Consider Oedipus’s Father

BY [DAVID TOMAS MARTINEZ](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/david-tomas-martinez)

It could have been a car door

                leaving that bruise,

as any mom knows,

almost anything could take an eye out,

and almost anybody could get their tongue

                frozen to a pole,

which is kind of funny

                to the point of tears

                plus a knee slap or two

that an eye can be made blue, pink

by a baby’s fist, it fits

perfectly in the socket. It’s happened to me.

                Get it?

Any scenario is better,

beats sitting in a car and hearing

                someone you love

                sob,

which I have done

with a black eye.

For me, a woman’s tears

are IKEA instructions

on the European side.

I’m sure for Laius, Oedipus’s father, it was the same.

                Think of him sleeping

after having held a crying Jocasta

because they had fought for hours

because she was stronger.

                Who knew better the anger of young Jocasta?

Knew that when the oracle, or the police,

                come, they are taking someone with them.

I’m sure Laius looked at the crib

                and thought *better you*

*than me, kid.*

Now consider your own

father, or the guy your mother

                dated until he took

the three-sided road,

crouched in front of a paper

                plate with a catcher’s

                mitt, teaching

                a curveball grip —

                but did he ever teach

the essential lesson

of how to block a punch

                from a finely manicured hand,

or to walk away when

records are being candled and books disemboweled,

teach the wonderment of

                a jar of peanut butter jammed

in a TV screen

below a snail trail of ice cream

                near broken pictures on the wall?

Not while he’s king, I bet, and not while

                there are mothers and their jobs,

like breastfeeding or serving a warm plate

                on a table

next

to cold beers

                from the hand

of a mother he made from a virgin

                with his own hands, his own hands.