

WHAT IF JOCASTA WERE MORE IN CONTROL

than we've all been led to believe? What if
when she allowed Oedipus to be left
exposed on the mountaintop, it was not

after all, to save Laius, but to redeem
herself from him, the cruelties sanctified
to the king—*droit du seigneur*, princes raped,

daughters sacrificed willy-nilly to Gods,
absent for decades, drunk on wine, women
and lotus leaves. Who'd blame her

—those ancient Greeks made great heroes
but terrible husbands and even worse
Gods—sex with anything that moved,

sex as anything that moved: sea foam,
a swan, the rain. Maybe she planned
to leave her son ankle-pinned

on the bare mountain, counting on
the child-starved heart of the shepherd
and his crone, in it right from the start:

the oracle, the blight of Thebes,
the death at the crossroads, which brooch
to choose, her son's limping return,
the messenger's terrible news.

Rebecca Foust