

## Children of War

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A full-length play by Selah DeGering

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Children of War  
by Selah DeGering  
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A full-length play

3 men and 3 women

## Cast of Characters

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| Teleion  | A prince of Elis. Insecure, flighty, clumsy, but nevertheless hardworking and earnest. Life is worth living even if it's terrible. Pessimist.   |
| Archaeon | Main guard attending Prince Teleion, his not-so-secret lover. Strong, brave, devoted, and true. Life is a feast of fruits- devour it. Optimist.   |
| Calista  | Princess of Ithaca. Daughter of Ares. Stubborn, proud, confident, vengeful, has a short fuse. Deeply kind. Ruthless in a way Archaeon can understand; a way Teleion fears about both of them. |
| Delia    | Lady in waiting to Princess Calista. Has a quiet strength, and keeps Calista grounded. Soft-spoken.   |
| Lycaeus  | King of Elis, Teleion's father. Lawful Evil, moderately competent Villain on an imperialistic conquest, but an attentive father nonetheless. Boisterous.                                      |
| Cora     | Queen of Ithaca, Calista's mother. Managing the kingdom and its affairs in the absence of her husband. Controlling, overprotective, fiercely loving but afraid of the future.                 |
| Page     | Bit part, young servant who delivers messages. Can be played by anyone.   |

COURTYARD, ELIS- Ancient Greece, a brilliant day. Prince TELEION meekly approaches his main guard, ARCHAEON. They wear matching pendants on leather cords around their necks.

TELEION

Archaeon?

ARCHAEON

Teleion.

TELEION

What would you say if, hypothetically, I did something...unforgivable?

ARCHAEON

I suppose I'd forgive you.

TELEION

But what if it was so bad-

ARCHAEON

Then perhaps I wouldn't forgive you.

TELEION is quiet.

ARCHAEON

Perhaps I would be unable to look at you the same. Perhaps this...hypothetical action would alter you, change you. Perhaps there would be no going back.

ARCHAEON takes TELEION's hands. TELEION cannot look at him.

ARCHAEON

But I would love you.

ARCHAEON gets on one knee, still grasping TELEION's hands.

ARCHAEON

I swore it by Helios himself, against a red sky, I swore, against every beaming star in the heavens, to love you always, above all, against all.

ARCHAEON brings one of TELEION's hands to his face.

ARCHAEON

Until my bones are dust and my spirit drinks of the riverwaters Lethe. And then, I would have to be dragged by the Lord of the Underworld himself, my jaw pried open by torture, to bid me drink and forget my love of you.

TELEION closes his eyes, holding his breath.  
ARCHAEON kisses his hand.

ARCHAEON

Teleion.

TELEION

Yes?

ARCHAEON

Would you tell me what troubles you?

TELEION

(A whisper) I don't know what to do.

ARCHAEON

I will tear the earth asunder at your call. Poly philtatos. Speak and I will act, wield me as your sword and your shield, both.

TELEION

That's what I'm afraid of.

ARCHAEON frowns. He rises, still holding  
TELEION's hands.

ARCHAEON

...What have you done?

TELEION

I am an oathbreaker.

ARCHAEON drops Teleion's hands.

TELEION

I couldn't bring myself to- I had no choice.

TELEION worries the pendant.

ARCHAEON

What was this oath?

TELEION

There will be consequences. They knock upon our door even now, dangle above our heads like mighty stones, boulders, temples' worth of consequences- will you stay with me?

ARCHAEON

What was the oath?

TELEION

Will you?

ARCHAEON is quiet.

TELEION

You have sworn.

ARCHAEON

I know it.

TELEION

Then-

ARCHAEON

And the gods know it. Tell me your shame.

TELEION

Long ago...

TELEION covers his face and shakes his head.

TELEION

I made an agreement.

TELEION crosses his arms tightly against his chest.

TELEION

I made an agreement with a foreign nation to take on a young woman when she came of age.

ARCHAEON

Meaning...

TELEION

To wife, Archaeon.

ARCHAEON

...I see.

TELEION

I have denied my father in this. Defied him. He says this will be war, that I've brought the family low before the gods and their vengeance will be paid in blood- blood on my hands if I do not honor my word.

ARCHAEON

This is the oath you've broken?

TELEION nods.

ARCHAEON smiles despite himself.

ARCHAEON

And you broke this oath to what end?

TELEION

To- (incredulous) To the end that I do as I please!

ARCHAEON

And what pleases you?

TELEION shoves him.

TELEION

This is serious!

ARCHAEON

(Laughing) I never said it wasn't.

TELEION

I'm in distress!

ARCHAEON

I always imagined that, should our union bring death, it would be at my hands, not yours.

TELEION

What does that mean?

ARCHAEON

It means...we are the same. That the lengths to which you will go for my benefit are without measure. This is no light thing. ...What is her name?

TELEION

Calista.

ARCHAEON

The most beautiful girl in the world? So beautiful, goddesses envied her?

TELEION

Like the legend, yes. I don't know if she lives up to it.

ARCHAEON

You've told your father. What now?

TELEION

We...prepare, I suppose.

ARCHAEON

Has he agreed to pass word of your disgrace?

TELEION

(dryly) Ha. ...I imagine not, at least not yet. He's still of the mind to turn my heart.



ARCHAEON  
But he will not?

TELEION  
He cannot.

ARCHAEON  
...Would banishment avoid war?

TELEION  
You're hardly one to shy from violence.

ARCHAEON  
You couldn't sleep at night starting wars for this end. No. No, there must be another way.

TELEION  
The other way is getting married.

ARCHAEON  
I thought you'd never ask.

TELEION rolls his eyes.

ARCHAEON  
Do you know how she feels on the matter?

TELEION is quiet.

ARCHAEON  
If she denies the match, you can reach a mutual agreement.

