

Sophocles'

*Oedipus Rex*

in a version by Adrian Guthrie

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CHORUS  
LEADER OF THE CHORUS  
OEDIPUS  
TEIRESIAS  
CREON  
JOCASTA  
FIRST MESSENGER  
SHEPHERD  
SECOND MESSENGER

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OEDIPUS

Children, my children,  
what brings you here?  
What plague and famine -  
what pestilence raging in our city  
brings you to me?

I hear cries from the city -  
I smell your incense  
and I smell death.

I hear your prayers  
and come myself,  
not trusting messengers.

Tell me what I can do for you.  
I, Oedipus, whose name all know.  
Your fears are mine also -  
I promise to do whatever is needed  
to end this suffering.  
Not to, I would be hard-hearted.

You, old man, speak for the others.

LEADER OF CHORUS

Oedipus, great king of our city,  
here are those who cannot yet walk,  
and those almost too old to walk any longer;  
of all ages, we have come to you.

You king, have seen the city  
plunged into a sea of death.  
The fields are barren.  
There is no food. The stock sicken and die.

On top of the drought, there is disease.  
In the city people die of the plague.  
In such times it seems,  
our women bare no children.  
All we bare is pain -  
the cries and regrets  
and despair of a people  
who knows no alter to  
carry their suffering.

We do not come to you as a god  
but as the first of men -  
a hero -  
the one who saved us from the Sphinx -  
the one who answered her riddle.  
This land, and it's people  
call on you to find  
a new answer to our suffering.  
a new answer to our fear!  
Remove this sense of doom!  
Remove this sense of fear!  
Rule us!  
But rule a peopled land,  
not one without survivors.  
A land without it's people  
is no land.

OEDIPUS

I suffer with you, children.

You have put it well  
but before you spoke I have known,  
and suffered with you.  
Your sickness is mine.  
When the city groans  
I groan with your pain.  
Each has his agony  
but I suffer the agony of the whole people.

It is not something new  
for you to tell me of the city's sufferings.  
I have not been asleep.

I have already travelled many  
possible paths towards our salvation.  
But there is only one way  
to know what particular truth weighs on us  
and so, I have sent  
my wife's brother, Creon,  
to Phoebus' temple  
to ask what act or word of mine can save the city.

I sent him many days ago -  
he is slow to return.  
When he comes back  
I should be wrong not to carry out

whatever the god says -

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

You speak well  
and at the right time -  
for listen -  
Creon at this moment is returning!

OEDIPUS

His face shines with Phoebus' light -  
God, grant that he might bring us relief.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

His face speaks before him -  
and laurel crowns his head!

OEDIPUS

He must not be able to hear us -  
Creon! Brother!  
What does the god tell us?

CREON

Good news!  
For even if harsh to hear at first  
knowledge will, in the end,  
make us strong.

OEDIPUS

These words do not either give confidence  
or cause apprehension -  
but leave us uncertain what to think.

CREON

If you wish it  
I can tell my knowledge  
before all -  
if not, let us go inside -

OEDIPUS

Speak before all -  
the sorrow I bare for them  
is more important than my own life.

CREON

I will tell you all, then:  
the god, Phoebus,  
was very clear -

we must drive out of our land a thing which pollutes us  
born here  
and cherished here  
but not fit to remain here.

OEDIPUS  
How shall we purify ourselves?  
How shall we be rid of this?

CREON  
By ridding ourselves of a man.  
By banishing one whose blood  
carries the guilt of blood -  
a murderer who brings  
this storm to our city.

OEDIPUS  
Who is it, the god names?

CREON  
King.  
Before you led us  
there was a king called  
Laius.

OEDIPUS  
I have heard of him, of course.

CREON  
Phoebus, the god,  
has commanded,  
that we punish his murderer.

OEDIPUS  
Where in all the world  
are we to find this murderer,  
so long after the crime.

CREON  
The god said:  
In this land  
and of this land  
Only seeking  
do we find.  
Only asking  
answered.

This land asks of you -  
you hold the answer.

OEDIPUS  
Where did Laius die?  
In the city,  
the country, or abroad?

CREON  
He left the city  
on a mission to Delphi  
but never returned.

OEDIPUS  
Was there no report  
no news, no witness  
to what happened ?

CREON  
They were all killed  
but one  
and he fled in terror.  
In such terror that he could  
tell of only one thing.

OEDIPUS  
What?  
One thing may lead to many.

CREON  
That robbers killed the king.

OEDIPUS  
When did a mere thief kill a king?  
Was there not corruption and conspiracy here  
in the city  
to kill a king?

CREON  
There were doubts  
but Laius was dead  
and there was no-one to turn to  
for guidance and the truth  
in our troubles.

OEDIPUS  
What troubles overshadowed

the killing of a king?

**CREON**

The riddle of the Sphinx  
her threat to the land  
overshadowed Laius' death.

**OEDIPUS**

I will bring light to this dark question.  
Phoebus, Apollo, sun god, as allie will help me.  
I will drive from Thebes  
this one who pollutes the whole city.  
I will avenge Laius' murder and  
save the people save the land  
save myself.  
For whoever struck the former king  
may strike again.

Come, children  
take your olive boughs  
and return home.  
Tell the people of Thebes  
I, Oedipus, will do everything -  
and Thebes will again prosper  
or else, by Phoebus, decline to it's doom.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

Come, children,  
what we sought from the king  
he has offered us himself.

Phoebus grant us relief.  
An end to plague.  
An end to hunger.

**CHORUS**

li  
What is the word from Delphi  
sent to Thebes?  
We are strung between terror  
and wonder.  
We tremble - our hearts race.  
O Phoebus -  
God of healing -  
Relieve us of our sense of doom.  
Sower of golden hope -

Return the land to  
the season of plenty.

Ii

Athene, daughter of Zeus -  
Artemis, huntress -  
whose shrine stands over the city -  
And Phoebus with your arrow  
able to shoot farthest -  
together, gods, avert our fate  
Defend Thebes -  
stand between us and our destruction.

Ii

Too many sorrows to count.  
Plague decimates a population  
without a weapon of defence  
you see no children in the city  
our women bring forth only still babies.  
Each can be seen  
at the end of the day  
like birds migrating  
to the coastline of death  
lit by the setting sun:  
The western land of death.

Iii

Death in the streets.  
Death in the fields.  
Death breeding death -

As each one dies  
the city dies.

At Athene's alter  
the people surge  
begging her to spare them  
others chant the office  
to her radiant image.

IIIi

Ares! god of war !  
surrounds us and makes us his plaything -  
There may not be the crashing din of war,  
the chill sharp sound of metal on metal  
but he is upon us.

