**SOPHOCLES’**

*OEDIPUS REX*

Translated by George Theodoridis © 2005

*Notes on this edition of the text:*

* The translation is extremely recent.  It's also available for free (limited copyright - hence its appearance below).  I have, however, edited it a bit.  These are largely formatting changes, but
	+ I also eliminated a few of Theodoridis' additions to the original material that are useful for performance aspects but add nothing to our myth class.
	+ speakers' names are in bold above their dialogue
	+ dialogue is in plain (normal) text below the speakers' names
	+ stage directions are in italics (in parentheses when the directions in "in-line")
* Finally, the proper name of the play is *Oedipus Tyrannus*.  But through a bit of a quirk of history, the Latin translation is used in lieu of the transcription: *Oedipus Rex*.  "Oedipus rex" translates literally into English as "Oedipus [the] king."  Neither the Latin nor the English translations entail the range of meaning that the original Greek holds.  The odd thing is that proper names are not generally supposed to be translated, simply transcribed.  But through a quirk of scribal practice, the same play actually has three functional names in modern English: *Oedipus Tyrannus*,*Oedipus Rex*, *Oedipus the King*.  They all refer to the same play.  The most popular modern translation is probably in verse by Robert Fagles (Penguin Classics).  The most literal version that I have read is by Hugh-Lloyd Jones, a facing page translation that is part of the Loeb collection (Harvard).

**DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

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**OEDIPUS:    KING OF THEBES**

**ATTENDANTS TO HIM  (LATER TO CREON)\***

**JOCASTA (QUEEN OF THEBES)**

**VARIOUS ATTENDANTS TO JOCOSTA**

**CREON (BROTHER TO JOCASTA)**

**TEIRESIAS (A BLIND PROPHET)**

**A YOUNG BOY (HIS GUIDE)\***

**A GROUP OF SUPPLICANT CITIZENS\***

**A PRIEST (THEIR LEADER)**

**A HERALD (FROM CORINTH)**

**ATTENDANT (FROM PALACE OF OEDIPUS, THEBES)**

**A SHEPHERD (FOR THEBES)**

**CHORUS OF THEBAN ELDERS**

**ANTIGONE AND ISMENE\* (OEDIPUS’ YOUNG DAUGHTERS/SISTERS)**

**Scene:** *In front of King Oedipus’ palace, in Thebes.*

*The palace stands three or four steps above the rest of the stage and on either side of it there is a small but obvious altar. The altar at SL is dedicated to Apollo (Jocasta will make use of this) and that on SR to Zeus (used by the Chorus)*

*While stage is dark:*

*We hear the soft but ominous sounds of ancient drums and perhaps a flute, mingled with the many loud groans of hunger and pain as well as calls for Oedipus’ help:*

**Chorus**: *(In supplication - offstage)*

Oedipus!  Oedipus our Lord, help us!  Help your people!

Small pause.

*A crowd of supplicant citizens and the Priest of Zeus sit as suppliants before the altars in front of the palace of Oedipus.  This group comprise all ages and both sexes.  They show suffering and exhaustion under the intense heat.  Standing in front of them, is the Priest.  He is holding a priest’s staff, which like the seer’s has a thick rope of cotton wrapped around its upper end.*

**Chorus**: *(as above)*

Oedipus!  Oedipus our Lord, help us!  Help your people!

*Oedipus comes out from the palace and addresses them.*

**Oedipus**:

What is it, my children? What’s wrong? All these cries of anguish, this waving of prayer branches! The scent has filled our city!  All this lamentation, these deep sighs of misfortune. What are they about?  Here I am then, you’ve got me here in person, so that I can find out what your anguish is directly from you, rather than risk any mistakes that might be made by a third person.  Speak, sons and daughters of old Cadmus, you’re talking with me, Oedipus, you all know me!

*(To the priest)*

You, old priest, your years well qualify you to represent this youth.  Tell me, what brought you all here?  Are you afraid of something?  Do you have a need of something? Tell me and it will certainly be yours!  Otherwise what sort of a man would I be if I had not the compassion to help you, my own folk, with all my heart?

**Priest**:

King of our Thebes,  Oedipus!  You can see us all here, gathered around your altars, praying.See? All the ages of men are here:*(Indicating the young children)*the youth whose wings have yet to spread wide enough for flying far and the old men whose head and back are bent with years - like me,  Oedipus, Zeus’ priest; as well as –look there! *(Indicating the older youth)*our youth, the best stock of men in the world!  We are all here.  And in the city, too, around both temples of our Goddess Athina, and by the fires inside  Apollo’s temple, near the river Ismenos, there, too there’s plenty of kneeling and lamenting and deep sighing going on!  There, too, the laurels are waved in supplication.

You, too, Oedipus can see how the whole of Thebes is in the grips of a battering sea storm of troubles and she cannot raise her head from its murderous waves.

Our trees let drop their best flowers to the ground even before they become fruit; our herds drop dead as they graze and our women have all become barren.

Despicable Pestilence!

As if a fire-carrying god has plunged upon our land, hollowing out our homes while cluttering Black Hades’ house with our moans and cries.

We are not saying, Oedipus, that you’re equal to the gods but we have come to you and have gathered around your altars, because, out of all the men we know, we think you to be the best in working out the meaning of the hardships thrown upon us by life and by the gods.

It was you, Oedipus, who came here, to our Thebes, in Cadmus’ land and saved us from the grips of that witch, that Sphinx, who held us all inside here in dreadful fear.  You did not do this with our help but with the help of some divine intervention.

With your act, you’ve let us live proper lives again.

