

bfk's  
**Oedipus**

**DEMONSTRATION CD**

*Libretto*  
*Manuscript Edition*



NEW YORK

Cottage Industries Music, 2007

*CD and Manuscript Libretto for demonstration purposes only.*

NOT FOR SALE

Copyright © MMV, MMVII Cottage Industries Music, New York, NY 10013 All rights reserved.

342 Broadway, #199, New York, NY 10013      Email: [info@cottageindustriesmusic.com](mailto:info@cottageindustriesmusic.com)

Roger N. Mohovich, *Associate Producer*

Recorded 2007 at Tribeca Recording, NYC. Jon Margulies, *Recording Engineer*

**ACT ONE** PROLOGOS: *Oedipus and the Sphinx*, **YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE?** 1.

PARADOS: *The Premise*, **THEBES IS DYING** 8.

EPEISODION I: *The Tragic Flaw*, **SEE WITH YOUR OWN TWO EYES** 9. **OEDIPUS IS LISTENING** 10.  
**HATE TO WAIT** 11. **HERE COMES CREON** 12. **WHODUNNIT?** 14.

FIRST STAISIMON: *Why Us?* **A WORLD WITHOUT ZEUS** 14.

EPEISODION II: *The Plot Thickens*, **SPEAK UP, PEOPLE** 19. **HAS ANYONE SEEN THE SEER?** 22.  
**WELCOME, DEAR TIRESIAS!** 23. **ZORBA THE ROCK** 25. **LOCAL BOY MAKES GOOD** 27. **SO'S YOUR OLD MAN** 29. **ONE FOR THE BIRDS** 30.

SECOND STAISIMON: *Why Not?* **THE LONG ARM OF THE LORD** 33.

EPEISODION III: *Marionettes of the Gods*, **HERE COMES CREON, AGAIN** 35. **BOYS WILL BE BOYS** 38. **HOLD YOUR HORSES** 40. **THE (BACK) STORY OF LAIUS** 43. **DESTINY, SCHMESTINY** 45.  
**SAY WHAT?** 46. **ONCE UPON A TIME BLUES** 48. **CURTAINS CALL** 51.

**ACT TWO** THIRD STAISIMON: *Because*, **IT HAD TO BE TRUE** 53.

EPEISODION IV: *Tidings from Afar*, **ALL THE NEWS THAT FITS** 55. **THAT'S A RELIEF** 58.  
**MOMMY DEAREST** 59. **MARRY MERRY MÉROPE?** 60. **HISTORY OF A FOUNDLING** 62. **KNOW THYSELF** 64.

FOURTH STAISIMON: *That's Why*, **MOUNTAIN MAMA** 67.

EPEISODION V: *The Awful Truth*, **HIGH TIMES ON CITHAERON** 68. **SHEEP DIP** 70.

FIFTH STAISIMON: *And What About Us?* **CATHARSIS** 73.

EPEISODION VI: *What's Going On Offstage?* **NOISES OFF** 73. **FICKLE FATE** 78. **THE BEST LAID PLAN** 80. **THANKS, BUT NO THANKS** 81. **HERE COMES CREON AGAIN, AGAIN** 82. **ALL MY CHILD(REN)** 83.

EXODOS: *All She Wrote*, **THE ANTIGONE AND THE EXITING** 87.

# Cast

*Eric Blair* — OEDIPUS. *King of Thebes*

*Paige McDonnell* — JOCASTA. *Wife of Oedipus*

*James Fernandes* — CREON. *Brother of Jocasta*

*Ilberto Lagana* — TIRESIAS. *A Blind Prophet*

*Roy Mazzacane* — A MESSENGER. *From Corinth*

*Eric Starker* — A SHEPHERD. *Known as Phorbas or Menoetes, Depending*

*Isabel Santiago* — A SPHINX. *Called Medea*

*Logan Tracey* — A BUREAUCRAT. *All right, The Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff*

*Rachel Menconi* — ANTIGONE. *Daughter of Oedipus*

*Tom Crozier* — POLYNEICES. *Son of Oedipus*

A CHORUS OF THEBANS *About Nine of Them (Including A Chorus Leader)*

*Old, Young, Male, Female, Plague-Ridden or Not.*

*Performed by Tom Crozier, Rachel Menconi, Logan Tracey, Isabel Santiago, Eric Starker,*

*Roy Mazzacane, Ilberto Lagana, James Fernandes and Paige McDonnell*

∞

*A Boy, A Servant Girl, and The Voice of Apollo*

Special Thanks to Lydia Ooghe, *Designated Singer*

## A C T O N E

PROLOGOS *Oedipus and the Sphinx* (DANSE FOR FOOT AND PAW)

SCENE: *Dusk. Outside Thebes on Mount Phikion, two generations before the Trojan War.*

*Enter OEDIPUS, using his staff, sword at his side.*

**YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE?** (KOP) 8:11

SPHINX: [*springing in, opposite*] Halt! Stand and deliver! Your money or...

OEDIPUS: Who are you?

SPHINX: The robber who's seizing your stash.

OEDIPUS: A pretty thing like you?

SPHINX: I'm your worst nightmare  
if you don't cough up some cash.

OEDIPUS: What's that in your hand? A lasso?

SPHINX: *Your necklace—if you're not quick to concede.*

OEDIPUS: [*flings staff to the ground, brandishes weapon*] Don't be absurd,  
I've a sword.

SPHINX: So did all the rest.

OEDIPUS: Wait! *You're* the Sphinx?

SPHINX: Now you see:

The name that Thebes gave me; Medea, my folks named me.  
Both seem to bring about stress.

OEDIPUS: But you're supposed to be a tripartite beast.

SPHINX: Don't believe all you read in the press.  
If you were a rich Theban merchant,  
would you admit that you were outdone  
by a little robber girl with a rope?

OEDIPUS: I guess not.

SPHINX: They embellish.

OEDIPUS: [*agreeing*] A little here, a little there.

SPHINX: Next thing you know I've got the body of a lion  
and the wings of an eagle. And that's why I chose  
these accessories for my costume.

[*showing off*] Do you like them?

OEDIPUS: A quite unique fashion sense.

SPHINX: [*spoken*] It's good for business.

Victims need to believe in something, *anything*.  
For pirates or prelates, image is everything.

OEDIPUS: Why don't you ask me your riddle?

SPHINX: What riddle?

OEDIPUS: The riddle that's dragging Thebes down:  
Their travelers are waylaid, their answers then gainsaid,  
you throttle their necks as you pounce.

SPHINX: You're misinformed, my friend. I've only one question:  
"Either your money or life?"

Though simple choice it is, most of them flunk the quiz.  
[*Approaches menacingly*] So I take *both*.

OEDIPUS: [*extends sword*] Mind my knife!  
I'm no fat bloated bourgeois sightseeing Boeotia,  
so back off if you find life sweet.

SPHINX: I'll admit you don't sound very much like a local.  
You're even quite cute... except for your feet.

OEDIPUS: My ankles have always been swollen  
for as long as I've known. Guess that's why mom and dad  
christened me as they did.

SPHINX: And who are they?

Who's mom? Who's dad?

OEDIPUS: I'm sure you know their names:  
my pop's King Polybus, my mother's Queen Mérope.  
And I'm their very own—the favorite son of Corinth—Oedipus.

SPHINX: Cruel name, isn't it?—"Swollen Foot."

OEDIPUS: [*spoken*] Not at all. Many bronze age heroes  
are named for salient characteristics. Take Perseus for instance.  
Besides, mom and dad love me. I've got the best parents in the whole world.

SPHINX: So what brings their dutiful boy to a place like this?

OEDIPUS: Fortune and fame. Mythic deeds.

SPHINX: Can't do them in Corinth?

OEDIPUS: I can't. It's abhorrent.

SPHINX: Why not?

OEDIPUS: A dread prophecy.

SPHINX: I don't believe in that stuff.

OEDIPUS: It's a good source: the Delphic oracle's shrine.

SPHINX: *You've* been to Delphi?

OEDIPUS: That's where I went to find my genealogy's line.

SPHINX: [*aside*] There's pretty good pickings around Mount Parnassus, I just might relocate some day.

[*to* OEDIPUS] But you're the number one son of perfected parents...

OEDIPUS: Don't believe all you read in the press.

Once at a party this drunkard claimed my parents weren't mine and a bastard was I all along...

SPHINX: I've been called worse.

OEDIPUS: I beat him senseless.

SPHINX: Typical Corinthian drunken brawl.

OEDIPUS: Then I thought about it, and I made my way to Phocis to learn about my family and how these feet got this way.

SPHINX: And what did Apollo say?

OEDIPUS: —I'd kill dad, marry mom.

SPHINX: [*spoken*] How beastly.

OEDIPUS: [*spoken*] I don't want to be a... a...



SPHINX: There's not even a *word* for that kind of behavior.

OEDIPUS: Incest?

SPHINX: Parricide.

OEDIPUS: Schadenfreude? Matrimony?

SPHINX: Don't be funny.

OEDIPUS: Needless to say, I'm avoiding my hometown  
and seeking my future elsewhere. Making a mythic quest—  
Bellerophon, Pegasus...

SPHINX: And that's where *I* come in?

OEDIPUS: Yes!

Since there's no Corinth crown in my tea leaves I need a  
Medusa/Chimera to fight.

SPHINX: A little *girl* with a noose?

OEDIPUS: A tripartite *beast* on the loose.

SPHINX: Ha! More than sufficient tonight.

OEDIPUS: How did you take up this profession anyway?

SPHINX: In a patriarchy like ours, you ask?

It's not too hard to see that I *really hate* sewing.

A husband's a snag and housework's a drag.

Just like you, I want fame and fortune.

And so far at least I'm doing quite well, don't you think?

OEDIPUS: For a beast.

SPHINX: [*sbrugs*] Whatever.

Well, so you've found me. What happens now?

OEDIPUS: Let's hear your riddle and see.

SPHINX: There *is no riddle*. Let's have your money!

OEDIPUS: You'll get no money from me.

[*spoken*] I said "fame *and fortune*."

SPHINX: We seem to be at an impasse.

OEDIPUS: We are. So I'll have to make up my own.

SPHINX: Keeping it short and sweet?

OEDIPUS: Something to do with... feet.

SPHINX: And when you solve it alone...

OEDIPUS: The legend says that you'll suddenly hurl yourself off a towering cliff..

(that one over there will do very nicely)

and then you *fall* to your death.

SPHINX: Don't hold your breath!

The "legend" claims I've wings of an eagle.

How am *I* supposed to fall?

OEDIPUS: How am *I* supposed to know?

SPHINX: Don't ask me!

The legend and you are entirely phony.  
You lie as if I were your wife.  
Your story is more than strange:  
A prince with *no* pocket change?  
So it's either your money or life!...