Drive him from this land  
to the hall of night and beyond,  
that, as day answers night -  
Zeus may destroy him with his thunderbolt.

IIIi

Phoebus, Apollo, strike Ares with your arrow.  
Artemis with your blazing torches,  
save us.

Bacchus, as you celebrate,  
save us from the god whom  
no god honours!

Save us from Ares!  
Save us from death!

**OEDIPUS**

*ENTERS*

Your prayer will be answered.  
The plague will abate  
if you listen to me,  
and work with me to find the answer.  
I am a stranger to this story -  
unfamiliar with the incident  
I, alone, could not trace  
these events far along the track -  
But since I have come here and become a Theban amongst  
Thebans  
Therefore I say :  
Who ever knows the murder of Laius,  
son of Labdacus,  
should tell me, now.

If the murderer fears  
the punishment for hiding guilt all these years  
know then I shall punish you no more  
then banishment  
and you will leave this land  
unharméd.

Or if any of you know the king was killed  
by someone else - a foreigner -  
speak, and be rewarded.

But if you keep silent  
while you know the answer  
hear what I shall do :

Who ever it may be

I outlaw  
without sustenance  
without property  
without welcome  
neither greeting  
nor sacrifice  
nor communion with the gods  
shall be yours  
You shall be driven from our homes  
driven from this land  
to rid us of this pollution.

This Phoebus requires of us !  
This Laius' memory requires of us!  
My curse upon you!  
May you know misery and die unblessed.  
May this even fall on me  
if my household houses him.

All this I lay before you  
to fulfill  
for me  
for the god  
and for our land, forsaken by god.

Even if the god had not spoken  
it was not fit to leave  
a good man dead - and he a king -  
without inquires.

Now I am king -  
successor to the throne his bed, his wife  
and my children would  
be sisters and brothers to his children, had he any.

The bond is very close  
and I will fight for him  
as for my own father -  
to find the killer of  
Laius, son of Labdacus,  
son of Polydorus, son of Cadmus,  
son of Agenor.

If you do not heed this  
may both your field and womb be barren.  
While those who support it  
live with the god's support, always.

**CHORUS LEADER**

Under your oath, I say:  
I did not kill the king -  
nor do I know who did -  
but since Phoebus asked  
it is Phoebus knows.

**OEDIPUS**

That is true.  
But we cannot force a god to speak.

**CHORUS**

Then, can I say second to that -

**OEDIPUS**

And third too, I will hear them all.

**CHORUS**

Teiresias, the seer, of all men  
sees most like Phoebus -  
ask him,  
and you will learn the truth.

**OEDIPUS**

I have not been slow,  
already Creon has suggested him  
and I have twice sent for Teiresias.  
He seems slow to attend.

**CHORUS LEADER**

The only other thing is  
a vague rumour.

**OEDIPUS**

What rumour?  
I will examine everything.

**CHORUS LEADER**

It is said  
he was killed by travellers on the road.

**OEDIPUS**

So I have heard,  
but no one saw it.

**CHORUS LEADER**

Under fear of your curse  
any who saw will come forward.

**OEDIPUS**

Who was not afraid of the deed  
need not fear my words.

**CHORUS LEADER**

Then here comes one who will expose him -  
The man given sight of a god -  
who does not lie.

*ENTER TEIRESIAS*

**OEDIPUS**

Teiresias,  
you who know everything  
speakable and nameless  
in the visible and invisible worlds -  
although blind  
you must know  
how plague is destroying the city.

Lord Teiresias, you are our hope.  
Phoebus,  
if the messengers failed to tell you,  
has sent an oracle  
telling that the city will be  
released from its distress  
only when the killer of Laius  
is banished or put to death.

Do not spare us your art of divination.  
Save the city, and me  
and yourself  
from the contagion  
which spreads from the unsolved murder  
of a king.  
To help your fellows  
is the most noble path.

**TEIRESIAS**

Knowledge is brutal when it turns against you.  
I knew this,  
but had forgotten it,  
or else I would not have come.

**OEDIPUS**

What is this?  
Why are you so despondent?

**TEIRESIAS**

Let me go home -  
and it will be easier for us both  
to bare our burdens.

**OEDIPUS**

You are no Theban  
to deny us your gifts.

**TEIRESIAS**

What you have said  
I find has already gone astray.  
Therefore I say nothing!

**OEDIPUS**

By the gods.  
if you know something  
do not turn from us.  
We beg you.

**TEIRESIAS**

You know nothing !  
I will not speak my sorrows  
and make them yours.

**OEDIPUS**

You mean to say nothing?  
You would rather  
be a traitor to the city?

**TEIRESIAS**

I do not wish to bring pain to you  
or to me.  
Do not ask me  
I will tell nothing.

**OEDIPUS**

You would provoke a stone to anger!  
Will you never speak  
but stand there unmoved?

**TEIRESIAS**

You blame me

but it is your own temper you must check.

**OEDIPUS**

Whose temper would not rise at this  
deliberate contempt.

**TEIRESIAS**

It will all come out  
although I say nothing!

**OEDIPUS**

Then you should tell me.

**TEIRESIAS**

I will say no more  
storm as you will.

**OEDIPUS**

I will not hold back :  
Your behaviour makes it clear to me  
that you are involved in this murder  
if you were not blind  
I would say  
you had done it alone.

**TEIRESIAS**

Is it so?

I say to you  
live by what you have said  
never again speak to these,  
or to me,  
and leave this land  
you contaminate.

**OEDIPUS**

You dare to taunt me!  
You think you will escape?

**TEIRESIAS**

I have escaped.  
The truth is my defence.

**OEDIPUS**

Who has prompted you

to say these things?

**TEIRESIAS**

You did -  
forcing me to speak  
against my will.

**OEDIPUS**

Speak ! What?  
Say it again

**TEIRESIAS**

Was it not clear?  
Do you provoke me to speak again?

**OEDIPUS**

I did not grasp it.  
Say it again.

**TEIRESIAS**

I say you are the murderer of the king  
whom you seek.

**OEDIPUS**

Repeat this and regret it!

**TEIRESIAS**

Will I give more to your anger?

**OEDIPUS**

As much as you like  
but all in vain.

**TEIRESIAS**

You live in the worst shame  
with those closest to you,  
and you do not see it.

**OEDIPUS**

Do you think you can say this  
and escape?

**TEIRESIAS**

Yes, if truth has strength.

**OEDIPUS**

It has, for everyone but you  
who are blind in eyes and ears  
and mind.

