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You Can't Control Destiny

Oedipus the King not only is a classic example of tragic hero story, but also shows how quickly things will go awry when mankind tries to control their destiny. Whether or not one believes in a higher power, this Sophocles tale goes to show that even though we try our best, some things are just left to fate.

When Laius and Jacosta, Oedipus's parents first heard the prophecy, they decided to kill their newborn son. They bound his ankles and left him in the wild for dead. If they could've killed the infant, their grim future would have been avoided. The problem was that one of their slaves, saved the baby and gave him to a shepherd of Corinth thinking that the prophecy would still be avoided and the life of Oedipus would be spared as well. In the words of the slave, "I pitied the little baby, master, hoped he'd take him off to his own country, far away, but he saved him for this, this fate. If you are the man he says you are, believe me, you were born for pain," (Sophocles, 232).

Starting from a young age, Oedipus did everything in his power to avoid the prophecy that he'd kill his father and marry his mother. To try and manage this situation on his own, he left his home in Corinth, "You are fated to couple with your mother, you

will bring a breed of children into the light no man can bear to see-- you will kill your father, the one who gave you life!' I heard that and ran," (Sophocles, 205). Had his parents of Corinth been honest with him about being biologically unrelated, the story might have ended differently, but this was the young king's destiny. Oedipus was trying to do the right thing and avoid the prophecy, but in the end it was out of his control.

Even in today's world, the reader can learn that fate is unavoidable. Often people try to control every aspect of their life: where they go to college, their career, how much money they make, when to start a family, etc. The future may not be proclaimed by an oracle, like it was to Oedipus, but readers will understand that no matter how hard they try to do the right thing, sometimes things won't go as planned. Oedipus tried to end the plague by trying to find the murderer of Laius, which turned out to be him. "He is the plague, the heart of our corruption, as Apollo's oracle has just revealed to me. So I honor my obligations: I fight for the god and for the murdered man," (Sophocles, 172).

Several times throughout the play, did characters try to take matters into their own hands. When this happened, things worse than the prophecy seemed to happen. The shepherd tried to save the life of the baby, but it ended up putting the entire city of Thebes in distress. When Oedipus ran away from his parents only to end up killing his biological father. In the end, Jacosta and Laius were dead due to the attempts to prevent destiny, Thebes experienced a famine, and Oedipus was exiled. Had they not tried to control the entire situation, the fate of Oedipus might have been more uplifting and over less depressing.