

Theseus and Icarus Are Waiting | Drew denDulk

Characters

THESEUS: a young man, maybe in his twenties, outgoing and a little brash. He isn't afraid to speak his mind, even if he isn't always right. He doesn't know how he got here, only that Icarus was here first.

ICARUS: a younger man, barely twenty, calm and carefree. He isn't as loud as Theseus, but his thoughts are deeper, wiser for his age. He doesn't know how he got here either, only that he was here before Theseus.

Setting

Bench in the open. There is an overlook to the right with an implied cliff drop and a streetlamp to the left. Everything is white. The only sound is that of wind rushing past.

It is dark. There's the faint sound of wind rushing past. The sound of wind rises before fading back down again. The lights rise suddenly, illuminating a white bench, sat next to a white streetlamp, a long white string tied to the base and stretching out into the wings. A white overlook fence sits to the other side, supposedly overlooking a cliff drop. There is a young man sitting, his legs crossed, on one side of the bench reading a book. The book has no title on the cover. This is ICARUS. He is dressed casually in grays and light blues; nothing too fancy. He looks up idly, glancing around at the audience. He can see them. He smiles kindly.

ICARUS

Oh, hello. Glad to see you've made it. I've been waiting for you for a while.

A pause. His smile does not change. It isn't unkind or disingenuous, but there is something

about it; something that does not sit right. He closes the book, keeping a finger in the pages to hold his spot. He leans back against the bench, looking at ease.

ICARUS

I'm waiting for someone else, actually. Well, I was told I was. You can wait with me if you'd like, it shouldn't be much longer.

He returns to his book. There is a long moment of silence, only the wind and the occasional flip of ICARUS's book. Then, footsteps. Another young man walks onstage approaching the bench. He holds a bundle of string, one end trailing long behind him. This is THESEUS. He stops next to the bench, waiting for ICARUS to notice him. When ICARUS doesn't look up from his book,

THESEUS clears his throat. ICARUS startles, looking up. When he sees THESEUS, he smiles.

ICARUS

You're here!

THESEUS

I am, yes. Where is 'here,' anyways?

ICARUS ignores his question, patting the empty bench next to him.

ICARUS

Please, take a seat. I'm sure we don't have much longer to wait, but sitting is far more comfortable than standing.

THESEUS

But-

ICARUS

Sit, please!

THESEUS relents, taking a seat. ICARUS goes back to reading his book. THESEUS watches him,

fiddling with his bundle of string. There is silence, awkward on THESEUS's part but completely missed by ICARUS. After a long moment—

THESEUS
I'm Theseus.

ICARUS
I know.

He returns to his book. THESEUS watches him, confused. He tries again.

THESEUS
I'm Theseus. What's your name?

THESEUS holds out a hand. ICARUS looks up, confused.

ICARUS
But don't you know?

THESEUS
No? How would I know? Have we met before?

ICARUS thinks for a moment before shaking his head. He reaches out, taking THESEUS' hand and shaking it.

ICARUS
No, I suppose not. I'm Icarus. It's lovely to meet you, Theseus.

THESEUS
Likewise.

ICARUS nods, smiles, and returns to his book. THESEUS looks around, fiddling with his string, clearly bored and trying to find a way to entertain himself. After a few moments he gives up, turning back to ICARUS. He's impatient.

THESEUS
How long are we here for?

ICARUS
What? Oh, um, I'm not sure exactly. Can't be too much longer now, though. I mean, I've been here for—

ICARUS's voice trails off and he looks out over the overlook, eyebrows furrowing. THESEUS pokes him gently in the arm to regain his attention.

THESEUS
You've been here for how long?

ICARUS
Oh, not that much longer than you, I'm sure. Why, when did you get here?

THESEUS frowns. He is clearly confused.

THESEUS
I just got here a few minutes ago.

ICARUS
Alright, I've been here for longer than a few minutes then!

He returns to his book. THESEUS is very confused, but he lets ICARUS read; continuing to try to find things to occupy his time. Again he grows impatient, letting out a sigh and turning back to ICARUS.

THESEUS
Listen, Icarus—

ICARUS
That's my name, don't wear it out!

THESEUS
Don't you think it's rather boring here?

ICARUS looks confused.

ICARUS

I mean, not really? I have my book, I'm satisfied.