**TEIRESIAS**

Poor fool,  
you say the things to me  
which people will soon throw at you.

**OEDIPUS**

You do not hurt me -  
or anyone who sees the light.

**TEIRESIAS**

It is not by me you will fall,  
Phoebus, has means enough.

**OEDIPUS**

Was this your plan  
or Creon's?

**TEIRESIAS**

Not Creon.  
Your own.

**OEDIPUS**

Wealth and power and  
the political sense to stay on top  
will always cause envy.  
My first and greatest friend  
has secretly been hoarding  
such resentment.  
Creon's apparent loyalty  
hides this plan he has devised  
with this fake prophet :

Wasn't answering the riddle of the Sphinx  
a prophet's task ?  
Where was your famed insight then, Teiresias?  
As blind to insight and fore-knowing,  
as to the light of day.

Did you know the answer  
and save the city?  
No, I, Oedipus,  
Ignorant Oedipus,  
answered her question -  
by my common intelligence.  
Not by divination  
or by inner sight.

And you now conspire  
to force me out of the city -  
which I saved -  
to take your place near Creon  
on the throne.

**CHORUS LEADER**

Oedipus, his words and yours  
were spoken in anger  
what we need is to understand  
and obey the oracle.

**TEIRESIAS**

Although you are a king  
I have at least the right to reply :  
I am not your subject,  
but Phoebus' servant -  
therefore I do not need Creon's patronage.  
Listen, you taunt me with my blindness, but it is you  
who do not see your own transgressions!  
Do your eyes see where you live?  
See with whom?  
See whose son you are?

Ignorant,  
you desecrate your family -  
living and dead.

You shall be driven from this land  
by a double stroke -  
your mother's and your father's curse  
your two eyes dark.

No place will harbour you -  
no peak of Cithairon not re-echo  
your despair -  
when you remember the wedding song  
which sent you first happily on  
your voyage, only to return  
to this haven, which is no haven.

Trample Creon's name  
and mine,  
no man shall be cursed  
as you will be cursed.

**OEDIPUS**

I will endure no more !  
Leave this house !  
Go home, and my curse go with you !

**TEIRESIAS**

I wouldn't have come  
had you not insisted.

**OEDIPUS**

If I had known you were a fool  
I would not have bothered.

**TEIRESIAS**

A fool to you,  
the parents who kept you,  
they would see my wisdom.

**OEDIPUS**

My parents? Stop.  
You knew them?

**TEIRESIAS**

This day will show both your birth  
and your destruction.

**OEDIPUS**

Will you always speak in riddles!

**TEIRESIAS**

Are you not most skilled  
in answering riddles?

**OEDIPUS**

You mock the gift  
that is my greatness.

**TEIRESIAS**

Your greatness is your ruin.

**OEDIPUS**

I saved the city.

**TEIRESIAS**

I will go home.

**OEDIPUS**

Your presence impedes us.

**TEIRESIAS**

I will go when I have said  
all I can say.

I do not fear your anger  
you can not harm me.

I tell you, the man you seek,  
the murderer of Laius is here,  
thought a stranger  
he will be found  
to be a native Theban.  
Blinded and dispossessed  
he shall leave here  
stick in hand  
to find his way.

To his children he shall be found, a brother;  
to his wife, a son;  
to his father, a murderer.

Go, and if you do not find it so,  
then say I have no gift in prophesy.

*EXIT TEIRESIAS*  
*EXIT OEDIPUS*

**CHORUS**

li

Who is it  
Delphi's oracle says has done this deed  
which no one names?

He should fly,  
a steed fast as the wind,  
for around him close  
both Phoebus with his light  
and the future.

lii

From Parnassus'  
snowy mountain  
a voice is heard:  
*Hunt this man.*  
Through forest and mountain  
a wild bull strays  
footsore, alone,  
trying to escape

the earth's centre -  
Delphi.

Ii  
Of these dark questions and arguments  
I cannot confirm  
and I cannot deny.  
I do not know.  
I know of no dispute between  
Oedipus and Creon's families  
that would break out in this way.

Iii  
Zeus and Phoebus are truly wise.  
A prophet is a man like me  
perhaps he knows more  
but only a god sees everything -  
therefore I will not  
blame until blame  
is proved.  
To challenge a king is a serious matter.  
Oedipus saved us from the Sphinx -  
therefore I will trust Oedipus.

*ENTER CREON.*

**CREON**  
Citizens of Thebes,  
I have come to you  
because Oedipus, our king,  
has made slanderous  
accusations against me.  
If he believes, in our present troubles  
he has suffered by my word  
or deed -  
I will not live. I will not live to be called traitor  
to my city,  
my friend,  
or you.

**CHORUS**  
It was a harsh judgement  
made in anger.

**CREON**  
But he said  
that it was I who had

the seer give false answers?

**CHORUS**

Yes, he said that.  
But we do not know seriously.

**CREON**

How did he say this -  
in his right mind?

**CHORUS**

I do not know  
I do not scrutinize my leader's  
behaviour.

Here comes the king himself.

**OEDIPUS**

You!  
You dare to come before  
the house  
whose head you once murdered,  
and whose crown you now  
try to trick from me?  
What cowardice of foolishness  
did you see in me  
that you thought you  
could plot against me in this way.  
Do you not know it is stupidity  
to seek power  
without the following  
or the wealth to rule?

**CREON**

Do you know what you are doing?  
Listen at least to what  
I have to say.

**OEDIPUS**

You are quick to speak  
but I am slow to understand -  
now I find that dangerous.

**CREON**

Hear me -

**OEDIPUS**

Anything but your honesty.

**CREON**

You confuse blind animosity  
with wisdom.

**OEDIPUS**

You are wrong if you believe  
you will not be punished because  
you are my kinsman.

**CREON**

That is just.  
But tell me what offense I have committed?

**OEDIPUS**

Did you suggest I sent  
for that ranting prophet?

**CREON**

Yes,  
and I would again.

**OEDIPUS**

How long is it since Laius -

**CREON**

What about Laius?

**OEDIPUS**

Vanished, died, was murdered?

**CREON**

A long time.

**OEDIPUS**

Did this prophet practice his craft then?

**CREON**

Yes,  
as honoured then, as now.

**OEDIPUS**

And did he then say any word of me?

**CREON**

Never,

at least none I have ever heard.

**OEDIPUS**

Did you enquire  
into the death of the king?

**CREON**

We did, but found nothing.

**OEDIPUS**

Then why did he not speak then?

**CREON**

I do not know,  
therefore say nothing.

**OEDIPUS**

This much you know.

**CREON**

What,  
if I know it  
I will say it.

