unreliable data would be completely speculation and we'd be much safer to drop to our knees and start paddling furiously with our hands like frightened dogs before Kate returns to find we've been theorizing and calculating her life.

COURTNEY

What?

At this moment Kate emerges from the ocean with a Pirate Sword and is anything but dumb.

THOMAS

Agh!

COURTNEY

To Thomas.

How long till death? How long till death? Calculate. CALCULATE!!!

THOMAS

Umm... Umm...

KATE

You removed my baby's bottle. Baby's first Christmas stolen by a statistician on a boat.

She is inching them closer to an edge.

THOMAS

Memory! Memory, Kate.

KATE

Lost lost lost.

COURTNEY

Kate! Listen, Kate!

KATE

The pages lost in the sea.

COURTNEY

Say something to her.

THOMAS

What words can I say?

Courtney hands him the script.

COURTNEY

Read the pages.

THOMAS

“An apology to all of the youth in the audience for the...”

He gulps loudly.

KATE

Baby’s Christmas lost forever in the sea!

Brandishing sword.

COURTNEY

Read it!

THOMAS

“... ensuing violence.”

Courtney attacks Kate in some pathetic way. While Kate is turned away from Thomas he grabs the sword away from her. He has the sword in one hand and the script in the other. He has no idea how to hold this instrument of comedy & death. Thomas screams wildly. Courtney and Kate turn to look at him.

This next section is “performed” without the actors acting.

KATE

What are you doing?

THOMAS

I was trying to get your attention.

COURTNEY

By screaming and brandishing a script?

KATE

It can't hurt us Thomas.

She touches the point of the sword, looks at her finger simply.

See?

THOMAS

But this...

He holds the script more prominently.

COURTNEY

Papercuts.

KATE

Pain.

COURTNEY

Torture.

KATE

Memorization.

Pause.

The actors resume acting. Thomas throws the script into the ocean and stabs the sword straight through the inflatable plastic raft. A sound effect of air releasing should be heard. The actors should mimic a slow, tortuous, sinking into the ocean while looking blankly at the audience for 15 full seconds (at least). It is best if they do not blink.

THOMAS

Mumble mumble mumble.

KATE

Lost lost lost.

COURTNEY

Mumble mumble mumble.

KATE

The pages lost in the sea.

THOMAS

Mmm... Dhmmmm... Khmmmm...

COURTNEY

Flmmmm... Shmmmm... Tuhmmmm...

KATE

The pages lost in the sea.

Scene III: In Limbo

Random ordering of scene due to employment of randomizing spreadsheet. Should feel like a dream without language. Multiple character names (one after another) can be treated in many ways: all lines are said together... the phrases are split up... they exchange meaningful looks... or something you decide.

COURTNEY

Give me the umbrella.

It is handed over or switches hands.

Give me the umbrella.

It is handed over or switches hands.

COURTNEY

THOMAS

The lights are glowing the the distance! I can see them! Perhaps we can escape! Give me your hand!

They do.

THOMAS

COURTNEY

The Hereafter is the place. I'm smiling instead of crying now.

KATE

THOMAS

Character finds and picks up Wood/Bamboo Parasol and opens it.

There is air here in this place. I can feel it blowing against my skin. I am protected from the sun. We're lost here and we're never going to get out... NEVER!

COURTNEY

I remember Lego's, and bean bags, and frito lays, and summer days, and hot wheels, and dirt bikes.

THOMAS

Didn't anyone try to stare up at the sky?

KATE

I'm dying of thirst. Can anyone give me a drink of water? There's something I've been trying to say... or think... perhaps I've been trying to communicate all my life.

KATE

The Hereafter is the place. I'm smiling instead of crying now. Something is here. Where are we?

THOMAS

KATE

COURTNEY

THOMAS

COURTNEY

THOMAS

Didn't anyone try to stare up at the sky?

COURTNEY

KATE

Crying.

The language is lost. The script is lost. The page is lost. Lycurgus was right... we need to write it down. I remember Lego's, and bean bags, and frito lays, and summer days, and hot wheels, and dirt bikes.

COURTNEY

KATE

THOMAS

Didn't we... (*huff*) swallow a lot of water (*huff*) before we drowned? Couldn't we all just cough it up. Couldn't we all just cough it up and drink forever? I'm dying of

thirst. Can anyone give me a drink of water? There's something I've been trying to say... or think... perhaps I've been trying to communicate all my life. Something is here. Where are we? We need to write it down.

THOMAS

I'm dying of thirst. Can anyone give me a drink of water? There's something I've been trying to say... or think... perhaps I've been trying to communicate all my life. It isn't working. Didn't anyone try to stare up at the sky?

Crying.

The language is lost. The script is lost. The page is lost. Lycurgus was right... we need to write it down. It isn't working. We're lost here and we're never going to get out... NEVER!

Crying.

The language is lost. The script is lost. The page is lost. Lycurgus was right... we need to write it down.

KATE

KATE

COURTNEY

THOMAS

Character finds and picks up Wood/Bamboo Parasol and opens it.

There is air here in this place. I can feel it blowing against my skin. I am protected from the sun.

KATE

COURTNEY

THOMAS

THOMAS

I think the first time I realized I was ineffective was _____.

Actor provides data from own life.

Why don't you calm down. You always act this way. It isn't fair to treat us like this. We're lost here and we're never going to get out... NEVER! Doesn't it feel somewhat different being here rather than being anywhere else?

KATE

KATE

THOMAS

Character finds and picks up Wood/Bamboo Parasol and opens it.

There is air here in this place. I can feel it blowing against my skin. I am protected from the sun. I remember Lego's, and bean bags, and frito lays, and summer days, and hot wheels, and dirt bikes.

COURTNEY

COURTNEY

SCENE IV: The Hereafter

The three actors come onstage from the wings in one glob – a human mass – mixed together pieces of humanity struggling to perform the human task of walking towards center stage. They are mumbling, audibly.

KATE

COURTNEY

THOMAS

MUMBLE MUMBLE MEUBLE MOBLE MEEBLE FEEBLE

Spitter-spatter thumb-bi dumble

Dreeble-dribble

Drop

Drop

Droop

Dop

Dip

An explosion: both as a sound effect & as our characters fly away from each other – as I imagine electrons do when they are angry.

COURTNEY

What... happened?

THOMAS

Agh!

KATE

Spits – yes... she should really spit on the stage. / Looking around.

This isn't what I expected, exactly.

THOMAS

It hasn't happened yet.

COURTNEY

I feel all gritty inside.

Brushing dust/etc... off of herself.

THOMAS

Did we make it?

KATE

Did you seriously... the...

COURTNEY

I'm not... perfect.

KATE

I'm not either.

THOMAS

“Yet.” It hasn't happened yet.

Kate reaches towards the ground to pick up the script that was lost. Thomas finds the green Christmas stocking DSL. Courtney locates the brown winter hat on her own head. A seagull sound comes from SL. A moment later the deflated raft (with the sword as visibly through it as possible) is thrown centerstage from SR. They all look at each other. A pause. They all smile broadly. They slowly walk to the raft, remove the sword (which Kate puts through her beltloop – it is hers) and they unfold the raft together to sit inside with all of their found objects. A long moment of satisfaction in silence – a nodding of heads.

KATE

Do you know what would be great?

The wood/bamboo Parasol is thrown in front of them DSC.

end of play