And now, great Oedipus!  We fall before you in supplication and ask you to find some salve for our pains if you can, either from some man’s wisdom or some god’s voice because I can see that the thoughts of experienced men are the wisest.

Come then, our Lord and King!  Come, first among the mortals! Make our Thebes live again!  Remember:  This city calls you “saviour” because of your past act of generosity.  Let us not ever think that “by Oedipus’ generosity we were saved and by Oedipus lack of action we died.”  Let us instead say, “Oedipus raised us to our feet yet again!”

You were driven here to our aid by a bright omen many years ago, so let it drive you to us once again!  Because, Oedipus, if you wish to rule this city, and I know you do, then it is far better to rule it when filled with men then when it’s scraped hollow of them.  No tower, no ship is worth anything if it’s bereft of men.

**Oedipus**:

My poor children!  I know you well, all of you and I know your anguish.   I know very well that you are all in agony.  Yet no one is in greater agony than I am because your pain affects only you, each one of you, alone, whereas I ache for the whole city and for all of you.  So have no fear, I’m not asleep.  I am wade awake to your misfortune.  My soul cries for us all.  I have lost many tears and wasted even more thoughts upon it and I’ve put into action the only possible solution that came to my mind:  I’ve sent Creon, my wife’s brother and the son of Menoikeos, to Apollo’s oracle to ask what we should do to save our city;  what deed or word should we do or say to save our country. Creon should have returned by now, really and I’m beginning to worry.  Let him come and tell us what needs to be done.  Then I would be indeed an evil man if I did not do all that the god asks!

*They all look towards behind the curtain and stand up pointing at Creon, who has not yet appeared on the stage.*

**Priest**:

You judge time well, Oedipus.  Here he is.  *(The chorus points towards Creon.)*

*(Priest indicating the chorus)*They’re all pointing at him in the distance.

**Oedipus**:

By Apollo!  His face looks happy enough!  Perhaps he’s carrying good news!  News that will save our city.

**Priest**:

He certainly looks happy, otherwise he wouldn’t be wearying a garland of laurel in full fruit!

**Oedipus**:

We’ll know soon enough.  He’s close enough to hear us now.

*(Enter Creon)*

My royal brother! What news from Apollo?

**Creon**:

Good news! That is, I think that even the worst events could bring good fortune if fortune wills it!

**Oedipus**:

You’re not making yourself clear, brother.  What did the oracle say?

**Creon**:

Shall I speak out here, in front of these people, or shall we go inside?  I don’t mind either way.

**Oedipus**:

Speak in front of them. I mourn for their lives more than I do for my own.

**Creon**:

Then I’ll tell you what the god said. It is this: There’s a wound that eats at the very heart of our city’s soul. A wound that has been allowed to grow and fester inside Thebes. Apollo commands us to purge the city of it before it becomes incurable.

**Oedipus**:

A wound?  What sort of wound is this and how can we purge it?

**Creon**:

By sending a murderer away or by washing away the blood of that murder with the blood of another murder.   It is this blood that tortures Thebes.

**Oedipus**:

Whose Fate declares this thing? Who is it who has been murdered?

**Creon**:

Once we had a king called Laius…

**Oedipus**:

I know of him though I never saw him.

**Creon**:

He was murdered and it is those murderers whom Apollo now demands to be punished.

**Oedipus**:

Where are these men? How can one find the clues of such an old crime?

**Creon**:

Here, inside Thebes, Apollo said!  In Thebes one can find whatever one looks for but misses what he does not.

**Oedipus**:

Where then has Laius fallen?  Within the palace walls?   The fields?  Or upon another land?  Where was his murder committed?

**Creon**:

He said he was going to the oracle himself but he never managed to return.

**Oedipus**:

Has no one else managed to bring news of his death or has none of his attendants any light to shed upon this dreadful deed?

 **Creon**:

All but one of them fled and he could only say one thing.

**Oedipus**:

One thing?  Such as what? Tell us! From that one single thing we might be able to learn a great deal. It might well be the beginning of some hint of hope! Tell us!

**Creon**:

Well, that man said Laius was murdered by the hands of many thieves.

**Oedipus**:

Thieves?   How could thieves be so daring?  Unless they were paid by some traitor from in here?

**Creon**:

That’s what we were wondering also but since Laius’ disappearance no one came to help us in this great misfortune.

**Oedipus**:

What could have stopped you? What fear stopped you from finding out how your king was murdered?

**Creon**:

The Sphinx, Oedipus!   She has twisted our minds with her puzzle songs and made us stop searching. We could only see the obvious and could never look for any hidden clues.

**Oedipus**:

Then I shall start from the beginning again and bring everything to the light.  You’ve done well, you and Apollo, to take up the cause again.  It is fair then that I shall be your partner in this cause, to help Thebes and Apollo at the same time.

This wound… this wound hurts me as well as my more distant friends and so I need to heal it.  Because the hand of Laius’ murderer could murder me as well and so, by avenging his death, I gain also.

Come then, my children!  Stand up from these steps.  Gather all the branches and pray no more.  Let someone gather our folk here and I will do everything in my power to heal this mortal wound.  With Apollo’s help we either win or we die.

**Priest**:

Come, stand up my children.  We’ve got what we’ve come for.  Apollo, who has sent his oracle will save us and will heal our city’s awful wound.

*Exit Oedipus, Creon and the citizens.Enter Chorus (speaking/singing)*

**Chorus**:

Sweet voice of Zeus that came to us through Apollo’s golden temple: What are you saying to our famous Thebes?

Shudders run through my heart with fear and my mind is unclear.

Apollo, god of healing, god from Delos, I dread the message your bring to us.