**OEDIPUS**

That if you had not told him to say it,  
he would never have said  
that it was I who killed Laius.

**CREON**

You know it, if he said this.

But now I should question you  
as you have questioned me.

**OEDIPUS**

Ask.  
I shall not be found the murderer.

**CREON**

You married my sister.

**OEDIPUS**

That I need not deny.

**CREON**

You are equal in power and possession.

**OEDIPUS**

Everything she wants  
she has with me.

**CREON**

And I am a third  
the equal of you both.

**OEDIPUS**

Yes.  
And there's the bitterness  
of your false friendship.

**CREON**

Reason for yourself:  
Why would I choose to rule  
when I can live the  
kingly life without it's cares?  
I have no ambition to be king.  
I have everything I want through you.  
A king fears every challenge to his power,  
instead I am a friend of all.  
If I were king, I would have to do  
many painful tasks I'd rather be without.  
I am no schemer.  
No benefit could come from  
my losing my good name.  
To prove this  
go to Delphi -  
ask the god.  
If then you find  
I have plotted with anyone  
to take the throne,  
then strike me down  
with a double condemnation -  
your judgement and my own.

Time alone shows the honest man -  
a single day will reveal the guilty.

**CHORUS**

His words are wise, Oedipus.  
Quick judgments are not sound.

**OEDIPUS**

When the plot is quick  
I must be quick to react,  
or he will have his way.

**CREON**

What do you want of me -  
my banishment?

**OEDIPUS**

Not your banishment -  
your death.

**CREON**

You are incapable of  
listening to reason.

**OEDIPUS**

All you have said is  
envy itself.

**CREON**

This is madness.

**OEDIPUS**

Not madness

**CREON**

Then be sensible  
and hear what  
I say.

**OEDIPUS**

You are a traitor.

**CREON**

You are wrong.

**OEDIPUS**

Kings must rule.

**CREON**

Not when  
they rule  
badly.

**OEDIPUS**

City, my city!  
Hear him,

Thebes!

**CREON**

My city, too.

**CHORUS**

My lords, stop.

Here, Jocasta is coming from the house,  
she may settle our quarrel.

*ENTER JOCASTA*

**JOCASTA**

Shame, men.

Why do you make a public  
quarrel of a private difference  
when the whole city suffers?

Come in.

Do not make a mortal conflict  
out of nothing.

**CREON**

Sister, your husband  
would have me killed or banished.

**OEDIPUS**

I found him plotting against me.

**CREON**

By the god -  
may I die cursed  
if I have done this thing.

**JOCASTA**

Oedipus, trust him,  
for my sake,  
and his oath to the god.

**CHORUS**

Be merciful, Oedipus.  
Be wise and generous.

**OEDIPUS**

What would you have me do?

**CHORUS**

Believe his oath.

**OEDIPUS**

Do you know what you ask?

**CHORUS**

Yes.

**OEDIPUS**

Say it then.

Say what you mean.

**CHORUS**

Do not accuse a friend or judge him  
without more evidence than rumour.

**OEDIPUS**

What you ask  
means my own death and banishment.

**CHORUS**

No,  
by the light of the sun god, Phoebus,  
may I be lost if I thought that -  
the troubles wasting our land  
break me -  
do not add your conflict  
to our present troubles.

**OEDIPUS**

Let him go then even if it means my disgrace  
your words have moved my pity  
but I will hate him forever.

**CREON**

Bitter in yielding,  
harsh in anger,  
such natures end torturing themselves.

**OEDIPUS**

Leave me.

**CREON**

I will go.  
You have not known me  
the people know my innocence.

*EXIT CREON*

**CHORUS**

Lady, take him inside.

**JOCASTA**

Yes, when I have found out what's the matter.

**CHORUS**

Surmise upon the fragments of some story  
and the sting of unjust words.

**JOCASTA**

On both sides?

**CHORUS**

Yes.

**JOCASTA**

What was this story?

**CHORUS**

Enough troubles in the land  
to leave this.

**OEDIPUS**

Do you see for all your well-meaning  
where you have left us  
by your blunting my anger.

**CHORUS**

Sir,  
I would be mad  
if I did anything to undermine you.  
You guided this land to safety  
when we were troubled. God grant that to you again.

**JOCASTA**

By heaven, my lord,  
tell me what it was caused you anger?

**OEDIPUS**

I will tell you.  
I respect you  
more than they do.  
Creon has plotted against me.



where three roads meet?

**JOCASTA**

Yes, that is what we are told.

**OEDIPUS**

Where is this place?

**JOCASTA**

Where the road to Delphi  
meets a third from Daulia.

**OEDIPUS**

How long ago was this?

**JOCASTA**

Just before you were installed  
as ruler of the land.

**OEDIPUS**

Oh god, what are you doing with me.

**JOCASTA**

Oedipus - what distresses you.

**OEDIPUS**

Do not ask.  
But tell me,  
what did Laius look like?

**JOCASTA**

Tall -  
The first white through his hair.  
A figure like your own.

**OEDIPUS**

Oh god,  
I have cursed myself,  
without knowing.

**JOCASTA**

What do you mean?  
I tremble just to look at you.

**OEDIPUS**

I am afraid  
the seer was not blind.

Tell me one more thing.

**JOCASTA**

I will.  
I am afraid,  
but I will answer you.

**OEDIPUS**

How many were with him -  
a few servants -  
or many, as befits a king?

**JOCASTA**

There were only five -  
a herald and a single carriage  
for the king.

**OEDIPUS**

It is clear.  
Too clear.  
Who told you this?

**JOCASTA**

A servant the only one  
who survived.

**OEDIPUS**

Is he here now?

**JOCASTA**

No, when he got back to the city,  
with you king, and Laius dead,  
he came to me and touched my arm  
and begged I should send him  
to the fields  
to be a shepherd  
as far as possible from the eyes of Thebes.  
I sent him,  
he was a worthy servant,  
he might have asked for more.

**OEDIPUS**

Could he be brought back quickly?

**JOCASTA**

He could. But why do this?

**OEDIPUS**

Dear wife,  
I fear I have said too much -  
and must see this man.

**JOCASTA**

Then you shall see him. But tell me what it is  
that weighs so heavily on your heart.

**OEDIPUS**

What ever my fears  
I will keep nothing from you  
Who else would I confide in?

My father was the king of Corinth, Polybus.  
My mother, Merope, a Dorian.  
In Corinth I was destined to lead the city,  
until an ominous thing happened -  
and it is strange how this thing angered me,  
yet it was something not worth my anger.