*THESEUS looks very impatient now. It's clear
ICARUS is wearing him out.*

THESEUS

Well that's all fine and good for you, but if you haven't noticed, I don't have a book. I just have this— he waves his bundle of string around -and it's not very interesting.

ICARUS

What are you suggesting, then?

THESEUS

I don't know, we could talk? Tell each other about ourselves? Pass the time?

ICARUS seems to consider that. Eventually he nods, smiling.

ICARUS

Alright! Would you like to start?

THESEUS

Sure.

A pause. THESEUS looks like he's searching for something, words or a story. A starting place.

THESEUS

I'm not sure what to say or where to begin.

ICARUS

Well your name is Theseus, you must be a certain age, which means you have a birthday. You certainly have parents, since you need parents to have a birthday. Maybe you even have siblings, or maybe a partner.

THESEUS

I suppose you're right. Well, I'm Theseus. You already know

that. I'm 25?

ICARUS
Are you unsure?

THESEUS
No, no. I'm 25. My birthday is March 7th. My mother's name
is Aethra, and my father is—

A pause.

ICARUS
Yes?

THESEUS
I'm not quite sure. Do people normally only have one
father?

ICARUS
Traditionally, yes.

THESEUS
I think I have two.

ICARUS
Oh. Well, doesn't that make you special!

THESEUS
I suppose, yes. My fathers are Aegeus and Poseidon.

ICARUS
Like the god?

THESEUS
What?

ICARUS
You know, the god. Poseidon, god of the oceans and
earthquakes? He's quite the big name, I'm surprised you
haven't heard of him.

THESEUS
No, no, I think I do know of him. Oceans, yes. What would

that make me then, if my father's a god?

ICARUS

Even more special than I thought!

THESEUS

I suppose, yes.

They fall back into silence for a moment.

THESEUS

What about you? Who are your parents?

ICARUS

Oh! Well, my father is Daedalus, and my mother is Naucrate. I never really knew my mother, but my father was a great inventor. You see, he designed the Labyrinth!

THESEUS is startled by this. He holds his bundle of string closer.

THESEUS

The Labyrinth??

ICARUS

Yes, have you heard of it?

THESEUS

Heard of it? I was in it!

ICARUS

Oh, well me too! I mean, me and my father lived inside for many years.

THESEUS

I was just there, I swear it. How come I never saw you?

ICARUS

Well, probably because I was already gone.

THESEUS

Gone to where?

ICARUS
Here.

THESEUS
Right. And where is 'here' again?

ICARUS opens his mouth to answer, but there's a new sound suddenly, cutting through the wind. It sounds like breaking metal, gears jamming together, the sound of something very heavy falling very far. THESEUS jumps up, looking up into the sky at something we cannot see. He moves suddenly, striding to the overlook, placing both hands on the rail and leaning out to get a better look. ICARUS watches him from his spot on the bench. He seems unsurprised by all of this.

THESEUS
What is that?

ICARUS
You'll see.

THESEUS watches as the unknown something falls past him, down into the abyss below the outlook. He leans dangerously over the railing, trying to watch it until it hits the bottom.

THESEUS
Was that you?

ICARUS
In a sense.

THESEUS
What does that mean?

ICARUS sighs, setting his book down on the bench and joining THESEUS at the railing. He leans casually against, uncaring of the sudden drop on the other side.

ICARUS

It means yes, but also no. That was certainly me at one point in time, but now... well, you could argue that, since I'm here with you, that really isn't me at all.

THESEUS

It looked like you.

ICARUS

It did.

THESEUS

But it's not you?

ICARUS

Maybe not.

THESEUS

Oh.

ICARUS returns to the bench. THESEUS continues to look out over the edge, leaning with both his arms propped on the railing.

THESEUS

I think I fell once.

ICARUS

You did.

THESEUS

How do you know?

ICARUS

Because you told me.

THESEUS

Just now?

ICARUS

Well yes, but also before.

THESEUS
When?

ICARUS
Never you mind. What were you saying about falling?

THESEUS
Well, I think I did it. Fell, I mean. Once. Like you did, like that.

ICARUS
Right into the ocean.

THESEUS
Right. Did you land in the ocean too?

ICARUS
I did. Most people do, I find. So, do you remember anything else?

THESEUS
I remember... I jumped? Or maybe I was pushed?

ICARUS
It does tend to vary, with you

THESEUS
What? How I end up falling?