What past deed must we pay for now?  What do we owe to the past?

Tell us, child of Golden Hope, sky-wide love!

Immortal Athena!  Zeus’ daughter!  I call on you first.

And to your sister, who is our protector, the goddess Artemis, whose throne is the magnificent earth and in whose temples we Thebans pray.

And you, too, Apollo whose arrows never miss:

Come, all three of you. You’ve come to our aid before and swept aside the flames of our catastrophe.

Come again now!

Save us!

Countless are my sufferings. The whole nation is suffering from this wound, this plague and we see no way to be rid of it.

No crops on the land, no children follow the women’s birth-pains.

And our souls, hasten to beat one another, like fast birds, in their race to get, like a wild fire, to Dark Hades.

The city is dying from her countless pains.

There the children die and left upon the earth unburied, uncried, uncleansed, polluting our city.

Women, young and old, fully grey, are spread in deep prayer upon the steps of altars.

They pray with deep sighs for the bitter sufferings.

The laments fill the air, the loud cries of pain, full of loss – for all this, worthy daughter of Zeus, send us your sweet aid.

And Zeus!  Make Aris the flying war god turn his back and leave from here.

Here he is before us all, no bronze shields but still he runs wild in the clamour and the hurt!

Make him run away! Make this god of war and destruction  leave our Thebes!

Send him away either to the vast watery chambers of Amphitriti or the storm-eaten, hostile shores of Thace!

Because here, what the night leaves untouched, the day destroys.

Send your burning bolt to him, Zeus.  Burn him, master of the thunderbolts.

You, too, Apollo! I ask you to give us aid and protection.  Let your untamed arrows leave their golden bow and you, too Artemis come with your burning torches.  Leave your Lycian hills and come to us.

And bright-eyed Bacchus, master of the maenads.  Let him come also with a burning torch, to send away the most odious of all gods.

*Enter Oedipus.*

**Oedipus**:

You’ve asked me to help and whatever it is you need you shall have.   My words and your help will give us strength enough to heal the despicable wound.  I speak to you as a stranger to this place as well as –as I am told- to the evil deed. Alone and with divine sign, I’d have no hope of finding any clues that have to do with this crime.

Now that I’ve become one of you, I talk to you all. If anyone knows anything about whose hand murdered Labdakus’ son, Laius, I order him to reveal everything.  Even if it were his own hand, let him speak because no harm will come to him save for exile.  Let him not be afraid.  He will leave our land untouched.

Also, if someone knows that the murderer is from another country, let him not be silent also because not only will I give him a reward but his help will be remembered.

If, however, either due to fear for a friend or for himself someone does not disclose the murderer, hear me! This is what I will do:

No matter who this man is, I forbid everyone here, in Thebes where I have my throne, to receive him as a guest to his home, nor speak with him nor pray with him or conduct sacrifices with him to any god or even to offer him sacred ablutions.

Let everyone of you send him away from your house because, as Apollo’s oracle has declared, he is the spreading wound in the soul of our city.

Such an ally I am to Apollo and to Laius.  As for the evil doer, I curse him and whether alone or with others he caused our wound, let him live a wretched life.

Even if he were someone in my own household, among my own folk and even if I happen to know it let me then suffer all that my curse has delivered upon the murderer.

This, I command you to do for me, then and for Apollo and for Thebes.

Unfortunate Thebes! Barren land, godless land, a land too much wasted.

Thebans, if the god does not make clear who this murderer is, it’s not proper that you should keep it hidden in the dark.  Find the murderer! He is the murderer of your glorious king.  Search for him everywhere.  Everywhere!  I’m here with you and sitting upon his throne, sharing his bed, his wife, the children he would have had he been alive and with an heir.  I share his brothers.

His Fate though dealt him a heavy blow.  Yet I shall try to do my best for him.  I’ll try everything for his sake… as if he were my own father.  I’ll try everything to catch his murderer. Laius, son of Polydorus and of Labdacus and of ancient Aginorus.

For those who have no love for what I have just said, curses to you. Let no god make your soil or your women fertile.  Let all your belongings go the way of disaster.  To you, real Cadmian souls, you, real Thebans, who heeded my words, holy Justice and the rest of the gods will be your allies.

**Chorus**:

Oedipus, all these curses of yours force me to speak.  I, myself, have neither killed old Laius nor do I know who did.  All this is Apollo’s business and one day he’ll disclose for us the evil hand.

**Oedipus**:

Quite right, Old man; but no mortal can force a god’s mouth.

**Chorus**:

Then I have another thought for you.

**Oedipus**:

That one and another still, if you have any more.  By all means, speak!

**Chorus**:

My Lord, I know a mortal who sees as excellently as Apollo.  Teiresias, the seer who would know the answers to all these things if one were only to ask him.

**Oedipus**:

Yes, yes, I know of him and I have not neglected that action either.  By Creon’s  suggestion I’ve sent two men to fetch him.  He should well and truly be here by now!

**Chorus**:

There are other things to consider also but they are old and meaningless.

**Oedipus**:

“Other things?”  What are they? Tell me I weigh every word!

**Chorus**:

It is said that Laius was killed by travellers.

**Oedipus**:

I’ve heard that too. Yet no one saw the murderer with his own eyes.

**Chorus**:

Still, once he hears your curses, fear might get the better of him and come forth.

**Oedipus**:

Men who are not afraid of the deed are not afraid of the word.