One day, at the dinner table,  
a man, who had drunk too much,  
claimed -  
or the wine in him challenged -  
that I was illegitimate.

With difficulty  
I kept my anger to myself  
and the next day  
faced my mother and father with this charge.  
They were outraged  
that he should throw up such a claim,  
and they denied it.  
This made me feel better,  
but still I couldn't rid myself of  
the idea,  
and the rumour spread everywhere.

With out telling my parents  
I went to Delphi  
to ask Phoebus' oracle.

But I was sent away  
without my question answered.  
All the oracle would say

was that I would end in disgrace -  
not answering, as I asked -  
it told of a wretched and terrible end:

That I was fated to commit incest -  
a thing not tolerated, but condemned -  
and murder the father who begot me.

So I knew I could never return  
to my home in Corinth  
but steered by the stars  
away from it's border  
never to see it again  
lest this dreadful prophecy should be fulfilled.

I travelled  
to a place  
near where you say  
this ruler  
met his end.

Listen, woman,  
and I will tell you  
everything I know.

I came to the place  
where three roads meet  
at the very same time  
as a carriage  
with a rider  
mounted in front  
arrived.  
Just as you have said.  
They forced me off the road.  
On an impulse  
I hit the driver  
who had pushed me aside.

The older man  
travelling in the carriage  
saw this  
and hit me on the head  
with his double-crossing stick.

He did not have to wait  
for repayment -  
I dispatched him from behind

with my staff.  
He rolled out of the carriage  
and lay on his back  
on the ground.  
I killed them all.  
If this traveller  
has any relationship to Laius  
am I not lost?

Excluded from religion -  
A man whom -  
none can shelter -  
neither citizen nor foreigner -  
whom none can speak to.  
And I have forced it upon myself  
no one else has,  
I have put this  
curse on myself.

I have taken his bed and these hands  
which killed him  
have caressed  
where he too has touched.

I have grown foul  
I am utterly unfit.

I have had to flee  
and not set foot in  
my father's domain -  
unless I should  
marry my mother  
and kill my father,  
Polybus, who begot me  
and brought me up.

Then from all this  
who would not judge  
some savage god  
has sent all this on me?

Never, never,  
let me see that day,  
Oh, awesome god!

May I be out of the sight  
of everyone

before such a disgrace is  
let loose on me.

**CHORUS**

We too fear this outcome.  
But until you hear  
from the one who was there -  
have hope.

**OEDIPUS**

Indeed, I have just so much hope -  
to wait for this man -  
this herdsman.  
Just to wait for him  
alone.

**JOCASTA**

What do you want to know,  
when he comes here?

**OEDIPUS**

I tell you,  
if we find his words  
match yours  
I am acquitted.

**JOCASTA**

What is it I have said  
makes you think that?

**OEDIPUS**

You said he spoke of robbers  
who held up Laius and killed him -  
if he still says there were more than one,  
I did not kill him.  
One is not many.  
But if he speaks of a solitary traveller -  
the scale weighs down  
with my guilt.

**JOCASTA**

Make certain, then -  
that was what he said.  
He cannot go back on it.  
All the city heard him  
not just I alone.

But whatever he said -

or whether he changes it -  
Laius' bloody murder  
does not run true to the prophecy  
because the god said  
it was by my son  
Laius was to die.

That unfortunate child  
did not kill him,  
for he had himself  
already been killed.

So forget prophecy -  
if it was wrong then for me -  
it is wrong again now!

**OEDIPUS**

Well said.  
But just the same,  
send someone  
to bring this shepherd back.  
Do not overlook it.

**JOCASTA**

I will send for him.  
Now let us go in,  
I will do only what you want.

*EXIT OEDIPUS AND JOCASTA*

**CHORUS** Ii

May we be found  
in every step we take,  
in every word, and act  
to be pure -  
following that law  
which heaven has imposed.

God makes law -  
without human help -  
endless, seeing everything.

Iii

Pride makes the tyrant -  
swelled up with  
having his own way -  
he rises up as high

as the top of the castle  
only to find  
an abyss at his feet.

But ambition can work  
for the city, too.  
God make it so.

Ii  
If a man struts -  
and his every word, and act,  
is gained without  
respect for law or god -  
his arrogance should  
bring him down.

His grasping  
and defiling  
should destroy him -  
not make him great.

When such a man is honoured,  
what is the point of such an act?

Iii  
We stray from Delphi -  
from the world's centre -  
the temples are destroyed in wars -  
How can we fit the oracle  
to what we know?

God, who rules all!  
lives forever!  
do not let us get lost -  
The oracle about Laius  
has been forgotten. Phoebus' religious rites are overlooked.

*ENTER JOCASTA*

**JOCASTA**  
Noble Thebans -  
I have in mind  
to go to Phoebus' shrine -  
I have brought olive branches  
as a supplication.

Oedipus is too on edge -

he can not judge what he hears  
or what will be, from what was -  
but finds greater horror  
in each new person  
who gives evidence to him.

I cannot help him,  
and so I come to Phoebus -  
the closest,  
to ask,  
bright sun god,  
for a clear view.  
We are afraid.  
Like sailors  
whose master has gone overboard.

*ENTER MESSENGER*

**MESSENGER**

Tell me, dear strangers,  
where is Oedipus' house,  
or better,  
where can I find him?

**LEADER OF CHORUS**

This is his house, stranger,  
and he is inside.  
This is his wife,  
the mother of his children.

**MESSENGER**

God bless, you, madam,  
and your household -  
you are indeed a blessed wife.

**JOCASTA**

Indeed, my friend,  
a blessing on you, too.  
But what message do you bring?

**MESSENGER** Good news,  
for your house and  
for your husband.

**JOCASTA**

What news?  
who sent you?

**MESSENGER**

I come from Corinth.  
And the message may  
give joy, but also pain.

**JOCASTA**

What news has this double ability?

**MESSENGER**

The people of the Isthmus  
would have him king -  
so the rumour has it.

**JOCASTA**

And what of old king,  
Polybus?

**MESSENGER**

No, he is dead and  
in his grave.

**JOCASTA**

What, Polybus is dead?

**MESSENGER**

May I die, if it  
is not so!

**JOCASTA**

Go quickly to the king.  
Tell him the news.

Where are you now,  
you oracles?  
From this man  
Oedipus fled,  
so that he would not  
be his murderer -  
now he is dead  
and Oedipus had  
no part in it!

*ENTER OEDIPUS*

**OEDIPUS**

Jocasta, why have you sent for me?

**JOCASTA**

Listen to this man -  
then see what you think  
of oracles!

**OEDIPUS**

Who is he?  
What has he to say to me?