*They struggle.*  
OEDIPUS *loses his sword but grabs the rope*  
*and strangles the SPHINX, who dies.*

PARADOS *The Premise*

SCENE: *Morning. In front of the royal palace in Thebes, sixteen years later. The palace doors are to the right; a statue of Lycian Apollo, with an accompanying shrine, to the left.*

*Enter the CHORUS, of all ages, some plague ridden, carrying suppliant branches.*

**THEBES IS DYING** (KOS) 1:55

CHORUS: Your city needs you, we're dying,  
Thebes needs you now.

Your city needs you, we're dying...

*Enter OEDIPUS.*

CHORUS: Oedipus!

EPEISODION I *The Tragic Flaw*

*During the Parados, the CHORUS has split into two groups,  
one to the left of the stage, the other to the right.  
Each kneels, lowering their branches.*

**SEE WITH YOUR OWN TWO EYES** (K1A) 2:22

See with your own two eyes that plague upon your city lies.  
Weak or strong, old or young, the blight can carry off anyone.  
Good or bad it matters not, rich and poor must share their lot.  
The dragon's teeth now toothless rot.  
Thebes is bleeding now, Thebes is pleading now, Thebes is needing you now.

In birth there's death with labor killing mother and child.  
Cattle perish in the fields, their breath beguiled.  
Yet their corrupted bodies remain undefiled  
since all the vultures in the wild are dead.

Our branches are wreathed in wool, we now beseech your wisest rule  
not as a god but first of men—You saved us once, you can again.  
You freed us from the singing Sphinx, stopped her wanton pillaging.  
For that deed, became our king.  
Thebes is failing now, Thebes is wailing now, Thebes is hailing you now.

Now again we beg of you, to use your skill.  
If the god who helped you then is with you still:  
Rule us, Oedipus! Rule the living, not the dead.  
Rule our city, not a graveyard's bed.

So see with your own two eyes that plague upon our city lies.  
A city without citizens dies.  
Save us, Oedipus! Save us, Oedipus! Save us, Oedipus now!

Your city needs you, we're dying,  
Thebes needs you now.

*OEDIPUS addresses both sections of the CHORUS.*

## **OEDIPUS IS LISTENING** (K1B) 2:20

OEDIPUS: I hear you, dear children of Thebes.  
My heart breaks for your suffering.  
I know how the plague grips you, but not as much as it grips me.

I slept not. You've not wakened me. I cried every night, uncovering every chance, any plan to defeat this destiny.

The pain that you must suffer solely gets added to my troubles  
and the grief that I feel for my city.

I'm not blind! Your misery I see.  
Finally, the cure discovering:  
To inquire of Delphi's god. He's never steered me wrong before.  
So I sent my wife's brother, Creon, you know him,  
to Apollo to receive the oracular answer.  
I admit he's been gone far too long.  
I wonder what that bastard can possibly be doing?

**HATE TO WAIT** (K1C) 1:58

OEDIPUS: God, I hate to wait, I hate to hesitate.  
It grates upon my irritation, exaggerates each abominating fate  
that tries to subjugate our nation.

Lord, I need to speed, I really do indeed.  
It leads to good procedures then onto famous deeds.  
No one will ever need to doubt the leader of Thebes' people.

CHORUS: There's so much more that you could do if you had a clue.

God he hates to wait. We state, we don't debate.  
We rate that his impatience now accelerates.  
He gives it to us straight then goes to meet his fate in greatness.





OEDIPUS: Yes, yes. We understand you.  
But now so tell us, what has the god shown?

CREON: I'll tell you, but let's go inside—  
Some things in private are better known.

OEDIPUS: [*laughs*] Nonsense! I have no secrets.  
You see my people: my ears and eyes.  
And I theirs: whatever I learn, they shall learn with me.  
Speak out and *we'll* surmise.

CREON: [*spoken*] Very well, as you wish.

[*Tries to whisper*] Delphi's commands are quite clear:  
"There's corruption inside the city.  
Drive out and do not harbor. It must be banished without pity."

OEDIPUS: [*not whispering*] Yes, yes. We understand you.  
But now so tell us, what *is* this cancer?

CREON: [*again, sotto voce*] "Pay back blood with blood or  
then root out the murderer."

OEDIPUS: [*forte*] Murder?!

CHORUS: Murder? Murder! Murder!

OEDIPUS: *Who* was murdered?

CREON: It was our leader, our prior king, { Laius. I think his name was.

OEDIPUS: { Laius! Yes, I remember!

I never met him. Tell me everything.

**WHODUNNIT?** (K1E) **5:03**

CREON: [spoken] Anyway, he died.  
And Prince Apollo's made it very clear: "Pay back the killers—Find them."

OEDIPUS: But where did they go? This was *years* ago.

CREON: "Right *here* to Seven-Gated Thebes,"  
[together with deep voice from the statue] *said Apollo.*  
([CHORUS:] Oh!)

CREON: [*continuing*] "What you search for surely can be found,  
what you overlook will vanish."

OEDIPUS: But where should we check? The palace halls and grounds?  
In the fields? Perhaps outside our lands?  
Where was Laius brutally cut down?

CREON: As he went to ask an oracle about our town.  
The Sphinx, you see. He went to calm our fear.

OEDIPUS: And were there any witnesses? Someone we could bring here?

CREON: [Thinks for a minute. Spoken:] Not really.  
For all five of the royal party died save one who escaped and, panicked,  
could tell us nothing new, except one crucial clue...

OEDIPUS: Well, what was *that*? That just may be the key!

CREON: He claimed that Laius' retinue was slain to a man  
by a band of thieves who overcame them all...

OEDIPUS: A *thief* with so much gall?

CREON: *Thieves.*

OEDIPUS: ... *Thieves* not frightened by a king?

Then this must be a vast conspiracy. For regicide's not free.  
Someone has paid a fee in Thebes.

CREON: Yes! That's what we thought and all agreed.  
But Laius wasn't here to lead, we didn't learn a thing  
to our misfortune.

OEDIPUS: [Incredulous. Spoken:] Your misfortune?

[spoken] Good god, your king was butchered mercilessly.  
Who'd dare stop you catch the killer?...

CREON: The *killers*, as you say.

OEDIPUS: Well, what got in your way?

CREON: Oh, just a little thing—  
the riddling *Sphinx*!

We had to set the mystery aside and deal with the threat before us.  
For it was that curse that led to Laius' hearse  
and took the very purpose from our trust.

OEDIPUS: Very well then, I'll find the villain's flaw  
as Loxias foresaw and so did you, my brother-in-law.  
All our thoughts turn to the murdered man:  
You'll have me to fight for you, and everything that I can do  
is everything and anything I can!

[Grandly] You'll see in me your avenging spirit's fire,  
and the right-hand of Phoebus' wrath.

Though not to assist some distant relative,  
but simply for my sake I take this path.

For this assassin may very well decide to swell his growing pride  
and cut me deep and wide. By avenging our king, surely I'll confide  
my fame to lasting memory in Hellas' civic pride.

CREON *congratulates* OEDIPUS. *They walk toward the* CHORUS (LEFT).

CREON: Children of Cadmus, rise  
and take up your woolened boughs.

[*The (LEFT) CHORUS rises*]

OEDIPUS: Creon and I shall retire inside  
and soon decide  
our plan of action now.

OEDIPUS/CREON/CHORUS: With the gods' help,  
today we shall see our triumph or fall.

*Exit* OEDIPUS *and* CREON *into the palace.*

FIRST STASIMON *Why Us?***A WORLD WITHOUT ZEUS** (K15) 3:00

CHORUS (LEFT:) Rise children! [*The* (RIGHT) CHORUS *rises*] Our king has heard us.  
 (RIGHT:) And we have heard Prince Apollo through him.

*The two groups, (one to the left, the other to the right)  
 now merge at center stage.*

Voice of Zeus! What word comes to us  
 from the golden vaults of Delphi's trust?  
 Racked with great terror, I cry your cry,  
 Healer of Delos. But what is your price?

STROPHE

Daughter of Zeus, Athena, I call, and  
 your sister Artemis, guardian of all,  
 and the far shooter, her brother. I pray—  
 Can you stop disaster? Defend us today!

ANITISTROPHE

How did the plague appear if not from the gods?  
 What are we saying here? It makes no odds:  
 Can we supplicate our destroyer with prayer?  
 A forsaking deity leaves us nowhere.

STROPHE

But we beseech Zeus, the father of gods,  
 the ruler of everything. We worship Zeus.  
 We always will. To think that we'd not  
 think of our Zeus is atheist rot.

ANITISTROPHE

If Zeus were not worshiped forever, I fear  
 no other god could be, that's very clear.  
 For all gods depend on the strength of their word,  
 and when that is doubted, they are absurd.

STROPHE

Imagine a world without Zeus!  
 No reason to get out of bed and drink your orange juice.  
 With no god to save you, you'd surely sink.  
 T'will be harder to swear, even harder to think.

ANITISTROPHE

To do it yourself doesn't sound like much fun.  
 Might have to be nicer to everyone.  
 Rougher on retailers of cowls and capes.  
 Others imply you're descended from apes.

STROPHE

"Not bright ones at that," they quickly add.  
 How to decide what's good and what's bad?  
 How to get through this existentialist maze?  
 How will you ever again celebrate your holidays?

ANITISTROPHE

No god? No Zeus? Preposterous!

EPEISODION II *The Plot Thickens*

*Enter OEDIPUS.*

**SPEAK UP, PEOPLE** (K2A) 4:43

OEDIPUS: Still praying to the gods, I see? Then let me grant your prayers.  
To stop the plague, my plan will be as the Pythia prefers.  
Naturally, I'm speaking as a stranger to the story.  
Had I been there then, there'd be no mystery now.  
But what with all the time passed and I an immigrant,  
I rely on native-born information.

Therefore, I proclaim, does anyone know who murdered Labdacus' son?  
*[The CHORUS looks confused or stares blankly]*

Even if it means the culprit's himself, let him speak up and have done!  
*[The CHORUS nervously trembles]*

He need fear nothing but banishment—an exile's future unharmed.  
*[The CHORUS is anxiously mute]*

Maybe an alien shifty and dark causes you to be alarmed.  
*[The CHORUS remains silent]*

Let's hear about it. You'll get my blessing and hundreds of drachmae as well!

[*Angrily*] Cat got your tongue, eh? Then open your ears  
and hear the conspirator's hell:

All Thebes reviles you—no water, no food. Driven away from each place.  
No shelter offered, shunned by us all, unTheban, subversive disgrace.

And now for the killer, if a lone monster or several malcontents:  
I now call forth complete degradation, a life painful step by each step.  
And should the villain be known to me  
then my curses I call down on myself!

Let us ensure the god's words are published today.  
I still can't believe they could kill a king and then get away!  
And now I'm king (his throne was my fate),  
possessing his bed, indeed, and his mate  
who might share our seed, our children create  
bonds of blood sanctioned by our civil state  
making them brothers had his offspring survived.