*(Enter the blind seer,  Teiresias, holding the staff which distinguishes him as a seer, ie, it has a  thin rope of cotton wool wrapped around its top end.  He is also guided by the hand of a young boy and by the two men whom Oedipus has sent to fetch him.)* *The two men bow to Oedipus and exit by way of the S.R. door.*

**Chorus**:

Here he is, king.  He is the one who will point out the murderer to you.  They’ve brought  him here for you because he, of all the people knows the truth.

**Oedipus**:

Blessed seer!  You see and judge all things, those that are known and those that have not been explained, those of the heavens and those of the earth.  Our land, Teiresias, you might not be able to see but you can certainly sense how ill it is.  We can only find you, Holy man, to be her protector and saviour.

If you haven’t heard already, Apollo has commanded us to find Laius’ murderers and either kill them or send them far from Thebes.  That would be the only way this wound in our city would heal.

Yet, if you have some knowledge from some sign from the birds or from some other medium of visions, don’t hold it from us.  Save us, save Thebes, save the Thebans, save me and save yourself.  Rid this shame born by the murdered king.  We are your servants. To help by whichever means one can, is a virtuous effort.

**Teiresias**: *(Shouts as if in pain)*

How brutal!  How hideous!  How loathsome is knowledge when knowledge does not help its possessor!  Horrible!   I knew this well!  I knew the cause of your invitation, yet I’ve made the mistake of obeying your order!  I should not have come.

**Oedipus**:

What is it old man?  What’s wrong?   Why such hostility?

**Teiresias**:

Let me go home, Oedipus!  For your sake and mine, let me go home.

**Oedipus**:

Come now Teiresias.  You’re being unfair and unkind to the city that has raised you.  Don’t hold back your vision.

**Teiresias**:

And I do so because I can see well where your ill-timed words will take you and I do not want to be your companion in that journey.

**Oedipus**:

No!  No Teiresias!  Don’t leave!  If you know something about our pain tell us.  With great respect, we beg you!

**Teiresias**:

You!   All of you!  You know nothing!  You… you know nothing!  Yet I will not speak. Ever!  I will not speak lest I disclose the sufferings you’ll have to carry!

**Oedipus**:

What?  You know something and yet you remain silent?  Do you want to send us and our country to absolute destruction?

**Teiresias**:

Me?  I have no need to hurt neither you nor me.  Ask me nothing more.  You’ll learn nothing from me.

**Oedipus**:

So you won’t speak?  Not ever?  Wretched man!   You’d raise the anger inside a heartless stone, you would!   Is this how you’ll take your heart to your grave?  A stone without remorse?

**Teiresias**:

You scorn and point at my own anger yet yours…   Your anger, King, your anger, which lives in there, in your own heart, that anger you do not see. So don’t send curses upon me.  Do not insult me!

**Oedipus**:

Who wouldn’t?   Who wouldn’t curse you for saying the things you do against our city?

**Teiresias**:

Those… “things”  will emerge of their own will, even if I stay silent.

**Oedipus**:

So, speak then!  Tell us what things will emerge.

**Teiresias**:

Enough! No more! Churn up all the wrath you want.  All the wrath you want

**Oedipus**:

Well then!  Quite so, quite so!  I’ll leave nothing unsaid in my wrath.  And I say to you then, old man, that in my mind I have you as one of those who has helped in Laius’ murder!  Yes, old man!  You’ve worked with them.  Perhaps even you’ve committed the deed!  Indeed, if you had eyes that could see I would have said you did the deed alone!

**Teiresias**:

Really!  Are these the thoughts within your wrath?  So!  I ask you then to continue with your proclamation but don’t speak to me nor to them *(indicating the chorus)*from now on, because… because it is you!   You are the wound!  You are the pollution of this city!  You are the wound and you the murderer!

**Oedipus**:

Look with what blunt effrontery he spoke these words!  Stupid man!  Where do you think you’ll hide them?

**Teiresias**:

I have already hidden them. I have hidden them inside the power of truth that I love and nurture.

**Oedipus**:

And who taught you to utter these words?  Surely not from your seer’s practice?

**Teiresias**:

Who?  Why, it was you who taught them to me.  It was you who forced me to utter them.

**Oedipus**:

What were the words again?  Say them so that I learn them even better.

**Teiresias**:

Did you not understand them before or are you joking with me?

**Oedipus**:

No, no!  Truly, say them again.  I want to understand them well. Repeat the words!

**Teiresias**:

Let me tell you then without equivocation.  The murderer you seek is you.

**Oedipus**:

Oh!  You will not insult me twice without punishment!

**Teiresias**:

Shall I utter yet something else?  Something to raise your wrath all the more?

**Oedipus**:

Utter all you want. It will be in vain.

**Teiresias**:

So, I’ll utter this: In your ignorance, you conduct the vilest acts with those closest to you.  Vile acts which you know nothing of and which you cannot see.

**Oedipus**:

Do you think you’ll always be happy uttering such words?

**Teiresias**:

Sure, if truth has some power.

**Oedipus**:

Truth does.  Truth has a great deal of power but not for you.  Because you are blind not only in the eyes but in the ears and in your mind as well.

**Teiresias**:

And you?  You insult me, you wretched man but very soon these men will be insulting you!

**Oedipus**:

You can hurt no one, old man.  Neither me nor anyone else who sees the light.  Your food bowl is the never-ending darkness!

**Teiresias**: *(Making as if to leave)*

Your Fate does not have you falling by my hand.  Apollo will take care of that.

**Oedipus**: *(As if he just discovered something)*

Hold! Are these “discoveries” you talk of,  yours or Creon’s?

**Teiresias**:

The fault is your own, not Creon’s.

**Oedipus**:

Oh, yes!  It’s Creon’s all right!