ICARUS
Yes. Depends on the story, who's telling it. Some people like to make it your fault. Some people like to say you jumped.

THESEUS
What people?

ICARUS gestures out towards the audience.

ICARUS
Them.

THESEUS looks, but he can't see them.

THESEUS
Who?

ICARUS
You'll see them soon enough. Would you like to know why I
fell?

THESEUS
If you'd like to tell.

ICARUS
I would. I was flying, you see.

THESEUS
Nonsense, people don't fly.

ICARUS
Special people do.

THESEUS
Well you said I was special, why can't I fly?

ICARUS
You're special in a different way. Anyways, I was flying. I
flew too high, my wings melted together, and I fell. Right
into the ocean. Most people assume I died falling, but I
didn't. I really died drowning.

THESEUS
Sounds unpleasant.

ICARUS
It was.

THESEUS
Wait, so you're dead?

ICARUS
Well, yes, in a sense.

THESEUS
You keep saying that!

ICARUS
Saying what?

THESEUS
"In a sense." It doesn't mean anything. You keep saying it,
but it doesn't clarify anything!

ICARUS
Well maybe I don't want to clarify anything.

THESEUS
Ok, fine. You're dead. Does that mean I'm dead?

ICARUS
Well—

THESEUS
Don't say "in a sense."

ICARUS
Fine. You're only most of the way dead.

THESEUS
And what does that mean for me?

ICARUS
It means you have choices. Options. Not many, but options
nonetheless.

THESEUS
Well, what are they?

ICARUS
I can't tell you that.

THESEUS
Why not?

ICARUS
It's not my place.

THESEUS
Gods, you are the most unhelpful person I have ever met!

THESEUS stalks over to ICARUS, grabbing his book and tossing it over the overlook and off the cliff. ICARUS watches it go, looking sad.

ICARUS

Well, now you've made your choice.

THESEUS forgets his anger, suddenly taken aback.

THESEUS

Have I?

ICARUS

One of them.

THESEUS

Well what do I do now?

ICARUS

Your string.

THESEUS

Yes?

ICARUS

Can I see it?

THESEUS cautiously hands over his bundle of string. ICARUS examines it, winding it between his fingers a few times before handing it back, seeming satisfied.

ICARUS

It will do.

THESEUS

It will do for what?

ICARUS

For a guide, like before.

THESEUS
Before?

ICARUS
Never mind. Do you want to try again?

THESEUS
Try again?

ICARUS
Do you want a second chance? A restart? Would you like to try again?

THESEUS
Oh. Is that an option?

ICARUS
Here, yes. With me, yes.

THESEUS
Then—yes, I'd like to try again.

ICARUS
Good.

ICARUS stands, crossing to the streetlamp. He swings around it once, neatly removing the string that's currently tied to the base as he goes. He walks back to THESEUS, holding out the end of the string.

ICARUS
Tie this to the lamppost. As long as this is tied tightly and you hold on to your bundle, you won't get lost.

THESEUS does what he's told. Once he's done, he turns back to ICARUS, who has moved back to the overlook.

THESEUS
What now?

ICARUS
You can go.

A pause.

THESEUS
Go where?

ICARUS
Anywhere you want. Anywhere the string will reach.

THESEUS
And that's how I start again?

ICARUS
In a sense.

THESEUS snorts. He turns, starts walking back offstage. He pauses. He looks out at the audience, finally able to see them. He understands, suddenly. He understands all of it.

THESEUS
Oh. Well, hello there. And goodbye, Icarus.

ICARUS
See you later, Theseus.

THESEUS walks offstage, the string trailing behind him. The sound of wind remains, and ICARUS stares out past the overlook. Finally he sighs, running a hand through his hair and down his face.

ICARUS
And so it begins again.

He begins to walk back towards the bench, turning back to give the audience a rueful smile as he sits down.

ICARUS
One must assume Sisyphus to be happy.

He pulls a book from behind him, an exact copy of the one he had earlier. He crosses his legs then opens to the page he left off at.

ICARUS

I would love to have Sisyphus come through here, now that would be an interesting conversation. But no, I suppose he's not part of my job. I've just got—

ICARUS looks back to where THESEUS disappeared, following the string for a moment before turning back to his book with a sigh.

ICARUS

Well. He'll be back. And I'll be here waiting.

Lights fade.