But for the wicked let no crops grow in their fields,  
wither their women's wombs aborting all they may yield,  
and make the plague ravaging here  
feel like a picnic, seem like small beer.  
But for the rest, my good subjects here,  
make heaven's wishes perfectly clear  
by approving my actions knowing how hard I strived!



CHORUS: My King, you know that I'm not the villain you seek.  
Nor can I point him out, or know if he's foreign or Greek.  
But may I make a suggestion?

OEDIPUS: Please do!  
All tips are welcome. You can even make two.  
Who knows which suspicion may prove to be true.  
So speak out and give us your well reasoned clue,  
and we'll see from that what possibly may be derived.

*The CHORUS cautiously approaches OEDIPUS to speak confidentially.*

**HAS ANYONE SEEN THE SEER?** (K2B) 2:54

CHORUS: Since it was Leto's kid who started this distress,  
he ought to nail the perp instead of forcing us to guess.

OEDIPUS: Good point, my countrymen. But *who's* going to make him do exactly what we want him to? *He's* a god. And so are *you*?

CHORUS: Right enough, Oedipus! We've always found you true and wise.  
Perhaps we need someone with birds who's skilled and can prophesy.

OEDIPUS: Yes, indeed. I've sent for him (convinced by Creon's sound advice)  
the best diviner known to us. I may even send my heralds twice.

'Cause, you know, I hate to wait.

CHORUS: We may have heard you state on six or eight occasions  
how your patience dissipates, when, we must relate,  
we watch you wait in consternation.

*And they wait while OEDIPUS directs one of the CHORUS, a Boy, off the stage.*

*As OEDIPUS crosses the stage in the other direction,  
the lights dim briefly.*

CHORUS: Has there been any word yet? Will the blind seer come?  
Tiresias, we mean.

OEDIPUS: Not yet. I've even sent a second escort.

CHORUS: Well then, he's on his way now.

OEDIPUS: His absence begins to pall.

CHORUS: Well, we certainly need him,  
otherwise we're left with only those tales...

OEDIPUS: What tales are these? Do you have some useful information?

CHORUS: Just that  
Laius was killed by footpads, bloodthirsty vagabonds.

OEDIPUS: Yes, so I've heard. We need *witnesses*.

CHORUS: A man would need a great deal of guts  
to stay silent against your curses and not tell all he knows.

OEDIPUS: He didn't stop at homicide, why would he stop  
at a curse? A useless threat?

*Enter blind TIRESIAS, led by the Boy.*

CHORUS: At last! We see the holy prophet, who's one with the truth!

### **WELCOME, DEAR TIRESIAS!** (K2C) 2:39

CHORUS: Welcome, dear Tiresias! Mystery master! Prophet's eye!  
You must, through your blindness, observe our sickness and know why.

OEDIPUS: You're our last hope and our help, don't you see?

[*with* CHORUS:] Give it your very best try.

OEDIPUS: So, take a look, sweet Tiresias,

[*with* CHORUS:] and then tell us what you spy.

OEDIPUS: [*confidentially*] Let me bring you up to speed so you'll know  
(in case my messengers haven't): "The plague will cease,"

[*together with deep voice from the statue:*] *said Apollo,*

([CHORUS:] Oh!)

OEDIPUS: "when the corruption is punished with banishment."

[TIRESIAS's *expression becomes clouded.*]

[*with* CHORUS:] That's it, dear Tiresias.

CHORUS: That's all we know, nothing more.

Answers learned from your ashes, birds or livers, we implore.

OEDIPUS: Please, save yourself, save your city, save me!

[*with* CHORUS:] You hold all of Thebes in your hands.

So help us, dear, sweet Tiresias.

CHORUS: Help us all, all you can.

TIRESIAS: [*aside*] Oh, what a pain to know  
when those around are dumb.

Though blind, it hurts my eyes to see.

I'd best stay mum.

And what was I thinking when they got me to agree to come?

OEDIPUS: [*Noticing* TIRESIAS's *expression:*] Why look so gloomy?

**ZORBA THE ROCK** (K2D) 4:12

*Variation on a theme by Mikos Theodorakis*

TIRESIAS: Do me a favor, can't you send me away?

You bear your burdens, don't make me stay.

You'll thank me later, if you let me go soon.

OEDIPUS: Is this how you honor the gods? Will you let your city be ruined?

TIRESIAS: You're the one to talk, watch out for what you pray.

OEDIPUS: If you know something, better speak out and say.

TIRESIAS: I won't tell secrets, so don't force me to...

OEDIPUS: See by the gods, [*indicating the CHORUS*] that they're *pleading* with you.

TIRESIAS: My secrets are yours even though they are mine.

OEDIPUS: So you'd rather damn Thebes to Hades? Is that your secret design?

TIRESIAS: I don't want to cause you distraction or pain.

OEDIPUS: Too bad for you, I'll just ask you again.

TIRESIAS: Your questions are useless. My lips are sealed.

OEDIPUS: You stubborn old goat, you better get real.

TIRESIAS: Your questions are vultures returning to roost.

OEDIPUS: Such impertinence from you! I swear, I think you're probably juiced;

Too much retsina has scattered your wits.

TIRESIAS: Too bad for you if the prophecy fits.

OEDIPUS: There you go again! You're making me sore.

TIRESIAS: Then I've said enough. Why don't you show me the door?

OEDIPUS: But *now* I see it, what's been happening here:  
*You're* behind the plot, old man, it's perfectly clear.  
If you hadn't lost your sight, you'd have even struck him down.  
So where are your henchmen? Hiding in town?

TIRESIAS: Enough is enough! I can't take anymore!  
*You're* the corruption, the chancre, the gore.  
The pestilence you seek is nowhere but here. You want to take a look at it?  
Then go find a mirror!

OEDIPUS: You dirty old man! You'd put the onus on me?

TIRESIAS: On no one else, the truth sets me free.

OEDIPUS: We'll see about that. Where did you find this truth?  
Was it from some hoopoe nesting near your stargazing booth?

TIRESIAS: I learned it from you, and you forced it out.

OEDIPUS: Then say it again, so everyone knows  
there's not a shadow of doubt!

TIRESIAS: Then you are the killer, and the killer is you!

OEDIPUS: You'll live to regret this, whatever you do!

TIRESIAS: Shall I add more? It might put you off.

OEDIPUS: [*not really paying attention anymore*] Whatever you feel,  
you silly old toff.

TIRESIAS: Then blind though you are to the horror of it,  
you and yours are lying neck deep in a stinking, revolting cesspit... of...

OEDIPUS: Now you're just blathering; You're as blind as a stone!.

TIRESIAS: Your insults will return to you from all you have known.

OEDIPUS: Listen you blackguard, you child of the night,  
you're feeble against those who live in the light.

TIRESIAS: Maybe you think so, and maybe you're right,  
but it's your fate and Phoebus that stage your miserable plight.

OEDIPUS: [*thinking to himself a moment*] Good god, I see it!  
It's abundantly clear! It's *Creon and you* who slew Laius that year!

[*to TIRESIAS*] So whose bright idea was it? Yours or Creon's?

TIRESIAS: Oh, you don't need us, the answer's bright as neon.

[*tête à tête with OEDIPUS:*] It's right in your face  
where there's more than a trace of your destiny—  
not me but *you* who truly is your own worst enemy!

OEDIPUS *walks away from* TIRESIAS.

### LOCAL BOY MAKES GOOD (K2E) 2:41

OEDIPUS: [*to himself*] Power and fame are not what they're cracked up to be:  
Both created and destroyed by envy and jealousy.

You know I never wanted this job. Thebes *gave* it to me; they *craved* it for me.

My pal, Creon, laid on the crown and now he wants it back.  
The new apprentice now defends the sorcerer's back,  
the one with scheming eyes for profits—not prophet's eyes.  
I despise all of their devising lies, but now I'm wise.

[*Speaking to TIRESIAS and pointing*] So, uh, how come we didn't hear a peep from you when the Sphinx proffered her riddles and apparently no one knew? Were you as muted then as blind? Did your birds fly south? Oh my!

Why was it left for me to come along hobbling by with no assistance, just on my own wits to rely? I didn't need any livers or birds, just listened and heard, and then answered her riddled verse with winged words.

And *I'm* the one you want to overthrow?  
Just so you can be Creon's playmate?  
Well, don't be too surprised  
that all your plots succeed  
in tripping both you bastards up.

A lashing would teach you some good  
or at least it could  
if you weren't  
so *old*.

CHORUS: Dear King, you are too angry, and the prophet spoke in anger too. Instead we should be solving the problem indicated by the god to you.

TIRESIAS: You're king, yet watched by cats, and the low may answer the high. I'm not your stooge, I serve Apollo.  
And I don't need Creon's aid in my reply:



**SO'S YOUR OLD MAN** (K2F) 2:24

So let me tell you—do you mock *my* blindness?  
 Your precious baby blues blind to your origins true  
 and your surroundings too, *you're* one myopic mess.

You dare not seek out the hate in your palace,  
 buried with close ones dead, his curse now yours instead,  
 falling upon your head with unappeased malice.

One of these days it is *you* who will stumble  
 blindly ahead in perpetual night, never a day to come.  
 You'll scream and Kithairon's slopes echo back your lamentable plight.

Wait 'til your great pride recalls your wedding.  
 All of those happy toasts, jesting and sexy boasts,  
 prompting their lusty host onto his bride's bedding.  
 Live with the knowledge that that dark day brings you:  
 Your children back away, Thebes will not let you stay. That's all I have to say.

Now smear us and make us pay, Creon and I, *but wait*:  
 Know very well in the oncoming hell that no man is brought lower by fate.

OEDIPUS: Good lord, must I continue listening to this creature here?  
 Get out! Back to the rock where you climbed out from! Now disappear!

TIRESIAS: How soon they forget. I didn't call you.  
It was *you* who summoned me here. [*Turns to leave*]

OEDIPUS: Knowing now the kind of fool you are,  
I would have waited until next year. You're a *fool*. I'd sooner wait!  
*Hearing the taunt, TIRESIAS turns back.*

### ONE FOR THE BIRDS (K2G) 3:00

TIRESIAS: A fool to you, maybe, but to your parents wise.  
OEDIPUS: Parents? Did you say? Is this one more of your lies?  
TIRESIAS: Today you'll get a birthday and then a demise.  
OEDIPUS: What a talent you have for spouting riddles!  
TIRESIAS: And you for acting surprised!  
Aren't *you* the riddle solver, who knows each puzzle's part?  
OEDIPUS: Chatter on, old man! You've named my most practiced art.

TIRESIAS: How could I forget Boeotia's acclaim  
for the clever fellow Oedipus? How he got his fame?  
Besting that riddling and *robbing* she-beast.  
Was it "wings of an eagle," eh? Did I get that right?  
OEDIPUS: [*catching the drift*] It saved the city at least.  
TIRESIAS: [*laughs*] Yes, Your Great Moment—But the start of your end.  
OEDIPUS: What do I care? I'd do it all again.