Wealth, Royalty and an art greater than all others in this much envied life. How much hatred is hidden within you!   I’ve been given all this without my asking it, yet *(Indicating the palace)*Creon, once my first and trusted friend, now seeks to take it all from me, sliding and hiding behind this scheming seer, this charlatan, this deviser of magic traps who has eyes for a profit but not for his art.

Come then, my seer!  Tell us: of what consists your qualification?  Where were you when the Great Bitch, that Sphinx who sang her deadly puzzles outside this city and needed the art of a genuine seer to answer them, where were you then?  Why did you not save the city then?  Where were your gods then?  Where were your birds?

It was I! Yes I, Oedipus, who knew nothing of such things who shut that monster’s mouth; not by magic or by signs of birds but by my own brain.

So!  Here you are, now!   Intending to send me away from here, hoping to hang around Creon’s thrones!  You’ll pay with tears, you and he, the chief plotter, for this outrage; and were it not for your advanced years hard pain would be your teacher.

**Chorus**:

I think, King that both of you spoke in anger.  This is no time for such talk.  Rather, we shall try and work out Apollo’s oracle.

**Teiresias**:

King or not, if I am to answer your questions, I need to be your equal. In fact it’s my right to claim this equality because I am not your servant but the servant of Apollo and I have no need for Creon’s patronage.

You berate me for being blind, yet I tell you that even though you have eyes, you cannot see in what evil circumstance you live, nor do you know where you live or with whom you live.

Ha!  Do you even know whose son you are?  Do you know Oedipus that you are the enemy of your people, both here on Earth as well as below in Hades?  The doubly sharp curse of mother and father will come one day with an angry foot and chase you away, outside this city, your eyes bereft of light and clogged with darkness.  What place on earth will not have heard your groans of pain?

And once you find out what harbour of misery your wedding brought you that fine day, what spot in the whole of Kitheron will not receive the echo of your groans?

And with your children!  You have no idea the multitude of troubles that will hit at you once you find out about your children!

Go ahead!  Insult Creon now if you want, and insult my mouth also because no one in the world will be destroyed in a worse way than your!

**Oedipus**: *(lunges at him angrily)*

How much more of this can anyone hear?   Leave!  Go on, leave!  Still here?  Go home, I order you! And stay well away from me!  Well away!  Do you hear?

**Teiresias**:

Had you not called for me I would not be here in the first place.

**Oedipus**:

Nor would I have called you here had I known you’d be talking sheer, stupid nonsense.

**Teiresias**:

For you, Oedipus, we’re stupid but for those who gave birth to you, we were wise. Knowledgeable!

**Oedipus**:

Gave birth to me?  Who are you taking about? Stay!  Tell me then, who was it who gave birth to me? When?

**Teiresias**:

It is today!  Today will be both, the day of your birth and of your death.

**Oedipus**:

How dark and puzzling your words are, old man!

**Teiresias**:

Did you not say you’re great at solving puzzles?

**Oedipus**:

You insulted me for every one of my qualities.

**Teiresias**:

It’s your very Fate who declared your destruction. A Fate that gave you success will now give you pain.

**Oedipus**:

If I have saved this city I am content.

**Teiresias**:

Let me leave then.  Come boy, give me your hand.

**Oedipus**:

Boy, guide him!  You’re a hindrance to me here.Leave so that you won’t cause me any more grief.

**Teiresias**:

I will leave after I say the things I came to say.  I do not fear your angry face.  My Fate is not that I shall die by your hand.

Let me say this to you then:  The man whom you are hunting with curses and threats for Laius’ murder is right here.  In here!

He is thought of as a foreigner, an alien but he will be found to be a true Theban.  Born right here!  And this discovery will not make him happy. Because from someone who now has eyes, he will soon be wandering blindly, in utter poverty and studying the ground with a blind man’s stick.

His children!

To his children he will discover that he is both brother and father.

To the woman who gave birth to him he is son and husband and to his father, both, a sharer of his bed and his murderer.

Go into your palace then, king Oedipus and think about these things and if you find me a liar then you can truly say I know nothing of prophesies.

*Exit Oedipus and Teiresias with his guide.*

**Chorus**:

I wonder whose murderous hand it is that Delphi’s prophetic rock said committed this most incredible of all incredible deeds?

Time for him now to flee this place, flee faster than flying mares, faster than the wind. Armed with flames and lightning Apollo, the son of Zeus pursues him; and he’s followed by the awesome, unfailing Furies.

Only a minute ago the command has come from the snowy tips of Parnassus to hunt down the hiding murderer.  There, the man, deserted, wanders like a wild bull from cave to cave from rock to rock, far from the paths of men, far from earth’s heart where the curses will not find him. But they, fully  alive, constantly speed their wings around him.

Yet, the wise seer troubles me!  Should I believe him?  Should I not?  I have no idea what to think of this and my brain flies this way and that without being able to see neither ahead of me or behind.

What conflict I wonder brought Labdakous’ generation against Polybos’ son?  Thebes against Corinth!  Why? I never knew the answer to this before nor do I know it now.  Who murdered Laius? Who knows?  I know nothing!  Nothing with which I may condemned our current king and thus avenge Laius’ death.

Men’s deed are known only by Zeus and by his son, Apollo!  Only the gods are privy to our deeds!  To say a seer knows more than me is false. Men are each other’s better in only one thing: wisdom.  As for the murder, myself, I’ll only believe the proven word and nothing less.

We saw it all!  Out there the winged Sphinx had asked him all her riddles and they proved him wise and, justly then, he was proclaimed our city’s loving friend.

No! My mind will not declare him evil!

