
Extract from **Welcome to Thebes**

By Moira Buffini

Welcome to Thebes

First published in 2010

by Faber and Faber Limited

All rights reserved © Moira Buffini, 2010

All rights whatsoever in this work are strictly reserved.

Characters

MEGAERA, *a female soldier*

Sergeant MILETUS

Junior Lieutenant SCUD

EURYDICE, *president of Thebes*

HAEMON, *her son*

ANTIGONE, *her niece*

ISMENE, *her niece*

THESEUS, *first citizen of Athens*

PHAEAX, *his aide*

TALTHYBIA, *a diplomat*

TIRESIAS, *a seer*

HARMONIA, *his guide*

POLYKLEITOS, *a mechanic*

PRINCE TYDEUS, *leader of the opposition*

PARGEIA, *a senator*

AGLAEA, *Foreign Secretary*

THALIA, *Minister of Justice*

EUPHROSYNE, *Minister of Finance*

EUNOMIA, *a student of law*

BIA, *Minister of Trade and Industry*

HELIA, *Minister of Agriculture*

ERIS, *Chief of police*

XENOPHANES, *Minister of Education*

ENYALIUS, *head of Athenian security*

PLAUTUS, *Athenian security*

ICHNAEA, *Athenian secret services*

Aides, bodyguards, attendants, citizens.

A city named Thebes,

Somewhere in the twenty-first century.

PROLOGUE

Boom

Three Theban soldiers enter: Megaera, a woman of twenty, Miletus a sergeant of maybe thirty, Junior Lieutenant Scud, a boy of thirteen. They come through the auditorium.

MEGAERA: OK shut up

MILETUS: Anyone still talking now shut up

SCUD: SILENCE

MEGAERA: Nobody make any sudden moves, nobody get up

MILETUS: Stay in your seats

SCUD: PHONES

MILETUS: Phones – any fucking disco tunes and I will not answer for my men

SCUD: You check them NOW

MEGAERA: Put the booklets down. Don't read that shit

SCUD: All of you make sure those fuckers don't go off

MILETUS: Listen to the Junior Lieutenant – he don't like mobile phones

SCUD: They have bad energy and they affect your brain. I'm telling you for your own good

MEGAERA: Anyone who wants the toilet I don't care. You missed your chance

By now all three are on the stage. It is dawn.

SCUD: You've got to look for bomblets

MILETUS: I am insulted if the truth be known

SCUD: Get looking

MILETUS: Our orders are to search for unexploded sub-munitions. No equipment. For our mine detector we have got the Junior Lieutenant here

SCUD: They are called bomblets – and they're yellow.
Look like little cans of fizz
And children pull on them because their thirst is bad
BOOM
And you become a rain of meat
And women pulling bits of you from out their hair
And screaming oh disgusting get me some shampoo

MILETUS: What are you doing?

MEGAERA: I'm sitting down here on my arse

MILETUS: Why?

MEGAERA: I haven't finished with these people

MILETUS: What d'you want with them?

Scud jumps on some rubble.

SCUD: BOOM

MEGAERA: To welcome them to Thebes

MILETUS: Don't tell them all your shit

MEGAERA: Why not?

MILETUS: They'll leave

MEGAERA: Are you the expert?

MILETUS: I would leave

MEGAERA: I'm going to tell them Theban politics

MILETUS: No one understands that

Scud jumps on another pile of rubble.

SCUD: BOOM

MILETUS: Easy son
Be easy

You stay right by my side

Miletus moves away, with Scud. Megaera holds up her gun.

MEGAERA: The only politics in Thebes is this.
This has been the government for years.
I don't know how it started; I don't care
Some brother fighting brother for the power.
My politics began the day the soldiers came.
This is my shit and if you're scared to hear it
Close your eyes.
We heard their guns and ran.
I could feel bullets wooshing past my face.
I saw a man turn round and try to stop one with his hand
Because he thought 'what's this?'
As if the bullet was a fly.
Woosh
They trapped us by the river.
If I could describe you how it felt
They way they held me down and tore
You would be sick I know you would
Or scream and we'd be here all day
While you had counselling and cried.
After five or six I was unconscious I suppose.
The soldiers must have thought that I was dead
Because when I came to, I found myself
In a pile of bodies. My mother

And my sisters seethed with ants.

This is your introduction to our state
'Cause everybody has a tale like this.
I slipped into the river, floated to the fields.
Time was not even. It was odd.
It bends and it's misshapen in my mind.
A day was like a month, a month a year.
I don't think that I spoke one word.
I ate forest nuts and beetles poor old me
My monthly bleeding never came again.

SCUD: BOOM

MEGAERA: And then Miletus found me
He's the sergeant there, my brother now.
He put this gun into my hand and
Made me human once again.
When we fall upon our enemies
- Always the men who did that to me -
Feelings come on me like I don't know
I am not scared of anything
No pain about my family
No cares
I am all powerful, all fire
I am revenge, Megaera; I am fury
Woosh.
The furies have no laws other than their own
Which even Zeus himself has to obey.
These are my laws now
And this, my life of politics.
Peace?
Never, not for me

MILETUS: Megaera

SCUD: Dead bloke

Miletus and Scud have discovered a corpse. Megaera approaches.

MILETUS: Look at that uniform
New boots, the golden braid

Scud spins, startled. He raises his rifle.

MEGAERA: It's ok Scud
He cannot harm you

SCUD: Felt fingers down my back

MEGAERA: Well they ain't his
He's maggot food

MILETUS: This is Polynices

MEGAERA: How do you know?

MILETUS: His necklace

MEGAERA: Fuck

MILETUS: General Polynices

SCUD: Did we fight for him?

Megaera spits.

MILETUS: No. He's the one who pulled you out of school; his men

Scud reacts to this, the memory like a cuff.

When I picked you up I was with Creon's men, remember? We fought for him til the stupid fucker got dismembered. Then for Adrastus til he set himself on fire. Then we were in the forest fighting everyone. Last we joined Eteocles. He's the one who still had food

SCUD: Who do we fight for now?

MEGAERA: That is the question, Scud

SCUD: I fought for you

MILETUS: I know

SCUD: The ghosts are grey

MILETUS: Come on

Miletus leaves with Scud.

MEGAERA: Welcome
Welcome to Thebes