TIRESIAS: Then I'll be leaving now. Here, boy, give me your arm.

*TIRESIAS turns with the Boy to leave.*

OEDIPUS: Yes, take him, boy, before he does himself more harm.

*The taunt stops TIRESIAS in his tracks.*

TIRESIAS: Oh! I'll go all right, but first I'll just say this:

You don't frighten me, King, there's nothing that you can do.  
 So listen up, King, all this cursing the killer should bother you.  
 You see, he's a native-born Theban,  
 but knowing so only shows his miserable misery.  
 Blind or 20/20 makes no difference in wizardry.

Prophecy is much more than birds that fly.  
 Don't wonder why we get it right:

An open ear that listens—  
 The surest way leading to real foresight.  
 Not so much religion as child psychology,  
 More traits and habits than seeming destiny.

*Ignoring the prophet, OEDIPUS walks toward the palace.*

Sometimes it's as plain as the nose upon their face.  
 For others it's the swelling on their feet that makes the case.

*OEDIPUS turns and stops.*

So here's a future getting clearer every minute:

Our profligate Theban is beggared;  
His mythic quest runs toward destruction;

[*Exasperated, OEDIPUS goes into the palace*]

A wooden staff taps out his future.  
Though blind he sees everything clearly—  
To his kids he's a brother and father,  
while husband and son to his mother,  
and if he were not an assassin,  
then a polyandrous perversion!

Now detect that!  
And if you find that I've lied  
*then* call me blind.

I'll send my invoice in the morning.

*Exit TIRESIAS, finally, with the Boy.*

SECOND STASIMON *Why Not?***THE LONG ARM OF THE LORD** (K25) 4:06

CHORUS: Whoever did this dread deed, now's the time for you to fly.  
Zeus's boy is on your heels, and the Furies close behind.

Delphi's voice, Apollo's words glitter off Parnassus snow, STROPHE  
tracking down the hunted man. Forest caves—no place to go.  
Like a bull, which tries to dodge the stings and gads from the gods  
that persecute, he can't outrun the shining of Delphi's sun.

On the other hand, the wizard's words bother me. ANITISTROPHE  
I can't accept them, I can't deny them.  
And I dare not look, the future has frightened me.  
I can't face today now. I can't face tomorrow.

Why should there be a blood feud between Laius and Polybus?  
Corinth and Thebes are at peace, unlike most of all Hellas.  
I see no reason to charge our dear leader with the death of the Labdacid king.

Apollo knows, so does Zeus, all about this horrid crime: STROPHE  
Where he flees, where he's fled, how he hides, spends his time.  
But can man know these things? Figure out the tangled strings?  
Is there proof a prophet knows more than a man? Is it a show?

On the other hand, he doesn't pretend to talk ANITISTROPHE  
to dead people's spirits, sell dead people's relics.  
Still, I want some proof. We're judging our leader here.  
The fellow we follow. We mustn't be foolish.

When Oedipus came all of Thebes celebrated in abandonment.  
He outwitted the Sphinx, her death freeing us from the god's punishment.  
Then we acclaimed him as our new dear leader  
and made him the toast of our town.

He'll never be guilty in his citizens' hearts.  
God forbid that he should  
think that we could  
ever let him down.

EPEISODION III *Marionettes of the Gods*

CREON *enters, agitated.*

**HERE COMES CREON, AGAIN** (K3A) 5:31

CREON: People! I hurry to you, dismayed and shocked our king indicts me.  
Does he believe I'd harm him? That a conjuror could incite me?  
If true, I cannot stand this. I'd rather not live, extend my life  
should I be branded traitor to my city, my leader and his wife.

CHORUS: Calm down, dear brother Creon,  
the accusations were in anger made.

CREON: But in *public* is where he made them!  
Did he seem steady? Speak out! Don't be afraid.

CHORUS: We're not sure, he's a king.

OEDIPUS *comes bursting on stage.*

OEDIPUS: Creon! You dirty bastard! You have the nerve to plot around here?  
Coward or fool you think me to be so brazen, that's very clear.  
You thought I was so stupid I'd overlook your machinations.  
Hardly! That's not how one becomes the leader of a nation!





OEDIPUS: And did he at that time then speak of me?

CREON: Not that I seem to recall at all at least never in my presence.

OEDIPUS: So why then did you wait to investigate...

CREON: We didn't! But our efforts were in vain.

OEDIPUS: And the fabled prophet never even stirred? No oracles from birds, and no seditious words about me? Why not?

CREON: I *don't know*, and when I don't I know to shut up  
for a gaping mouth is hard to close. Hmm?

OEDIPUS: Then I'll  
tell you why: you swine *now share* the sty, or else he'd not accuse me  
of Laius' foul death with his foul breath.

CREON: Yet what prompted him *only you* can say.

But, answer me, is my sister not your wife?

OEDIPUS: That fact I will stipulate to.

CREON: And as equals do you reign?

OEDIPUS: I so stipulate again. I grant her every wish, she is my life.

CREON: And am I not the third in all of Thebes?

OEDIPUS: *That's* where you aggrieve the love you have received from me.  
It's rightful that your spiteful plans are foiled  
before they do us greater harm—our reputation soiled.

**BOYS WILL BE BOYS** (K3B) 3:25

CREON: Why should I ever covet the crown that you wear in Thebes?  
 Why would I want the anxiety of sovereignty, when my powers are similar?  
 All men sing my praises, your suitors kiss my arse.  
 And yet when I find that they overstay, I can walk away,  
 you *can't*—and that's the farce.

CHORUS: My King, did you hear?  
 That point is well taken, consider it made.

CREON: Since treason holds no profit, why should I grasp for pain?  
 I'd rather substance than imagery, it's easier to hold and gain.  
 If you want proof check Delphi, learn my report is true.  
 If you find that I've lied here and conspired too, I'll condemn myself with you.

CHORUS: Well said again, our dear brother Creon surely persuades.

Besides, it's not a good idea to start jumping to unproved conclusions.

OEDIPUS: Better to leap than be leapt on.

Besides, would you have me *waiting* until he's all prepared with his collusions?  
 I *hate* to wait, didn't I mention?

CHORUS: So you've said.

We know you hate to wait. We think we got it straight.

If you find us late in stating that we commiserate,  
 your anger should abate when you contemplate our obligation.

CREON: What then do you want of me? Do you want my banishment?

OEDIPUS: No, in fact I want you *dead*.

CREON: You're incredibly pigheaded.

OEDIPUS: You don't think I'm serious?

CREON: I think you're not in your right mind.

OEDIPUS: Right enough it is for me.

CREON: But not right enough in its design, for you are making a mistake.

OEDIPUS: It's decisions that I make!

CREON: Insane decisions that can't help.

OEDIPUS: Do you hear, my Thebes?! The yapping whelp.

CREON: It's *my* Thebes too, as well as yours!

JOCASTA *appears in the palace door.*

CHORUS: Princes, *please!* Calm yourselves!

Queen Jocasta's coming now. You must stop this awful row.

*The CHORUS tries to ingratiate itself by chanting timidly:*

CHORUS: Your city needs you, we're dying,

Thebes needs you now... Your city needs you... we're dying...

JOCASTA *enters.*

Jocasta!

**HOLD YOUR HORSES** (K3C) 5:50

JOCASTA: Stop it, you silly men! Our city's sick with plague, and then here you are shouting threats as if this could be as bad as it gets.

Oedipus go to your rooms, Creon, you had best go home.

What could be the cause of all this crass dissension now?

Pay attention now, Thebes needs invention now—

your *calm* intervention right now.

CREON: Listen! My dear Jocasta, my elder sister, it's not my fault.

Um, Oedipus was picking on me. He wants me banished or laid out in our vault.

OEDIPUS: Not so, my dear Jocasta! Um, it was Creon who started it.

Plotting to bring me down with a knife in my back, the little twit.

CREON: I did not! And may god strike me if I've ever done such a thing.

OEDIPUS: Did so!

JOCASTA: My husband, wait please! An oath's denial you *must* believe.

CHORUS: Believe it, my King. Be wise, believe.

OEDIPUS: [*to* CHORUS] Are you requesting *I* yield?

CHORUS: Creon's never told you lies.

OEDIPUS: Do you know what you ask for?

CHORUS: We do!

OEDIPUS: But I don't. So make me wise.

CHORUS: Don't cast out a friend based on an assumption in anger made.

OEDIPUS: If not him, do you want *me* dead or even exiled?

CHORUS: Never! We'd be too afraid.

No, by Helios, the sun that looks on us, it never crossed our mind.  
 To the plague ravaging us and our land  
 must we add the madness of you and... ?

OEDIPUS: All right! Never mind. Though it brings my ruin,  
 for your sake I shall let him go.  
 But it's you, Thebes, that I pity not *him*. Him I detest!

CREON: Oh, look at you:  
 Even when you concede you condemn.  
 Watch that you never have to be as hard on yourself.  
 OEDIPUS: [*spoken*] Be gone! Get out of my sight!

*Exit* CREON.

OEDIPUS *walks off to the side, visibly shaken. The* CHORUS *turns to* JOCASTA.

CHORUS: My Queen, why not take King Oedipus inside?  
 JOCASTA: Yes, I will. But what caused this wounded male pride?  
 CHORUS: You mean the heated words? Caustic threats?  
 JOCASTA: From both?  
 CHORUS: From both.  
 JOCASTA: And what words were there?

OEDIPUS *returns toward the* CHORUS.

CHORUS: Enough! Please, my Queen, to hear it once was more than enough.  
 OEDIPUS: Boy, you said it.  
 And his words still ring in my ears.

CHORUS: My King, we've said it before, we say it again:  
We'd not turn from you. It was you who saved our ship,  
who put her straight on course, who each day is steady at her helm.

CHORUS *steps away leaving* OEDIPUS *and* JOCASTA.

JOCASTA: In the name of all the gods, why this rage?

OEDIPUS: I'll tell *you* willingly. Listen to me, my wife,

I'd sooner confide to my faithful bride

[*giving the CHORUS a dirty look*] than reckon aside

with these "Thebans" as guides to my actions.

[*whispers*] It's Creon! He's full of plots!

JOCASTA: To which plots do you refer? Tell me now.

OEDIPUS: Your brother accused me of Laius's murder!

JOCASTA: And what is his proof of this dreadful charge?

OEDIPUS: [*sputters*] He keeps his hands clean, it's the Seer-at-Large—  
while he's on the margin—the prophet who does all his dirty work.

JOCASTA: It was a prophet? Is that what you said?

Then put it straight out of your head, don't worry about it!

For seers are human and no human sees what the future will bring.

If people could see, there'd be no mistakes, and we know that can't be.

For that's the only thing that's destined to be in our future.

OEDIPUS: That's a very important point.

**THE (BACK) STORY OF LAIUS** (K3D) 4:22

JOCASTA: My husband Laius wanted his very own son,  
wanted someone to succeed him in his kingdom.  
But the gods forbade, Tiresias said.  
His invention of pederasty had upset them.  
As the years went by, no child arrived, then his first wife died,  
Epicaste—Homer knew her.