*Enter Creon from the SL door*

**Creon**:

Men of Thebes! I’ve heard that Oedipus has smudged my name with heavy accusations. This I will not tolerate! If he thinks that all these troubles our city is suffering right now are caused by some evil word of mine or some deed, well then, let me tell you, I’d rather be dead –cut my life’s string short.  Because such accusations cause huge harm to a citizen if the whole city, including his friends believes them.

**Chorus**:

Creon, perhaps this condemnation was uttered in the heat of anger rather than from the thinking mind.

**Creon**:

He says the seer uttered false predictions and these were advised by me.

**Chorus**:

Yes, I don’t know why Oedipus said that.

**Creon**:

And did he honestly believe these accusations of his?

**Chorus**:

I’ve no idea.  I can never tell what thoughts run through the minds of leaders.

*(Enter Oedipus)*

Ah, here’s the man himself!

**Oedipus**: *(to Creon)*

You!   The audacity! You dare live in the chambers of my palace, you dare work plots against my throne, against my very life, and you do all this in the bright light of day, obvious to all who have eyes to see!

By Apollo!  Tell me, is it because you thought I was a weakling or a fool that you’ve put such ideas into your head?   Or did you think that I’d never discover this sinister plot of yours or that I would be too weak to escape it?

Let me teach you something: Such plots, plots to overthrow a king need the strength of people and purse; Only stupid men don’t know this.

**Creon**:

Give me my turn, Oedipus!  Give me my turn to answer your words and then you may judge.  This you must do.

**Oedipus**:

You have the audacity to speak but I!  I've not the stomach for the words of a murderer!

**Creon**:

Murderer! Well, then let me first speak on the matter before you judge me one!

 **Oedipus**:

And on this very matter, don't tell me that you're innocent!

**Creon**:

Oedipus!  Oedipus you're wrong to think that this mindless stubbornness of yours is a virtue.

**Oedipus**:

And you are wrong to think that a man can murder a relative and get away with it!

**Creon**:

On that I agree!  Oedipus, I do agree with you on that!  Tell me then, Oedipus, what is it that I've done against you?

**Oedipus**:

Was it not you who's persuaded me to send for the *(sarcastically)*reverend seer?

**Creon**:

But why not?

**Oedipus**:

Now, tell me also, how long has it been since Laius –

**Creon**: *(Interrupts him)*

Laius?   What's he got to do with it?  I don't follow.

**Oedipus**: *(losing patience)*

When was Laius murdered?

**Creon**:

Many years ago.  Why?

**Oedipus**:

And was this "reverent" seer plying his trade at the time?

**Creon**:

Just as wisely then and just as much revered by the people.

**Oedipus**:

Did he say anything about me at the time?

**Creon**:

No, at least not near my ears.

 **Oedipus**:

Did you not search for your murdered king's corpse?

**Creon**:

But of course we did but we found nothing.

**Oedipus**:

How is it then that this wise seer of yours did not make all these revelations about me back then?

**Creon**:

I have no idea about such things, Oedipus and when it comes to things I know nothing about, I prefer to keep my mouth shut.

**Oedipus**:

But you do know everything about this matter!  You certainly know enough to confess!

**Creon**:

Which matter, Oedipus?  I will make confessions about things I know.

**Oedipus**:

This matter: that had the seer not conspired with you he wouldn't be calling me a murderer!

 **Creon**:

I had no idea he did this.  Let me then ask you a question also.

 **Oedipus**:

Go ahead! Ask all you want.  Ask and learn that I am not a murderer!

**Creon**:

Tell me then Oedipus. Is not my sister, Jocasta, your wife?

**Oedipus**:

She is indeed.

**Creon**:

And tell me also, are you two not equal rulers of Thebes?

**Oedipus**:

I begrudge Jocasta nothing.  What is mine is hers.

**Creon**:

And I?  Am not your equal also?

**Oedipus**:

Aha!  This!  This is the very point upon which my anger rests.  You’ve failed to be a faithful relative.

**Creon**:

No, Oedipus, not if you think through all this the way I do.

Look:  Which do you think is preferable?  To rule in fear or to sleep in peace, having, in any case, equal access to power as his king and sister?  I know of no one who’d chose the former and nor would I. Me?  I want neither the throne nor the chores that accompany it.  Because of you, Oedipus, I have everything I need without the fear.  Were I to be a king the chores would choke me. Throne and tears on one side, everything I need without the tears on the other.  Believe me I’m not so foolish as to chose things which bear no benefit.

All the folks respect me now.  They greet me with a smile, they come to me whenever they need something from you because they know they can depend on me.  Why then should I give all this up for the sake of your throne?  Would it not be thoroughly unwise of me?   In any case, Oedipus, believe me: murder is not in my nature – alone or with others!

Go ahead, go to Delphi, Oedipus!  Check me out.  Ask the oracle if I’m not telling the truth; and if you find out that Teiresias and I conspired against you, then kill me.  In that I’ll give you a hand but judge me with certain proof.  Judging a good  friend as evil without reason is bad work because sending away a good friend is like losing your own life and your own life is the most loved life of all.

Time, Oedipus, will show you the truth in this matter.  Innocence takes time to be revealed; guilt can be announced far too quickly.

**Chorus**:

He spoke well, my king.  Those who hurry to judge, judge badly.

**Oedipus**:

When the schemer rushes with his scheme so must I with my decisions, otherwise his schemes win over my decisions.

**Creon**:

So what is it you want, Oedipus? To send me away from here?

**Oedipus**:

Send you away?  Absolutely not!  I want you dead! Dead here, before me rather than alive elsewhere.

**Creon**:

Tell me first.  What exactly are you afraid that I’ll do to you?