TELEION  
Ithaca is a small nation. They need this alliance.

ARCHAEON  
Who's to say an alliance can't be reached by other means? Why not just- ally?

TELEION  
Because they're *so* small, they need something of ours- a testament that we won't abandon them next they're caught between two larger enemies.

ARCHAEON

Hm...something your father wouldn't otherwise give up... And this weak babe of a kingdom is the most advantageous match your father could arrange?

TELEION goes red.

TELEION

Calista is a demigoddess.

ARCHAEON

To whom?

TELEION's throat is tight. ARCHAEON goes pale.

ARCHAEON

No...

TELEION nods.

ARCHAEON

Truly?

TELEION nods more earnestly.

ARCHAEON

Are you equipped to resist a daughter of Aphrodite?

TELEION

No! I mean yes, it's not- it's Ares!

ARCHAEON

Oh.

TELEION

Calista is a daughter of Ares.

ARCHAEON

Breaking the engagement would mean war.

TELEION

Come up with that yourself, handsome?

ARCHAEON

Marriage would probably bring war, too, just with the god of blood and honor on your side rather than not. Hm...is Lycaeus still...ambitious?

TELEION

Father still wants to reign the world in blood, yes.

ARCHAEON

Won't back down, then... Run away?

TELEION

And have three armies and my father's navy raise the ocean to find me? No, thank you.

ARCHAEON

He could banish you.

TELEION

He could banish us both and I could play the lyre in the streets.

ARCHAEON

You play?

TELEION

Like a man with cloven hooves. There's not a way out of this.

ARCHAEON

Not a way for you to get out of it, but if she-

TELEION

I already told you, her-

ARCHAEON

-Didn't like you?

TELEION

I beg your pardon?

ARCHAEON

What if she didn't like you? What if- she found you intolerable? What if she was *disgusted* by you?

TELEION is appalled.

ARCHAEON

Think about it. You can be plenty insufferable when you want to be.

TELEION deadpans. ARCHAEON smiles fondly and takes TELEION's hand, twirling him lightly to take hold of him from behind. Grasping both of TELEION's hands, ARCHAEON's chin rests over TELEION's shoulder. They sway softly. TELEION tries not to smile.

ARCHAEON

You don't think you could be a little cicada, chirping in her bed?

TELEION

Most people like cicadas.

ARCHAEON

*You* like cicadas. Girls typically don't.

TELEION

What would you know of girls?

ARCHAEON

More than you.

TELEION

If she comes to hate me, it would be for love of you, no doubt.

ARCHAEON scoffs.

ARCHAEON

If you're as much a beast to her as you are to me, she'll be gone in no time.

TELEION's jaw drops in playful drama.  
ARCHAEON kisses him. Languidly, he reaches his  
arms around ARCHAEON's shoulders.  
ARCHAEON grins and pulls him closer.

COURTYARD, ITHACA- same day. Princess  
CALISTA and her servant, DELIA, lounge on stone  
benches, fanning themselves and panting.

CALISTA

I'm going to cut it off.

DELIA

No, princess.

CALISTA

I am. I'll weave a blanket and wear it come winter.

DELIA

A golden fleece?

CALISTA

Baa.

DELIA

You have beautiful hair, princess.

CALISTA

I know. Say, come word from my liege?

DELIA

I haven't heard anything. Your mother, though-

CALISTA groans.

CALISTA

She's worse than these infernal bees. Calista! Calista! You must apply yourself! Do your lessons!

DELIA

You're excellent in lessons.

CALISTA

The best!

DELIA

She's only preparing you. Who knows what this Teleion is like, he's hardly known for public appearances. She fears his standards may be unpredictable.

CALISTA

I don't need to predict his expectations, I'm sure to exceed them all. By double, at least.

DELIA

Triple.

CALISTA smiles.

CALISTA

You know, they say his father, Lycaeus, aims to launch a conquest of Cephallenia. Ithaca will become a naval port, cornering them on two sides.

DELIA

Of what use is Cephallenia? Pigs and sheep?

CALISTA

We've plenty of those here.

DELIA

Baa.

CALISTA laughs.

CALISTA

Securing Cephallenia means he'll have Zacynthus all but surrounded. Then Leucas, every island on the Ionian sea. Then...Arcanania.

DELIA

Big plans.

CALISTA

Father told me I'd be queen of two shores. I'd have to cross a horizon for that, and own both sides. And for that, I need Elis.

DELIA

And you will have it.

CALISTA

I will. Teleion should be easy enough to charm, and besides. My interests ought to suit his well enough. ...Do you ever want more out of life, Delia?

DELIA

More, princess?

CALISTA

It is my destiny to run the world red in the name of my father, yes, and I'm perfect for that job.

DELIA

Couldn't be one better.

CALISTA

Exactly! But sometimes...I don't know. I want to cut my hair.

DELIA

Your mother would be furious.

CALISTA

...No, she'd cry.

DELIA

...We can cut a small bit. Just off the ends, if you'd like.

CALISTA sits up, delighted.

CALISTA

Delia!

DELIA

We can even keep it, give a lock of hair to your beloved.

CALISTA's face falls. DELIA furrows her brow and moves closer, offering her hand. CALISTA considers, then takes it, though still crestfallen.

CALISTA

What a world we live in.

DELIA

Indeed.

CALISTA

...It is said I will find great love in Elis.

DELIA

Who couldn't love you?

CALISTA giggles.

CALISTA

You're cruel to tease me. No, the Oracle has spoken it.

DELIA

Then this Teleion must be a great man.

CALISTA

...Must it be Teleion?

DELIA

Who else?

CALISTA drops her gaze. DELIA realizes too late what she was asking.

DELIA

He...will be worthy of you in ways others cannot compare.

CALISTA

Mm.