**JOCASTA**

He comes from Corinth -  
your father, Polybus,  
is no more.  
He is dead.

**OEDIPUS**

What's this?  
Tell me yourself?

**MESSENGER**

Well, since that has been asked first:  
Polybus has gone to death.

**OEDIPUS**

Struck down by  
treachery or  
sickness?

**MESSENGER**

Just a touch will fell  
an old man.

**OEDIPUS**

Sickness killed him, then?

**MESSENGER**

Yes, and age.

**OEDIPUS**

So, So,  
listen wife,  
why should we  
look to Delphi,  
or listen to the  
screaming birds  
above our heads?  
The oracle said

I would kill my father.  
But he is dead  
and I did not kill him - unless it can be said  
he died of grief  
at my absence.

These oracles have died with him!  
Lies that lie with him in his grave.

**JOCASTA**  
Didn't I tell you this?

**OEDIPUS**  
Yes,  
but my fear mislead me.

**JOCASTA**  
Then free your heart  
from fear.

**OEDIPUS**  
But still I must fear  
my mother's bed.

**JOCASTA**  
Why fear chance -  
when you *have* chance?  
You can not know the future.  
So take life as it comes.  
As for your mother - don't fear that.  
Many men in dreams, as well as oracles,  
have slept with their mothers.  
Take it as nothing -  
and life is easier.

**OEDIPUS**  
It would be alright to say that,  
if she were dead.  
But she lives on, for me to fear,  
even if you are right.

**JOCASTA**  
Look, your father's death is something.

**OEDIPUS**  
Something!  
But I fear the living.

**MESSENGER**

Who is it you fear?

**OEDIPUS**

Merope, old man, Polybus' wife.

**MESSENGER**

And why fear her?

**OEDIPUS**

A terrible oracle, stranger.

**MESSENGER**

Can we hear, or is it a secret?

**OEDIPUS**

No secret.

Phoebus has said,

I must lie with my mother

and, with these hands,

take my father's blood.

**MESSENGER**

And this drove you from Corinth?

**OEDIPUS**

I did not want to

kill my father.

**MESSENGER**

Now, shouldn't I remove

your fear - since that

is why I am here?

**OEDIPUS**

That would not go unappreciated.

**MESSENGER**

In fact it's just for that reason

I have come, to earn your

thanks when you come home -

**OEDIPUS**

No, I will never return -

**MESSENGER**

Then quite clearly you don't know

what you say.

**OEDIPUS**

What do you mean, old man,  
in god's name!

**MESSENGER**

If you don't return -  
because of - those fears -

**OEDIPUS**

I fear Phoebus may prove right.

**MESSENGER**

This defilement and murder?

**OEDIPUS**

Yes, it is my constant fear.

**MESSENGER**

Then all your fears are empty.

**OEDIPUS**

How can that be  
If I was born their son?

**MESSENGER**

There is none of Polybus' blood  
in you.

**OEDIPUS**

He was not my father?

**MESSENGER**

No more than I -  
or just as much.

**OEDIPUS**

As much as no one then.

**MESSENGER**

Neither he, nor I, begot you.

**OEDIPUS**

Why did he call me son?

**MESSENGER**

He took you from my hands.

**OEDIPUS**

Such love, for  
what came from another's hands?

**MESSENGER**

His childlessness won him over.

**OEDIPUS**

Was I bought or found?

**MESSENGER**

I found you -  
on Mount Cithairon.

**OEDIPUS**

Why were you in that wild place?

**MESSENGER**

Grazing a flock of sheep.

**OEDIPUS**

A mere shepherd?

**MESSENGER**

Yes, and I saved you.

**OEDIPUS**

From what?

**MESSENGER**

Your feet were pierced,  
I freed you.

**OEDIPUS**

A stigma I have  
carried from my cradle.

**MESSENGER**

And from it comes your name.

**OEDIPUS**

Was this my father's or my mother's doing?

**MESSENGER**

I cannot say.  
Ask the man who  
gave you to me.

**OEDIPUS**

You took me from someone else?

**MESSENGER**

Yes another shepherd  
gave you to me.

**OEDIPUS**

Who was this shepherd?

**MESSENGER**

I knew him,  
he was one of Laius' men.

**OEDIPUS**

Is he alive  
that I can see him?

**MESSENGER**

Your people will know that best.

**OEDIPUS**

Do any here  
know this shepherd -  
in the city, or the countryside? Tell me,  
for it is time we  
found out everything.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

I think he is the man you sent for -  
Jocasta will know best of all.

**OEDIPUS**

Jocasta, do you know about this man?  
Is he the man we seek?

**JOCASTA**

Why ask whom he speaks of?  
Forget all this -  
it is wasted labour.

**OEDIPUS**

With such clues as these  
I cannot fail to find out about my birth.

**JOCASTA**

By god, I ask you,  
if you care for your own life,  
ask no more.

**OEDIPUS**

Take courage -  
if my mother was a slave -  
and her mother, and grandmother,  
you'll still have your noble family.

**JOCASTA**

I ask you, listen to me -

**OEDIPUS**

I will not let you dissuade me,  
when I can know it all.

**JOCASTA**

I want only the best -  
This is the best advice.

**OEDIPUS**

Then I have had enough of the best advice.

**JOCASTA**

God, may you never find who you are!

**OEDIPUS**

Go, fetch the herdsman here.  
Leave her to her noble family!

**JOCASTA** Broken, destroyed, Oedipus!

This is the last word -  
the last name -  
I shall ever call you.

*EXIT JOCASTA*

**CHORUS**

Why has Jocasta left in such wild distress?  
From this silence  
I fear something dreadful breaking forth.

**OEDIPUS**

Then let it break!  
My parentage may be humble,

but I want to know it.  
She is proud,  
and, just like a woman,  
ashamed at my low birth.

I am Fortune's child -  
*she* shall not be dishonoured,  
*she* is my mother.  
The months, my cousins,  
who marked my low times  
and my rise to greatness.  
That is my breeding  
and why would I be so false to myself

as not to seek it out?

**CHORUS**

If I could tell the future  
I would say, Mt Cithairon,  
by tomorrow's full moon,  
shall prove to be Oedipus' nurse and mother.  
And we shall dance to honour Cithairon.  
Phoebus, let this be so!

Who was it bore Oedipus?  
Which of the Nymphs slept with Pan?  
Or was it Apollo in those grassy uplands;  
or the god of the drunken Bacchanals;  
or Helicon, who took you from the arms  
of a favourite Nymph?

*ENTER HERDSMAN*

**OEDIPUS**

If I can make a guess,  
although I have never met him,  
this is the herdsman.  
The same age as the other.