**Oedipus**:

Are you disobeying me?

**Creon**:

I can see, your reasoning is bad, Oedipus!

**Oedipus**:

My reasoning is perfect.

**Creon**:

But your reasoning ought to be perfect in my mind also.

**Oedipus**:

Firstly, you can’t be trusted.

**Creon**:

But what if you’re wrong?

**Oedipus**:

You’re still obliged to obey!

 **Creon**:

Obey? An unjust command?  Why should I?

**Oedipus**: *(Exasperated)*

O, Thebes, Thebes!

**Creon**:

Thebes is mine just much as she is yours!

*Enter Jocasta from door SL*

**Jocasta**:

What is all this?  What is all this silly squabbling?  Are you not ashamed? The whole country is suffering the pains of a horrendous pestilence and you two –here you are, in front of the palace for all the people to see, arguing about your petty little affairs.  Get back inside both of you, before you turn these little affairs into a something major.

These petty squabbles of yours can bring about large and bitter consequences.

**Creon**:

Darling sister! Your husband here is threatening most seriously to either send me away from the land of my birth or to have me executed.

**Oedipus**:

Of course I do. I caught him plotting against me, Jocasta. An evil mind working evil webs.

**Creon**:

Ah!  If this is true then let me not enjoy a moment more of my life.  Let me wander around the world, a cursed soul wherever I go!

**Jocasta**:

By all the gods, Oedipus! Have some faith in him! At least have some faith in the gods by whom he swears; and then in me and in all these folk who stand before you!

**Chorus**:

I beg you king, listen and think! Think well!

**Oedipus**:

And compromise upon what?

 **Chorus**:

Trust Creon.  He has never been untrustworthy before and now, you see, your faith in him is made all the more secure by his oaths.

**Oedipus**:

Do you know what you’re saying?

**Chorus**:

I do, my king!

**Oedipus**:

Tell me!

**Chorus**:

I’m saying you should never condemn a friend without proof.

**Oedipus**:

Know this well, old man: that if this is what you really want then you must also want my destruction or my exile from this land.

**Chorus**:

By Helios, the Sun, the first of all the gods!  May I be cast asunder without gods or friends by my side if I desire such a thing!  My poor, luckless heart, though, is hurt with these new suffering of Thebes and all the more if upon them are added your own sufferings, my king.

**Oedipus**:

Well, then, all right!  Let him be exiled and not killed – even though, I know, it means my own death or my own exile in disgrace.  It is your mouth that gained my sympathy, not his.  I shall hate him wherever he might be.

**Creon**:

So much hatred in your compromise! Yet, when your anger subsides a little how you’ll suffer! Souls like yours are their own worst enemy! Quite justly, too!

**Oedipus**:

Leave!  Get out!

**Creon**:

I shall.  A foreigner to you, a friend to them.

*Exit Creon*

**Chorus**:

Queen, why don’t you take your husband inside?

**Jocasta**:

First I need to know what’s going on.

**Chorus**:

Hollow suspicions from words, my Lady. Still, even the unjust word has a strong bite.

**Jocasta**:

Hollow words from both?

**Chorus**:

Yes, madam.

**Jocasta**:

But why?

**Chorus**:

Enough, my Lady, enough!  Thebes is suffering enough.  Let them end it where they’ve just stopped.

**Oedipus**: *(To the Leader)*

You see? An intelligent man like you, yet you see what you’ve done with my part of justice!  You spat upon it with cold and uncaring heart!

**Chorus**:

But, my king, I’ve told you many times before: I would be mad to disobey you.  You, Oedipus who, when this land was tortured by misfortune, you came and healed her well.  Heal her again, my king,  Heal her!

**Jocasta**:

By the gods, Oedipus! Tell me, as well, what raised your anger so much?

 **Oedipus**:

Your brother says I am Laius’ murderer!

**Jocasta**:

Who told him that?  Or was it his own thinking?

**Oedipus**:

He’s sent that evil seer to me to tell me while he kept his own mouth free from such utterances.

**Jocasta**:

Well, then!  Oedipus, my king! Forget everything and listen to me.  No mortal knows the will of the gods.  Let me show you proof of this.  Once, an oracle came to Laius –I’m not saying from Apollo directly, but from his servants- that it was his Fate to die by the hand of his son – his and my son!  However, word has it that Laius was killed by strangers, thieves, at a three-way cross road.

 As for the boy, three days after he was born, the king had his ankles pinned and gave him to someone to take him to some forest where no human ever went.  And so, neither the child was allowed by Apollo to kill his father, nor did Laius suffer murder in the hands of his own son.

That was god’s real intention, not what some seer said would happen.  If the god wants something done he’ll tell us himself.

**Oedipus**: *(highly disturbed by some new thought)*

Ah, what a fear!  What a trembling, cold panic has overtaken me, wife!  Something from what you’ve just said…

**Jocasta**:

What fear, my king?  Tell me.

**Oedipus**:

I think… I think I’ve heard you say that Laius was killed at a three-way crossing.

**Jocasta**:

That’s what they said then and that’s what they’re still saying now.

**Oedipus**:

And where is this crossroad exactly?

**Jocasta**:

The city is called Phokis. A divided road which splits all the way to the Delphi on one side and to Daulia on the other.

**Oedipus**:

How long ago did the murder happen?

**Jocasta**:

It was announced just a little before you arrived here and became king.

**Oedipus**:

Oh, Zeus!  Zeus!  What do you have in store for me next?

**Jocasta**:

What is it, Oedipus?  What memory disturbs your mind?

**Oedipus**:

Ask me no more, wife, just tell me: What height what age was Laius then?