In a flash Laius married me, and at fourteen, I got pregnant rather quickly.  
So Laius thought the gods forgot and off he shot to the oracle there at Delphi.

He'd ask the priests: "Was it a boy?  
Would he be smart, would he bring him joy? Rule the kingdom?"  
But on his return, he wouldn't say. He touched me not.  
He stayed away from our bedroom.

Much later I heard, the ominous words:  
the unborn child would slay his father in the future.

But it was a lie, what they prophesied. Yes, Laius died,  
but killed by brigands where three roads meet... [OEDIPUS *starts.*]

He'd gone off again to those hopeless men  
to check with them regarding our Sphinx situation.  
So now you see, what was supposed to be  
never occurred, never happened as was foretold.  
And it never could, for my baby's blood was spilled long before by his father.

OEDIPUS: He murdered your son? Is that what you said?

JOCASTA: Yes, the old goat snatched my infant from out of the cradle and handed him to a henchman who knew the oracle's threat.

Taking my baby he went to the mountains.

[*aside*] No one helped and I was too distraught.

So he exposed my innocent child, and either wolves or hunger assuredly had to have killed him.

I could never forgive Laius for that.

But a queen is a Queen though her king is a rat.

My duty made me overcome all of that—For appearances.

It wasn't long since the death of the king that you showed up in Thebes and we hailed you as conquering hero.

All of us, stunned, learned the Sphinx was undone.

Thebes cheering on their adopted new son.

And Creon's reward you had certainly won—

The City and I were glad to become well-earned prizes.

OEDIPUS:

It was my mythic destiny!



**DESTINY, SCHMESTINY** (K3E) 3:22

JOCASTA: Mythic destiny? Is that all I seem to be to you?  
What do destiny, oracles, fate have to do with life? With love?

It wasn't the stars. It wasn't the moon.  
It wasn't a prophecy. It wasn't our destiny.  
There is no need to find an irrational force—  
What brought me to want you is you. And the reason I love you is you.

It wasn't the gods. It wasn't our fate.  
It wasn't a moonlit night. It wasn't those starry skies.  
It was you, you alone, who put flame in my heart.  
And now why I need you is you. For the reason I love you is you.

How many times have you heard the poets sing of enchanted nights?  
Next thing you know the harsh light of day gives enchanted feelings a fright.  
Enchanted nights are nothing to the spell that you cast on me.  
And you do it whatever time it is whenever you look at me.

Though I recall some singers crooning about the seductive moon,  
the scenes that happen after it sets are never part of the tune.

So many stars and moons and fortunes, it's a wonder two people can see  
each other without tripping over those moons, over those stars, over the gods,  
and over their great destinies. And so...

It wasn't the gods. It wasn't our fate.  
 It wasn't a moonlit night. It wasn't those starry skies.  
 These delusions belong in silly love songs, but life is to be lived. And you  
 are the reason I live it with you.  
 That, my lover, is reality. Our destinies? Let them go.  
 The future our future conspires to be in good time will be past,  
*then* we'll know.

### **SAY WHAT?** (K3F) 3:14

OEDIPUS: I see your point. But what did you say?  
 Um, that bit about the *three* roads intersecting?

JOCASTA: Yes, *that* was the place, the survivor said,  
 where Laius and party were all left for dead on their journey.  
 And he said very little else.

OEDIPUS: There must be many similar spots—  
 intersecting three different roads—all over Hellas.  
 So where are *these* three?

JOCASTA: In Phocis. You see,  
 the road from Delphi branches south off to Thebes  
 and then off to Daulia and east—  
 there at the foothills.

OEDIPUS: I *know* that place! I've been there before!  
 But tell me, *when* did this massacre actually happen?

JOCASTA: Oh, a long time ago. Although not so long before you arrived and were hailed by the throng for stilling the she-hawk's terrible song. [OEDIPUS *blanches*]  
 Oh! My dear husband! Have I said something wrong? You don't look well.

OEDIPUS: Don't ask. But first, please, answer me—  
 What *exactly* did Laius look like?

JOCASTA: Tall, kind of your height and sort of your build.  
 But *old*. His temples already had begun to turn an ashen light gray.

OEDIPUS: Good lord, self-accused must I stand here! But I didn't know...

JOCASTA: What are you saying? And why did you sigh?

OEDIPUS: I fear the blind prophet sees much better than I.  
 But tell me one thing more...

JOCASTA: I'm too frightened to.  
 But ask anyway.

OEDIPUS: Did Laius leave with an escort or two?

JOCASTA: I believe there were five in all, with one chariot.

OEDIPUS: Oh, I see it all now! And who told you of this?

JOCASTA: One of the servants. The only one to get away.

OEDIPUS: And is he still in the palace?

JOCASTA: No, he went away.

Now that you mention it, when he returned from the scene of the crime with Creon and learned

that you would be ascending to the Theban throne,  
 he came one night to me quietly alone.  
 Would I let him “go back to shepherding?” he asked.  
 “Good honest work and a quiet rustic task.  
 Easier than learning a new administration.”  
 An old house slave, he deserved consideration.

OEDIPUS: Can we bring him here for questioning?

JOCASTA:

We can.

But why?

OEDIPUS: I'd rather wait first for this man...

(CHORUS: ?!)

OEDIPUS:

Before I go and say another thing.

JOCASTA: Then he will be summoned at once for you, my King.

### **ONCE UPON A TIME BLUES** (K3G) 3:20

JOCASTA: But might I know what is bothering you?

OEDIPUS: Of course. I've got a bad feeling about it.

As you're my companion, and closest to me,  
 I'll share it with you—no need to ever doubt it.

I've told you before of my parents. But there's parts I've not spoken of.

JOCASTA: I know Polybus, your father, you cherish.

Mérope, your mother, you love.

OEDIPUS: Yes, I was their fair-haired princeling,  
admired by one and by all, 'til one day at a banquet a braggart  
in his cups intended to brawl.

He cried out I wasn't my father's own son! Yelled it right out before everyone!  
The pain of this slander was equally bad  
as the pounding I gave him for knocking my dad.

Needless to say, I called on my parents, who were shocked to hear of this slur.  
Though relieved at how they reacted, the charge I couldn't defer.  
So next day, without their knowing, I snuck out in the dead of the night,  
then I stole away to Delphi to see if the slander was right.  
The Pythia wouldn't reply to my doubt, instead giving me an earful about  
some horrible news that quickened my breath:  
Predicting a future of incest and death.

JOCASTA: Incest and death? That's appalling. A frightening thing to learn...

OEDIPUS: And the details even more galling, forcing my stomach to turn.  
That I, by mating with mother, would bring our hatchlings to birth:  
Monsters perceived by mankind as abominations on earth.

And if that couldn't have been bad enough,  
I'd slaughter my father, the one that I loved.  
Nervous and ill, I fled Delphi's goad  
straight down the hill 'til I came to three roads.

At that point, I then had decided not to go back to my hometown.  
I didn't dare risk the dangers. The fear was bringing me down.

And then at that three-way junction, I saw a herald coming my way  
followed by a colt-driven wagon with a gray old man as you say.

The old man commanded his groom to unload  
and “get that cripple right off of the road.”  
So groom and herald charged up the path  
to beat me but met the wrath of my staff.

The two slaves bit the dust quickly. Then the driver and the old man  
wheeled the chariot 'round beside me and brandished a club in his hand.  
The old boy barely missed my head and splattering all of my brains.  
But the wagon went past and I jumped on,  
showed them both the meaning of pain.

I ran them through and I don't deny  
I got some satisfaction in seeing them die.  
But if Laius turns out to be that old thing,  
then I stand accused of killing your king!

**CURTAINS CALL** (K3H) 3:20

CHORUS: [*remembering their instructions*]

“King killer, hated by the gods. King killer, no citizen shall aid.”

King killer chastened by our rods. King killer, no calumny gainsaid.

OEDIPUS: [*unhappily continuing*]

“No one may provide fire or water.” All my curses cried seal my slaughter.

In my foul hands I hold the treasure of your dead mate’s connubial pleasure.

They now cover you with his blood.

I must be exiled from this land! And yet in exile I can’t go.

Returning home, you understand, will doom the ones I love and know.

For I am cursed to kill my father, and I am doomed to marry mother.

Never let me see that foul morning. I’d rather disappear without warning  
than to be covered with the mud of shedding royal blood.

CHORUS: My King, you terrify us.

But ’til the witness speaks, you should have hope.

OEDIPUS: Yes. Hope. I must wait for the shepherd.

JOCASTA: And when he comes here, what do you hope to figure out?

OEDIPUS: Well, if his tale seems to match yours in the essentials,  
I’m in the clear.

JOCASTA: And tell me how is that? What did you hear me say?

OEDIPUS: You said, “thieves”—*thievzzz*. Remember?

He claimed a whole gang of them  
overpowered the retinue.  
And “one” can never equal “few.”  
So that takes me right off the hook!

JOCASTA: Then don't stop to fret.  
It happened just as I said.  
Besides, he swore before  
the whole city, and what's more,  
he can't now take it back  
though his report should lack  
all the facts and evidence.  
Therefore, any hesitance  
is misplaced. So let it go.  
The oracles did *surely* show  
my son would kill my husband but  
it happened just the opposite.  
So much for prophecy.

OEDIPUS: Very true. But we *must* see  
that shepherd who had witnessed the Phocis butchery.

JOCASTA: I'll have him fetched. But we  
should go inside and be a family.

*Exit OEDIPUS and JOCASTA into the palace.*

END OF ACT I



## A C T T W O

THIRD STASIMON *Because*

SCENE: *Later that day at Thebes Central.*

**IT HAD TO BE TRUE** (K35) 3:48

CHORUS: May my destiny always lead me to  
reverent words and deeds. May I follow true  
Olympian laws and not seek to find within them flaws. STROPHE

Pride breeds tyranny, to scale heights vanity  
'til the stones give way, and the footholds crash away  
as pride tumbles down, no longer so bold prone on the ground. ANTISTROPHE

What happens to the brazen man who parades  
his disdain for justice and the laws heaven made?  
The price paid for scorn must be straightaway bought,  
and arrows of reprisal to his lack of heart shot. STROPHE

If not, do I celebrate this wantonness? Why should I dance?

Unless prophecies turn out to be true,  
so that all men know, I shall never go  
to the omphalos where the Pythia breathes the air from below.

ANTISTROPHE

For if Zeus is king of heaven then nothing  
hides from his seeing eye. If he missed this aching sty,  
what else could he miss? He must deal with a crime such as this.

STROPHE

It's been a long time for these oracles' claims.  
The ones about Laius are fast turning to lies. And as they fade,  
the reverence that we pay to Apollo and to the pantheon of gods dies.

ANTISTROPHE

If not, do I celebrate such wantonness? Why should I dance?