You know him better perhaps, you've seen the man before.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

Yes, he is Laius' trusted servant.

**OEDIPUS**

You sir, from Corinth, is this the man?

**MESSENGER**

It is him you see.

**OEDIPUS**

Old man,  
answer what I ask.  
Were you a servant of Laius?

**HERDSMAN**

I was -  
no slave, but one of the household.

**OEDIPUS**

What was your job?

**HERDSMAN**

Most of my life  
I watched the flocks.

**OEDIPUS**

In what part of the country?

**HERDSMAN**

Cithairon, and round about.

**OEDIPUS**

Have you seen this man before?

**HERDSMAN**

Who?

**OEDIPUS**

This man.  
Have you ever met him?

**HERDSMAN**

I have no memory of it.  
I cannot say.

**MESSENGER**

That is no wonder, king.  
But I will help him remember.  
I am sure he remembers Cithairon -  
he with two flocks,  
I with one.

For three summers we returned;

and each winter came home,  
I to Corinth,  
and he to Laius' house.

Isn't that right?

**HERDSMAN**

You are right, but it is long ago.

**MESSENGER**

And don't you remember giving me a child -  
to bring up as my own?

**HERDSMAN**

What of it?  
Why do you bring this up.

**MESSENGER**

That child is the man  
you see before you.

**HERDSMAN**

Damn you! Say no more!

**OEDIPUS**

No, no, don't fault his words,  
it is you who are at fault.

**HERDSMAN**

Do not let me offend you, noble master.

**OEDIPUS**

Then speak of the child  
he asks you about.

**HERDSMAN**

He is meddling without  
knowing what he is saying.

**OEDIPUS**

If you will not speak to please me,  
you will speak to avoid pain.

**HERDSMAN**

Please, sir, don't hurt an old man.

**OEDIPUS**

Here.  
get his arm behind his back.

**HERDSMAN**

Unhappy man, what else  
do you want to know.

**OEDIPUS**

This child -  
did you give it to him?

**HERDSMAN**

I did -  
and wish I had then died.

**OEDIPUS**

You will,  
unless you tell the truth.

**HERDSMAN**

The truth will harm me far more.

**OEDIPUS**

You seem determined to hold back.

**HERDSMAN**

No, no.  
I told you I gave it.

**OEDIPUS**

Where did this child come from -  
your home -  
or another's?

**HERDSMAN**

Not mine -  
another's

**OEDIPUS**

Which citizen?  
What house?

**HERDSMAN**

I beg you, master,  
please ask no more.

**OEDIPUS**

You are dead

if I ask again.

**HERDSMAN**

It was a child from Laius' house.

**OEDIPUS**

A slave?

Or his family?

**HERDSMAN**

I am at the verge of this appalling thing.

**OEDIPUS**

And I,  
of hearing it.

**HERDSMAN**

The child  
was called his child.  
But she that is inside  
can best tell about it.

**OEDIPUS**

She gave it to you?

**HERDSMAN**

She did.

**OEDIPUS**

To do what?

**HERDSMAN**

To do away with it.

**OEDIPUS**

Her son?

**HERDSMAN**

Yes,  
she feared the oracle.

**OEDIPUS**

Which?

**HERDSMAN**

That he should kill his father.

**OEDIPUS**

Then why did you give him to this old man?

**HERDSMAN**

O master,  
for pity.  
I thought he would take  
the child away.  
But he saved it  
for a worse end  
than death on the mountainside.

If you are the man  
you were born cursed.

*EXIT ALL BUT CHORUS & OEDIPUS*

**OEDIPUS** So, so, so,  
that end will come.  
All is clear.  
Light of the sun  
let me look at you  
for the last time.  
Born accursed.  
Living accursed.  
Killing accursed.

*EXIT OEDIPUS*

**CHORUS**

All those born into this world  
add up to nothing.  
Who has ever won  
more than a glimpse of happiness  
and then  
it passes.

Oedipus is like this -  
looking on  
can I call anyone happy?

As if with Zeus' thunderbolt  
Oedipus thrust at the Sphinx  
and destroyed that monstrous clawed woman,  
answering her riddle which had tormented us.  
He was our king and hero,  
like a tower against death  
he protected the land:

most honoured of all men,  
he ruled great Thebes.

Whose story now is more awful?  
Whose fate more savage?  
Whose luck turned around so totally,  
as Oedipus?

Famous Oedipus,  
who found harbour  
where his father had.  
And the same furrow -  
twice ploughed -  
did not cry out.

Time, who sees all  
has found you out -  
condemning your marriage  
which is no marriage -  
begetter and begot in one.

O Laius' child, better I had never seen you!  
I weep for you,  
and cry.

You gave me breath,  
and thinking of you  
I closed my eyes in sleep.

*ENTER SECOND MESSENGER*

**SECOND MESSENGER**

Noble Thebans,  
such things you will hear  
and see -  
such a weight of grief  
for this house of Labdacus -  
the world's great rivers  
cannot wash it clean  
of these new horrors  
done knowingly  
and self-inflicted.

**CHORUS LEADER**

Enough, already  
of tears and moaning!  
What more is there?

**SECOND MESSENGER**

For a start,  
the Queen is dead.

**CHORUS LEADER**

Unhappy woman.  
How did she die?

**SECOND MESSENGER**

By her own hand.

You cannot imagine -  
you have not seen.  
I do not think  
I can bring it back for you.

The Queen -  
this unlucky woman -  
hear of her end.

She ran inside -  
frantic - she slammed the doors -  
she went straight to the  
marriage bed -  
and called to Laius -  
long dead -  
remember the son we got together in this bed -  
who then killed you  
leaving the mother  
to get children with her son.

She cursed the bed itself  
which brought forth  
a husband by her husband,  
and children by her child.

I cannot say then  
how she died.

Oedipus burst in -  
he ran to each of us raving:  
"A sword!"  
"Where is this wife who is no wife?"  
"Mother, where I too fathered children!"  
None of us said anything,  
but then some god led him

to where she was.

With a huge cry  
he smashed down the doors -  
tearing them off -  
and there we saw the woman hanging -  
a knotted rope around her neck.

When he saw her  
he made a dreadful shout  
and took her down.

Then what happened  
was terrible to see.

He tore the golden brooches  
from her robe -  
held them out  
and plunged them into his eyes  
crying "These eyes shall not see  
what I have done.  
Not see the faces forbidden.  
Pass blindly, by those I long for."

Again and again he gouged his eyes.  
The bleeding sockets  
became a dark storm  
which poured down his face.

