

SANDY DAYS, SALTY NIGHTS

Too much mom in this picture

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"O God-all come true, all burst to light! O light-now let me look my last on you!
I stand revealed at last-cursed in my birth, cursed in marriage,
cursed in the lives I cut down with these hands!"

— *Oedipus the King*, Sophocles

In the Fort Myers dating world, I've been thinking about the classics lately - Greek tragedy, specifically - and some of the relationship warnings that can be culled from the ancient dramas.

Not to say I don't love them. Euripides' spurned Medea and Sophocles' suicidal Antigone are powerful heroines, even today. The one that worries me, the Greek drama that makes my skin scrawl here in the 21st century, is incestuous Oedipus, the original mother-lover.

I recently exchanged flirty banter with a quick-witted, big-hearted bachelor who promised a night on the town filled with non-stop humor. Even in our short conversation, he had me rolling, stomach muscles aching and the sides of my cheeks hurting from all the smiling.

"I gotta warn you, though," he said. "I got a picture of my mom in my wallet and she's number one on my speed dial."

I stopped laughing.

Years ago, I had my first look at this type

of "Mother knows best" dating behavior, and I've had a strong aversion ever since. When a potential suitor touts his love for his mom, I always have a flashback on "Jimmy".

On our third date, Jimmy suggested we have dinner at his mom's place. It was theoretically early in the game to take me home to the parents, but I turned a blind eye. After the last dishes were cleared and errant globs of murky gravy wiped from the scuffed wooden table, Jimmy and I played a game of Scrabble under his mother's watchful eye. When he nailed a triple word score, she hooted in victory, and when I goofed on the spelling of "svelte," they tittered together and rolled their eyes in unison.

I felt a sense of foreboding, and if there had been a Chorus in this particular tragedy, they would have shouted, "Beware" in eloquent Greek prose.

The signs continued, pointing to inevitable doom for the relationship (mine and Jimmy's, not Jimmy and his mom's). In the final act, the three of us returned from a cross-state roadtrip to pick Jimmy up from college.

On the way home, Jimmy drove and his mother rode shotgun. I was relegated to the back seat.

"I have such bad knees," his mother said. "And this will give Jimmy and I a chance to catch up."

Two hours into the drive, I dozed off, Jimmy and his mom still hashing it out in the front seat.

When we pulled into her driveway, she had an aptly timed muscle spasm and asked if we could help her in. Jimmy tenderly looped an arm under her shoulder and led her through the front door while I trailed uselessly behind.

Jimmy knelt at her side for the next hour while she mewled piteously and begged him not to leave. I stood self-consciously in a corner of the living room until I finally made my excuses and ducked out the back door. Jimmy waved a hand limply in my direction, barely pulling his eyes from his mother's slack face.

Thus marked the tragic end of my brief stint with Jimmy and his mom. Creepy, yes. Classic? Absolutely. Sophocles couldn't have imagined it better. ■



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