EPEISODION IV *Tidings from Afar*

JOCASTA *enters, accompanied by a Servant Girl, carrying a suppliant's olive branch wound in wool and a burning censer.*

**ALL THE NEWS THAT FITS** (K4A) 5:31

JOCASTA: People of Thebes! I've decided to call at the shrines of the gods.  
As you can see, I'm well prepared holding my bough,  
burning my incense—sincere supplication.

*[As JOCASTA kneels before the statue of Apollo, placing the incense in the niche, an elderly MESSENGER from Corinth enters.]*

Oedipus grieves, completely enthralled to prophecies' prods,  
ignoring me. To Phoebus I turn, return him now  
to his senses and civil administration.

MESSENGER: [*pompously*] Strangers! Can you tell *me*  
where lives the Theban King? Where *I* can find him?

CHORUS: You've found him, friend. This is his palace.  
[*also pompously*] Inside, our King now contemplates important things of state...  
Ah! But here's his Queen—his own wife and mother  
of his children.

MESSENGER: [*pushes* CHORUS *members aside*] Blessings! Noble Queen of Thebes, wife of Oedipus, renowned by all!

JOCASTA: Blessings! As well to you to, dear sir.  
But what have you come for, why do you call?

MESSENGER: I bring happy news straight to you, honored Queen,  
for your house, your spouse and your King!

JOCASTA: Then thank you, timely messenger. And do tell us the news you bring.

MESSENGER: The word out of Corinth is joyful!  
Well, that is, it's a bit bittersweet.

JOCASTA: And what is this two-edged Corinthian news?

MESSENGER: The Corinthians want Oedipus King!

JOCASTA: But why this sudden jacquerie?  
Doesn't Polybus the Isthmus reign?

MESSENGER: No more. He is grave now.

JOCASTA: Do you mean dead, sir?

MESSENGER: Beyond life's pain.

In fact, *I* would say that he's quite passed away.  
Hanging 'round Hades is he.

JOCASTA: Quick girl! Tell your master this!

[*The Servant Girl exits hurriedly.*]

Bring him here now! And let him see!  
Bring him here, let him see...

[*aside*] You prophecies! Where are your predictions now?  
What you supposed, well, I suppose can't be now!  
The man that he fled for years for fear of killing, now lies dead.

*Enter OEDIPUS.*

OEDIPUS: You called me, darling?

JOCASTA: You must listen to this messenger from Corinth  
and what he says about you.  
And those oracles you feared for all these years have disappeared.

OEDIPUS: So who is this man? And what is it he has to say about me?

JOCASTA: He brings tidings that the Corinthian king has passed away.

OEDIPUS: My father dead? Is that what he said?

Then let me hear it from his own lips. [*turns to the MESSENGER*] Tell me about it!

MESSENGER: He's dead as a doornail, cold as can be.

OEDIPUS: But how did he die? Sickness, conspiracy,  
virus, bacteria, heredity—which of these killers took poppa from me?

MESSENGER: [*consoling*] It was age, sir. A slight touch puts the old to rest.

OEDIPUS: A natural death is that what it was?

Just a geriatric malady took away daddy?

MESSENGER: A lingering illness from lingering years.

Softly subverting mortality's fears, less of a threat the closer it gets to the outcome.

ALL: Poor old Polybus!

OEDIPUS and JOCASTA walk to the side to review the situation.  
(The MESSENGER joins the CHORUS to share a bowl or two of retsina.)

**THAT'S A RELIEF** (K4B) 2:00

OEDIPUS/JOCASTA:

We are now done with pythian prophecies!  
 Don't need blind men scanning the sky for birds.  
 Their wingbeats made an assassin of me/you.  
 But what's wrong's not I/you but their lying words.

OEDIPUS: My dad's dead in Corinth and here I am  
 in Thebes, my sword scabbard. And I'll be damned  
 that he died while pining for lack of me.  
 Well, he's gone and taken all those prophecies with him...

—hmm?

[*brightens*] So, Jocasta! What do you think about that?  
 Wasting my time on a voodoo threat!

JOCASTA: That's what I've tried to tell you, and yet  
 I couldn't make you understand, my pet.

OEDIPUS: So you did now. But I was too scared to listen to you.

JOCASTA: Thank god, it's all behind you now.

OEDIPUS: Back to the ship of state's commanding bow!

JOCASTA: At least no more oracles anyhow.

OEDIPUS: [*agreeing*] No, Jocasta!

**MOMMY DEAREST** (K4C) 2:11

OEDIPUS: [*darkens*] Of course, there's still mom and her bed to watch out for.

JOCASTA: I tell you, don't worry.

Though chance rules existence and changes our future,  
we mustn't be sorry.

No one can see the next morning ahead,  
whether there's joy or there's mourning and dread.

Nothing's predestined or written in stone,  
except that our "fate" is to face it alone.

We must live as carefree as we can.

So rid all these thoughts of a maternal wedding. And don't think about them.

You're not the first man who's had such thoughts of bedding.

Just don't slink around them.

Those who live happiest pay them no mind.

Free from the guilt and the analyst's bind.

What makes you think I would somehow adjust  
and ever allow you to be bigamous?

I'm your *wife*. You'd be *crazy* to try.

OEDIPUS: I would be persuaded by your brave words—I know I could  
*if* mom were dead with dad, but she's still alive and knocking wood.

OEDIPUS and JOCASTA return to the MESSENGER,  
*who is finishing his retsina.*

JOCASTA: But your father's passed away taking that load off your mind.

OEDIPUS: Yes, it did, but still I say: That woman I'm afraid to find.

MESSENGER: [*a bit drunkenly:*] A woman, sir, you said?

That causes you such dread?

The man who beat the Sphinx and was then elected head  
of old mighty Thebes, they said.

Which woman could ever spread fear on you?

### **MARRY MERRY MÉROPE?** (K4D) 3:14

OEDIPUS: It's Mérope, she's my black beast—wife and queen to the deceased.

MESSENGER: The old queen? What's to fear?

OEDIPUS: A dire threat to keep clear.

MESSENGER: But can you recite this prophecy? Let us know the doom you see?

OEDIPUS: Yes, I can. Loxias said I'd mate with mom and dad's blood shed.

So for many years, I've stayed far from Corinth.

I wouldn't go back there, I dared not return there.

JOCASTA: And until today, I thought that the reason  
we didn't visit was your chronic carsickness.

OEDIPUS: [*shakes his head and addresses the MESSENGER*]

Though it is true that my exile has led to great eminence,  
what is as sweet as the gaze gleaned from our loving parents?



MESSENGER: And it's this fear of *mother*, not chariot nausea, that's kept you away from our town?

OEDIPUS: And my *father*, old man. So as not to kill pop.

MESSENGER: Then, since I bring good news, let me bring it in twos and settle your nerves down.

OEDIPUS: And if you do, you'll receive a grateful large reward.

MESSENGER: *That's* the reason I journeyed here:  
To bring you home and do well by myself.

OEDIPUS: No!  
Not home. I won't go near to a parent's hearth.

MESSENGER: My lord, it's clear that you do not know what you talk about.

OEDIPUS: What do you mean by that?

JOCASTA: [*hopefully*] And are you claiming his sainted mother can welcome him home?

MESSENGER: Well, as I understand it, you fled your birthright from fear that you'd be covered in infamy by your *mother*, who has reached her *sixty-eighth* year?

OEDIPUS: Yes. It's the great fear that's tormenting me and haunting me still.

MESSENGER: Then cheer up!

There is no reason to become frightened by simply nothing!

OEDIPUS: Nothing?! Old man, I'm their son and their doom!

MESSENGER: Well, no, you're really neither. He was no father, no more than *I* am.

OEDIPUS: Then *why* did he call me his sweetkins?

MESSENGER: You were a gift...

### **HISTORY OF A FOUNDLING** (K4E) **2:56**

MESSENGER: Years ago he took you from my very arms...

OEDIPUS: Nonsense! How could he love me so?

MESSENGER: An old man, childless—destined to remain so—how could he *not* love you?

OEDIPUS: All right then, where did I *come from*?

Did you trip on me in a street or road? Did you pick me up in the marketplace next to the oregano, cheese and mace?

MESSENGER: I, er, uh, *discovered* you on Cithaeron's...

JOCASTA *becomes anxious.*

OEDIPUS: Nonsense! That's a *Theban* slope!

What could a herald from Corinth be doing there? [*Glares at the MESSENGER*]

MESSENGER: [*Hesitates. Nervously:*] Grazing sheep and goats.

[*Recovers himself:*] I used to be a shepherd, you see.

OEDIPUS: So far from the Isthmus? Hard to believe!

Were you scrounging for work abroad?

MESENTER: Is that how you ask your savior, my lord?

OEDIPUS: My *savior!* How can you be so certain of this?

MESENTER: [*looks down, then points*] Your *feet*, my lord.

It's your feet. Your ankles, sir... Swollen. They're a dead giveaway.

OEDIPUS: Don't bring up that ancient hurt. I've learned to accept it anyway.

MESENTER: They were bound with an iron pin. It was *I* who loosened them.

OEDIPUS: My birthmark from the cradle?!

MESENTER: The same.

And it's how you got your name.

OEDIPUS: Yes, I know. I preferred the name of John...

Maybe even Rhadamanthys. But who named me? Dad or mom?

MESENTER: Better ask the one I got you from.

OEDIPUS: Oh great! My foundling's history is now a secondhand mystery!

So tell me who gave me to you?

MESENTER: A servant, sir.

OEDIPUS: A servant?! *Who?*

Describe him!

What is his name? And where does he live?

MESENTER: Out on the slopes where the sheep would safely graze,

we called him Phorbos. He was one of Laius' slaves.

JOCASTA *understands!* She turns away in shock.

OEDIPUS: Good god, man! You mean *the* Laius, King of Thebes?

MESSENGER: That's the *one*, all right! You jogged my memory.

OEDIPUS: Well, could I see him? Is he still alive?

MESSENGER: Laius, sir? *I* had heard the king had died.

OEDIPUS: No, no, you fool! I referred to the slave!

MESSENGER: Oh! Well, I don't know. It's been over a decade.

I suppose these Thebans could tell you well enough.

*My* hands are full with the House of Polybus.

OEDIPUS *turns to the* CHORUS.

OEDIPUS: Then do you know this slave? Who is he?

CHORUS: The *herdsman*, King. The one you asked to see.

But the Queen would know for sure.

OEDIPUS *turns to* JOCASTA.

## **KNOW THYSELF** (K4F) 4:37

OEDIPUS: Oh, Jocasta!

Is this the man we sent for before?

Is he the man known by the workers and peasants as Phorbas?

JOCASTA: [*feigning nonchalance*] Which man do you mean?

The servant? The slave? The shepherd? The goatherd? The peasants' brigade?

Which one is which? This is nonsense in spades! Be serious,  
and don't give it another thought.

OEDIPUS: What's that? Forget it?! Here's the best clue yet  
and you say let it drop?