And this storm has  
struck both man and woman.

All their days of happiness  
are gone in this one day!  
Suffering, destruction,  
death and disgrace -  
no bad thing is missing.

**CHORUS LEADER**

Is there no end to his pain?

**SECOND MESSENGER**

He shouts for the door to be opened.  
For all Thebes to see  
the father-killer  
and I cannot say the word.

He would cast himself  
from this land,  
remove the curse  
and follow his own decree.  
He is weak  
and blind  
and needs someone to guide him.

*ENTER BLIND OEDIPUS*

**CHORUS**

Terrible to see.  
Most dreadful suffering.  
Poor man,  
what madness made you do this?  
What evil pounced upon your life?  
I pity you,  
but I cannot look at you.

**OEDIPUS**

Oh, oh.  
Where am I going?  
Is this my voice  
I hear on the wind?

**CHORUS**

Where no one's ears shall hear  
and no one's eyes shall see.

**OEDIPUS**

Dark -  
a horror of darkness  
wraps around me -  
and I am blown  
by a wind which brings  
mad flashes -  
and memories of evil deeds -  
and pain.

**CHORUS** Your double misfortune -  
to suffer and mourn.

**OEDIPUS**

I know this voice -  
old friend -  
you have stayed by me,  
my nurse

in blind darkness.

**CHORUS**

Furious man,  
what drove you to do this  
to yourself?

**OEDIPUS**

It was Phoebus, friend,  
it was Phoebus sent all this.  
But the deed was mine, alone.  
Why should I see  
when all about is insufferable?

**CHORUS**

It is as you say.

**OEDIPUS**

What can I see, and love?  
What greeting can comfort me?

Take me away from this land,  
hurry, my friends -  
I am impure -  
hated by the gods -  
the man most cursed.

**CHORUS**

Your knowledge  
and your pain  
are equal sufferings.  
I wish I had never seen you.

**OEDIPUS**

Curse the man who  
took the cruel bonds  
from my feet -  
stole me from death.

Had I died then  
I would have saved so many  
so much pain.

**CHORUS**

I, too, wish it had been so.

**OEDIPUS**

Then I would not have gone on

to kill my father  
and marry my mother.  
Now I am without a god,  
patricide and mother-fucker.  
Is anyone lower than Oedipus?

**CHORUS**

You would be better dead  
than blind like this.

**OEDIPUS**

No, better blind!  
Do not try to tell me -  
In death can I meet  
my father  
or my mother?

And would the sight of children  
begotten as they were,  
give me joy?  
And Thebes' strong towers  
and holy shrines,  
from which I have banished  
the criminal, Laius' murderer?

With such a stain,  
who could I look at ?

No. If I could block my hearing, too -  
I would be prisoner in this body -  
without sight or sound.  
How happy the mind  
which lives that way  
and never shares its secrets.

Cithairon, why did you shelter me?  
Polybus, old man I once called father -  
what a fair face you fostered,  
and what foulness it hid.

Then that narrow place  
where three roads meet  
hidden in thick bushes,  
which drank my father's blood -  
my blood - remember.

And I came here -

marriage, oh marriage  
which bore me  
and bore my children -  
brought to light  
sons, fathers, brothers locked in on unholy bond.

Come, I beg you,  
hide me away -  
or strike me down -  
throw me in the sea -  
for ever out of sight.

Do not avoid me -  
no one will be infected  
by my fate.

### **CHORUS**

Creon comes.  
He can advise you,  
for he alone, now, is ruler.

### **OEDIPUS**

What can I say to him?  
Why trust me now, when I have  
not trusted him.

*CREON ENTERS*

### **CREON**

Oedipus, I have not come to taunt you,  
or blame you.  
But this shame  
should not stand in the open,  
in Phoebus' sunlight,  
and before all.

Take him inside,  
it is not proper  
his private trouble  
should go outside the family.

### **OEDIPUS**

I beg you,  
as one so low  
to one so high -  
grant me one favour -

for your good, not mine.

**CREON**

What do you ask?

**OEDIPUS**

Send me from this land.

**CREON**

It will be done, if Phoebus says so.

**OEDIPUS**

His word has been quite clear  
get rid of the patricide.

**CREON**

Yes, that was so,  
but still we must be sure.

**OEDIPUS**

Will you send to Delphi  
about a poor wretch like me?

**CREON**

I will.  
Perhaps you will listen this time.

**OEDIPUS**

I command that -  
ask you that -  
the woman inside  
is given a proper burial,  
you are her brother, do this.

As for me, send me from my father's city,  
leave me on Cithairon,  
so that I may die there  
as I should have done.

Creon, my sons are men  
and will find a means to live,  
but my daughters -  
my two unhappy daughters,  
who have never eaten  
except at my table,  
protect them Creon.

May I, perhaps, one last time

touch them, and weep -

*ENTER ANTIGONE AND ISMENE*

What? Can I hear then sobbing?  
Creon has had pity and sent them?

**CREON**

They are here.  
I know your love for them.

**OEDIPUS**

Bless you!  
May god be kinder to you  
than to me.  
Children, where are you?  
Come to my hands -  
brother's hands.

My eyes weep.  
I cannot see your faces.  
I weep to think  
how bitter your lives will be.  
Who shall be your happy companions?  
You will leave the Festive days in tears  
instead of making it a holiday.

Who will marry you?  
Born in disgrace  
of a father who  
sowed seed where he  
had sprung himself.

Your lives will be barren.

Creon, do not let them  
wander, homeless, husbandless.  
They are your kin  
care for them.  
Touch my hand, noble Creon,  
let it be so.

Children, I would say more  
if you were older.  
But only this must be your prayer:  
To live with what ever life will give;  
but a better life than your father's.

**CREON**

Enough of your tears.  
Now, go inside.

**OEDIPUS**

I must obey, however bitter.

**CREON**

Each in its time.

**OEDIPUS**

But on condition -

**CREON**

What condition?

**OEDIPUS**

Send me away from Thebes.

**CREON**

That is for the god to say.

**OEDIPUS**

The gods hate me.

**CREON**

Then your wish will be granted.

**OEDIPUS**

You agree then.

**CREON**

I mean only what I say.

**OEDIPUS**

Take me away.

**CREON**

Leave the children.

**OEDIPUS**

No, do not take them from me.

**CREON**

You are not master, now.  
You ruled once, but that is over.

### **CHORUS**

O Thebes! Look at Oedipus,  
who answered the riddle,  
who was master everything -  
now, no one would envy him.

Think of the final day.  
Count no one happy  
until they have passed life's end  
with that happiness still intact.