You must be kidding, I haven't come this far  
to suddenly stop.

JOCASTA: [*desperately*] In the name of all of the gods,  
please let it go! I love you so!

For your own sake if not for mine, give it a rest!

This is torture enough for me! Must I bare my breast?

OEDIPUS: Darling! Please, don't tremble so!

It won't be *you* who's brought low

if it's shown from long ago I'm a humble joe.

JOCASTA *throws herself at the feet of* OEDIPUS.

JOCASTA: Listen to me! This is critical! Do not proceed!

OEDIPUS: Listen to *you*? Not seek the truth nor where it leads?

You might as well be asking me not to breathe. It's my destiny.

It is my nature to seek out and grab reality.

JOCASTA: I only want what's best for you! { What's best for you.

OEDIPUS: { What's *best* for me?

I'm sick and tired of hearing what's best. I want facts! Damn the rest!

Make the throw! The dice will show what comes up next!

JOCASTA: [*screams*] Aii! [*rising*] God help you, my husband,  
and hide you from who you are.

OEDIPUS: Will somebody *please* fetch that damn shepherd  
and bring him here instantly?

[*Two members of the CHORUS run offstage*]

Let's leave the lady to fret about her stained royal family tree.

JOCASTA: [*turning away*] No more! My poor cursed and deluded husband!  
Man of Misery—the only name fit for you now! [*screams*] Aii!

JOCASTA *runs into the palace.*

CHORUS: What has happened to our Queen?  
Why did she rush off in grief? Is this the calm before the storm?

OEDIPUS: Then storm away! Let it come! I will know my history  
no matter how low it may be. Though baseness be my discovery,  
I will steer it out, Thebes will hear it out. I will not fear about it now.

Let my wife's female pride bridle at my birth.  
I am Fortune's lucky child, for what it's worth.

She's my mom, the moon's my cousin. *They* watch over me.  
And I will search for them, my *real* family.

OEDIPUS *exits offstage.*

CHORUS: So let it be.

*The MESSENGER follows OEDIPUS.*

FOURTH STASIMON *That's Why***MOUNTAIN MAMA** (K45) **1:46**

CHORUS: If I were a prophet with foresight aplenty, STROPHE  
 before the moon tomorrow, Mount Cithaeron,  
 I'd shout out your name as the nurse and parent of Oedipus—  
 His mother and his father, the bedrock of his fame.  
 We'll dance 'round you, the savior of our prince.  
 Great Apollo, may our dance please you.  
 We'll dance 'round you, like you've never seen it since.  
 Lord Apollo, may our dance please you.

Who was your mother, lucky child Oedipus? ANTISTROPHE  
 Which dryad mated with Arcadian Pan?  
 Was he your pa? Or Apollo of the pastures?  
 Or Hermes of Cyllene? You tell us if you can.  
 Was it Dionysus roaming over Helicon,  
 Reveling about with a comely local nymph?  
 And how did our god of the theatre seem to get it on?  
 Reveling about with a comely local nymph?

EPEISODION V *The Awful Truth*

*An old SHEPHERD enters with the two CHORUS members.  
From the other side of the stage, OEDIPUS enters with the MESSENGER.*

**HIGH TIMES ON CITHAERON** (K5A) **3:50**

OEDIPUS: Look, friends, though I've not seen this man before, I'd say that's the herdsman we seek, for he's as old as our guest here from Corinth. But you could tell me for sure he's our Greek.

CHORUS: Yes, we know him well. Menoetes is his name, an old and trusted servant to your house.

OEDIPUS: And how say you, Corinthian? Is this the man?

MESSENGER: That's Phorbas all right! The very one.

OEDIPUS: [*to the SHEPHERD*] And so tell me the reason you go by two names.

SHEPHERD: I've one for the city, the other for the country, my lord.

OEDIPUS: [*spoken*] That does not inspire confidence.

But, old man, who'er you are, were you a slave to	{	Laius?
SHEPHERD:		Laius, sir. I was born and bred,
never was bought or sold nor served a meaner man instead.		



OEDIPUS: And what did you do for the Theban king?

SHEPHERD: Mainly a herdsman. Off and on.

OEDIPUS: And where did you herd the royal flocks?

SHEPHERD: Out on the slopes of Cithaeron.

OEDIPUS: Good! So then you must have seen [*indicating*] this messenger?

SHEPHERD: Which one?

OEDIPUS: The one in *front* of you!

SHEPHERD: Well, I wouldn't say I'd not.

OEDIPUS: Did you, sir?

SHEPHERD: If I forgot...

My memory's not what it used to be. So I couldn't say for sure.

MESSENGER: It's a wonder he doesn't remember *me*  
and all the times that we endured.

Let me try to jog his brain, help him recall...

SHEPHERD: What's that?

MESSENGER: Help you to recall again.

The good old days out on the hill—the starry nights, the ouzo still.

From spring to fall, our flocks would graze.

When winter came, we went our ways—

I to my pens, he to Laius' folds. Three years just broken by winter's cold.

Now doesn't that ring a bell?

SHEPHERD: Well, I suppose. Maybe. But it was long ago.

MESSENGER: And do you recall a baby boy  
you gave to me to raise as my own?

SHEPHERD: A baby boy? What do you mean?

MESSENGER: Well, here he is! [*indicating OEDIPUS*] Your little tyke!  
All grown up and now a king!

SHEPHERD: Oh, why don't you shut up and take a hike?!

OEDIPUS: Watch out! If anyone's to get a verbal lashing here, it's going to be *you*.

SHEPHERD: Master, please! What have I done wrong?

OEDIPUS: You don't answer his questions about the baby.

SHEPHERD: But he's talking nonsense.

OEDIPUS: So if you refuse to talk freely, then maybe some pain  
will help to loose your tongue [*raises his hand to strike*]  
and get your mouth to speak.

SHEPHERD: By the gods, please don't strike an old man who is weak!

OEDIPUS: Someone grab and twist his arm!

[*The two CHORUS members grab the SHEPHERD*]

SHEPHERD: God help me! I meant no harm!

OEDIPUS: So did you or did you not give him that kid?

### **SHEEP DIP** (K5B) 3:19

SHEPHERD: All right I did...

Though I wish I'd died that day.

OEDIPUS: If you don't tell the truth, you'll surely die today.

SHEPHERD: Frankly, much sooner if I tell the facts.

OEDIPUS: You're mincing words, to see how I'll react.

[*Motions for the two CHORUS members to inflict pain*]

SHEPHERD: No, no! I gave it to him! I already said!

OEDIPUS: And where did you get the child? Most likely from your bed!

SHEPHERD: No, not mine! It was a hand-me-down.

OEDIPUS: Well then, from whose house? [*Looks at the CHORUS*]

Someone here in town?

SHEPHERD: By the gods, no more questions, please!

OEDIPUS: If I ask again, you're a dead man.

SHEPHERD: Then, it was out of *Laius's* house where the boy came from!

MESSSENGER: Well, strike *me* dumb!

OEDIPUS: Out of his house? Hmm. Do you mean a slave?

Or one born of his blood?

SHEPHERD: You're *forcing* me to say?

OEDIPUS: Yes I must! And I to hear it said.

SHEPHERD: All *right*. It was his *son* he left for dead!

OEDIPUS: *Why* would a father make off with his son?

SHEPHERD: There was an oracle...

OEDIPUS: Oh, not *another* one!

SHEPHERD: A warning he'd be murdered by his child.

OEDIPUS: But you passed him on to Corinthian exile?

SHEPHERD: I had to sir, I pitied him,  
the way his feet were grasped with an iron clasp.

The king told me my task would be  
to expose his son on Mount Cithaeron.

Though I was Laius's most devoted slave  
(in return for this task I'd get a palace place),  
I couldn't bear to see the baby die. So I  
slipped him to my friend here on the sly.  
The deal was to Corinth the infant now would go.  
The child would be safe and Laius'd never know.  
Everyone is happy with the situation,  
and I get a new in-house occupation.

[Addresses MESSENGER] I *thought* he'd be safe in faraway Corinth but, then  
at the crossroads, I saw those ankles again and I ran.  
And then at the Sphinx Victory Parade what marched by?  
"Those *damned* ankles," I sighed.

[Addresses OEDIPUS] And when you married your bride,  
Laius's wife, then I cried that you were doomed.

OEDIPUS: I *was* doomed!  
[*aside*] And now at last everything is piercingly clear:  
The light shining on me but I crave darkness drear.  
For I've seen far too much, I don't want to see more. No more.

*OEDIPUS runs into the palace.*

CHORUS: God help the wretched.

*The MESSENGER and the SHEPHERD exit slowly.*

FIFTH STASIMON *And What About Us?***CATHARSIS** (K55) **2:27**

CHORUS: In all of the generations of men,  
 has life ever lead to somewhere but the end?  
 And what of the one who grabs more than a dream,  
 who holding it thinks that it's more than it seems?  
 We see it in you: man's troubled destiny.  
 And if it's true and that's what meant to be,  
 Oedipus, *you* were ruined, which says to me  
 we must be doomed to even more misery than you.

STROPHE

You who exceeded all other men,  
 the one who grasped glory from the she-hawk and then  
 saved our city in shambles from partisan fights,  
 we made you our king. You protected our rights.  
 We see it in you: man's troubled destiny.  
 And if it's true and that's what meant to be,  
 Oedipus, *you* were ruined, which says to me  
 we must be doomed to even more misery than you.

ANTISTROPHE

When at last caught by old patient Time,  
who sees all, forgives none, vengeance sublime,  
I watched as your family was wrested apart.  
I wish I'd not known you. It's broken my heart.  
We see it in you: man's troubled destiny.  
And if it's true and that's what meant to be,  
Oedipus, *you* were ruined, which says to me  
we must be doomed to even more misery than you.

STROPHE

[*aside*] WITH CHORUS: Poor unhappy man.

EPEISODION VI *What's Going On Offstage?*

*An agitated BUREAUCRAT appears at the palace door.  
She enters.*

**NOISES OFF** (K6A) 5:07

BUREAUCRAT: Good people of Thebes! If you love the royal house, look away! Run away! Hide your eyes and cover your ears! Neither the rain from the skies nor our rivers can wash away the stain, which was caused by the pain of the past and the pains that today hurt us so.

CHORUS: But we've pain enough. Please let us be! More misery is more now than we want to know.

BUREAUCRAT: Then I'll say it fast: the Queen lies dead.

CHORUS: Poor lady! How?

BUREAUCRAT: Our Queen killed herself.  
You're fortunate not to have witnessed the horrible infamy.  
Although not so I. I wished I'd averted my eyes  
but it's burned deep in memory.

She burst through the doors, rushed to her room  
 like a maenad maddened in agony.  
 Ripping her hair, slamming the doors,  
 she made straight for her bridal bed's canopy.  
 And there she wailed out her husband's name:

JOCASTA: [*offstage*] Laius! Laius! It was *your* curse after all!  
 But now your curse is mine. Now your curse is ours!  
 Unrest! Bad bed! Doom here conceived from life!  
 Husband from my husband,  
 siblings from his wife!     [*screams*] Aii!

BUREAUCRAT: Sobbing, she must have decided there and then.  
 Fastening a rope to the post, she cinched the knot, adorned her throat.

Not long after that, our King stormed in suddenly,  
 frantically running from door to door.

OEDIPUS: [*offstage*] Get me a sword! Where is my wife?  
 My benighted bride? Lord Apollo's whore?!

BUREAUCRAT: And then as he raged, his dark fate led him straight  
 to that place, a most terrible sight.  
 For there she was, still hung from the halter:  
 grace gone from her face, the breath from her life.

And then our King cried:                     { "My Queen is dead!"  
 OEDIPUS: [*offstage*]                        { My Queen is dead!



BUREAUCRAT: Gently, gently he freed her from the noose,  
he laid her down to bed and softly then he said:

OEDIPUS: [*offstage*] You'll not see the pain I suffer anymore,  
the pain I caused before. You'll be blind from all this gore.  
Too long you saw the ones you shouldn't see,  
but blind to those with whom  
your heart craved to be!        [*screams*] Aii!

BUREAUCRAT: But he talked not to his wife, but to his eyes!  
Though to tell is hideous, he ripped the brooches from her dress...  
He then stabbed the pins into each of his eyes.

OEDIPUS: [*offstage*] *Blind* in the darkness, now *blind* in the light!

BUREAUCRAT: And *over* and *over* he struck with delight.  
His voice a low dirge, his face now a fright.

CHORUS: And these are the griefs of our household's destiny.  
Fates worse than death. If that's what is meant to be,  
never before has happiness tragically fallen so far to agony, misery and pain.  
Poor unhappy man!

BUREAUCRAT: He's shouting now to have the doors opened wide shamelessly  
to display himself in all his grief, misery—to face his horrible history.

He's begging to be cast away, but his strength is gone, he needs our help.  
His wounding's made him very weak...

[OEDIPUS *staggers blindly down the palace steps*]

But there he is! See for yourself.

*The BUREAUCRAT returns to the palace.*

CHORUS: My god! No one can be unmoved who sees this.

### **FICKLE FATE** (K6B) 2:44

CHORUS: [*to themselves*] Dare we to look now? The horror of this sight!  
What madness from Tartarus, dark fury cast a spell?  
To look at how far he fell, surely can't be right.  
Nevertheless we must face his disaster. There is too much to learn,  
questions inside us burn, so to him now we turn, and ask our ex-master.

OEDIPUS: [*to himself*] All is deep dark here. The black nightmare sweeps me  
so far down the stream of the blood from my eyes.  
I throb with conscience of sharp ends of brooch pins,  
but they lack the point of my memory's knife.

CHORUS: [*to OEDIPUS*] The two-edged blade slicing  
straight through your wretched life.

OEDIPUS: Friends! Are you by my side?

Forgive my vanquished pride? Unseen, your voice confides  
balm for my tired strife.

CHORUS: Oh, man of madness, why hurt you your vision so?

OEDIPUS: It was Apollo, whose damned oracles and clues  
made this insightful ruse, but my hands alone the blows.

What good is seeing when joy is seen fleeing away from one's sight?

CHORUS: That's a very good, uh, point.

OEDIPUS: So cast me away, from my cursed birthplace  
and then leave me to wander alone in my plight.

[*His sense of mythic destiny returning, spoken:*] Like Bellerophon, actually.

CHORUS: Your understanding is even more pitiful.

We wish you had never known...

OEDIPUS: Had I been left alone, my ankles not been unsewn,  
the wolves'd left only bones.

CHORUS: Yes!

Your death as an infant would've spared you from worse pain.

OEDIPUS/CHORUS: Instead of a killer, incestuous tiller,  
my/your life would be unstained.

OEDIPUS: Now no one will speak of my Sphinx deeds or Thebes gov.  
All is forgotten, subsumed by this rotten fate of mine staged from above.

**THE BEST LAID PLAN** (K6C) 2:27

CHORUS: Dear King, we are uncertain that your present scheme is very wise.  
To choose to live in utter blindness—Would it not be better now to die?

OEDIPUS: Enough of your advice! This plan of mine is well devised.  
How could I face father in the next world  
knowing how great he'd find my crimes?

And here, in life, is worse. How could I bear to see my kids?  
Knowing I was the sole source of their now befouled innocence?

Nor do I wish again to see the towers and gates of Thebes,  
the city that bred my grief.  
For it was my command that he who brought the plague to Thebes  
would be banished with no relief.

The curse I hurled at him has now recoiled onto me.  
The pollution's source is now discovered: the son of Laius, fount of blasphemy.

Now, if I could be as deaf as blind, if I could cover my ears from all sound,  
the lovely oblivion would lift my spirit off this fouled ground and liberate me!

**THANKS, BUT NO THANKS** (K6D) 2:51

OEDIPUS: Why did you aid me, Mount Cithaeron? You see,  
more helpful would have been to slay me and leave nothing:  
An afternoon snack, a small meal for a pack of hungry wolves.  
Then there's Polybus and Corinth, you made a fuss  
to conceal such decrepitude. Yet in the end it did no good:  
It walked all the way to the place where they say meet three roads.

In that small valley framed by oak trees, you'll find  
there's simply no room for passersby to pass by  
at the same time. So one must politely yield.  
When neither will do so, there could be blood on the field.  
Father, like son, do you still remember well what I did that day?

And not the least, at the great bridal feast, the curse was increased.  
The begetting of beasts:  
Father and son, mother and bride, brother and wife lying there side by side...

*Enter* CREON.

CHORUS: But wait! Is that our Creon? We know he'll listen  
to all your plans now. [*aside*] Now that he's made himself Vice-King.

OEDIPUS: [*aside*] Good lord! What could I say to prove  
how wrong I was to move against his counsel?  
My suspicions abused him so badly.



As for me, my city righteously agrees it will not shelter me  
nor hold me while I live.

Let me dwell on my mountain, my nursery—Cithaeron.  
Supposedly my infant tomb, so my living crypt from now on.  
For know this: neither sickness nor death will ever lay me low.  
My life's not been spared from a certain doom only to fall to a prosaic end.  
[*spoken*] *No!*

CHORUS: It's going to be so awful and daunting no one will forget.

**ALL MY CHILD(REN)** (K6F) 5:36

OEDIPUS: And now for my children, you need not worry about  
the boys, they are men enough, but my little girls,  
who always sat to table next to me, look after my poor little orphans, please.

[CREON *motions a CHORUS member to go  
into the palace and fetch the children*]

Ah, if I could only touch them once again,  
it would almost be like seeing both of them.

[*The children, ANTIGONE, sobbing, and POLYNEICES, scowling,  
enter with the CHORUS member.*]

Wait! Do I hear children sobbing near?  
Creon pities me, he's brought my daughters here!

CREON: Yes, I did, to help you cope.

OEDIPUS: My children! Are you nearby?  
Let father, um, *brother*, hold you close to me.

ANTIGONE: [ANTIGONE *rushes to* OEDIPUS] Oh, dear *father*.  
Call yourself nothing else. We'll always be  
your children who will cherish you.  
When we needed you, you were always here.  
A revelation can't change a world  
that we shared so many years.

CREON: But of your daughters only one,  
Antigone (with Polyneices), has come here.

OEDIPUS: But where then is my Ismene?

CREON: She's tending to Eteocles...

POLYNEICES: And the big black eye *I* gave to him!—  
That no good brother, fatherkins.

OEDIPUS: But what made you punch him in the face?

POLYNEICES: He started it!

CREON: This is *not* the place  
to carry on about a fight. So stop it now!  
Before you're sent in for the night.

You make my job as regent worse...

OEDIPUS: Regent?!

CREON: Yes, a holy curse!

I *told* you I would rather be behind the scenes *modestly*.



The boys shall share the throne of Thebes,  
 alternately, *if* they can be... *quiet!*  
 And stop this fussing all day, all the time!

POLYNEICES: Since I am the eldest, it's proper I be first.

CREON: We'll discuss this *later*.

POLYNEICES *storms off towards the* CHORUS,  
 OEDIPUS *sits holding* ANTIGONE.

OEDIPUS: Ah, my children!

CREON: [*aside, spoken*] Child.

OEDIPUS: My daughters!

CREON: [*aside, spoken*] Daughter.

OEDIPUS: I weep for you  
 when I think of all the hard days to come.

How cruelly the world looks upon you  
 and treats you as each festival nears:  
 Will you be allowed to attend, or from which you  
 come running home in tears?

And when you're older, who will marry you?  
 Who's willing to carry the slur if they do?  
 There is not one. You must bear it alone.

[*Turning to* CREON]

[*with* CHORUS:] Your parents are gone.  
 It's you *only*, Creon, who can be  
 a real father to them.

CREON: Enough. You've wept enough. And now it's time to go inside.

OEDIPUS: But I'm still filled with bitter pride.

CREON: Too bad. Now wait for the god's words patiently.

OEDIPUS: I will—if you'll agree to my terms.

CREON: And just what are these?

OEDIPUS: Drive me banished away from cursed Thebes.

CREON: Await the deity's...

OEDIPUS: They are my enemies.

CREON: Then they'll surely grant your heart's desire.

OEDIPUS: You think so?

CREON: I'm no liar.

And now you must retire.

Come. Let your child(ren) go.

POLYNEICES *joins* CREON *at his side.*

OEDIPUS: [ *Holding ANTIGONE tighter* ] No! I won't let you take them from my side!

CREON: *Still* the master's pride?

Unaware your power's died?

CREON *and* POLYNEICES *exit into the palace.*

**THE ANTIGONE AND THE EXITING** (K65) 3:36

CHORUS: Citizens of gated Thebes look upon our king and grieve.  
Riddle solver, powerful man of genius, wonderful  
deeds renowned throughout our land, greater since done by a man—  
one with brains, one with plans.  
We needed Oedipus, he freed us. Oedipus agreed to rescue our land.

Who could not have envied him his keen foresight?  
But then to see him pulled down low, it can't be right.  
Now we fret for him and us, what tomorrow sends.  
We'll count no man as happy 'til his last day ends.

CHORUS *exeunt.*

ANTIGONE *helps OEDIPUS rise, and they begin to exit slowly.*

ANTIGONE: It wasn't the stars. It wasn't the moon.  
It wasn't a prophecy. It wasn't our destiny.  
There is no need to find irrational force—  
You're my father so know I love you.  
For the reason I love you is you.

It wasn't the gods. It wasn't our fate.  
It wasn't a thund'rous night. It wasn't the moonless sky.  
It was you, you alone, with claim to my heart.  
You'll find that I'm always with you.  
For the reason I love you is you.

ANTIGONE *and* OEDIPUS *exit*.

**END OF ACT II**