**Jocasta**:

Tall…his hair just greying… looked quite like you do now.

**Oedipus**:

O, what a wretched man I am!  I think I’ve cursed hateful curses to myself without my knowing.

**Jocasta**:

My king!  What are you saying? What fear floods your face!

**Oedipus**:

A dire fear!  I fear that blind priest, that seer is truly Apollo’s eye!  You’ll show me proof of this if you can tell me one more thing.

**Jocasta**:

Ask, Oedipus!  How frightened I am. Ask and I shall tell you.

**Oedipus**:

When Laius went away, was he accompanied by a few or by many armed men?

**Jocasta**:

Five, including a herald. Laius was in a carriage.

**Oedipus**:

Ah! So many clear signs, wife.  Wife, who told you all this?

**Jocasta**:

A servant.  He was the only survivor.  He came and told me.

**Oedipus**:

Does he still live with us?

**Jocasta**:

No.  As soon as he came and saw you upon Laius’ throne he disappeared.  He begged me at the time to send him to the grazing lands, to be as far away from the city as possible. So I sent him.  He was a good man and worthy of even greater reward so I granted him his wish.

**Oedipus**:

Could we bring him here in a hurry?

**Jocasta**:

Of course, but why?

**Oedipus**:

I’m afraid for myself, wife.  I’m afraid I said too much against myself and I want to see him.

**Jocasta**:

Of course he’ll come but I think I have the right to know what’s going on.

**Oedipus**:

Since I’ve come so far into the depths of fear, Jocasta, I won’t keep you in the dark.  I’ll tell you everything.  Who else could I possibly disclose such Fate?

My father was the Corinthian Polybus, my mother, the Dorian Meropi.  There, in Corinth, I was loved by all, until one day when something odd happened. Odd and not worthy of the attention I gave it at the time.

A drunk, during a banquet said that I was not my father’s son, that I was a false son, an adopted son. I held my temper that day but the next I asked my parents and they, too, were highly insulted by what that drunk said.

I loved those two. Still, some thought at the back of my head was eating at me, at my very soul. One day then I went secretly to Apollo’s shrine and asked him about it but the god gave me no answer to any of the questions I’d ask him but… he’d tell me all sorts of other horrible, dreadful prophesies, prophesies like, one day I’d become my mother’s husband, or that I’d spawn a generation hated by mankind, or that I’d murder my father! At that I let the stars guide my path and left Corinth behind me. I walked away from there so that I wouldn’t give the slightest chance for these awful prophesies to come true.

I walked and walked until I came upon that forked road where you’ve told me Laius was murdered.

Let me tell you the truth, wife.  As I got to that spot, I came across a herald and a man on a horse-drawn carriage.  Both, man and herald came and tried to push me roughly out of the way.  I got so angry that, in the fight, I hit the driver of the carriage.  The old man saw this and as I walked past the carriage he picked up the double goad and hit me over the head with it. Let me tell you,  wife, for that little act, he paid double. I lifted my own staff and hit him back. He rolled to the ground from the carriage, flat on his back.  Then, as I fought on, I killed all the rest of them.

But if this stranger now has some light to shine upon that incident -

Oh, wife! Who would be more unfortunate than me?  More hated?  By man and by gods?

Neither a stranger nor a citizen could let me into his home nor even speak with me but send me on my cursed way.  And it was I who announced this course upon me, no one else.

These hands!  With these very hands I gripped at the man whose wife I hold now.  Am I not then an evil man?  Am I not a vile sacrilege? If I must leave, I will neither be able to see my family nor go back to my own country, Corinth.  Or else, the prophesy says, if I go back to Corinth, I shall marry my mother and kill Polybus, my father, the man loved me and gave me life and raised me.  Would it not be true if someone said of me that a cruel god is pursuing me?

Gods! Pure and Revered Gods! Never, never let me see such terrible a day!  I’d rather be lost from the eyes of men than see myself branded by such malignant shame.

**Chorus**:

All this, my king, is dreadful for all of us.  But have courage.  Let’s see what the witness has to tell us.

**Oedipus**:

True. There is this slender hope.  Let me wait for the shepherd.

**Jocasta**:

And what then?  What will you make of his words?

**Oedipus**:

If his words agree with yours then I am doomed.

**Jocasta**:

What do you mean?  What words have I told you?

**Oedipus**:

You said that this shepherd told you that a group of thieves killed Laius.  If he still says that it was a “group” then I’m clearly not the murderer.  A group is not a single man.  But if he says it was only one traveller, then it would be all too clear: the deed falls on me!

**Jocasta**:

I shall do whatever pleases you, Oedipus. I’ll send for the shepherd now.  In the meantime, let’s go inside.

*Exit Oedipus through middle door and Jocasta through that of SL.*

**Chorus**:

If only!  If only I was lucky enough to be able to understand in full the wise and pure words of the heavenly gods, fathered by Olympus, and not some mortal whose memory can fail!

Great and ageless are the God within those words.

Arrogance overfed with vanity, bloated with unearned riches will turn a man into a tyrant.  Yet even from the highest peak he’ll fall into the deepest abyss from where there’s no escape.

*(Turning to the altar of Apollo)*

I pray to Apollo that he does not stop the good fight for the city.  Let this god be my protector always.

If by his tongue or hands a man becomes too proud, if he neglects his duty to Justice or to the gods’ altars, let that man’s Fate be harsh, as harsh as is his undue pride.

If by unjust deeds he seeks to make his profits, or he does not hold back the madness of his hand from touching the untouchable shrines, who could help him?  Who could remove the arrows sent into his heart by the angry gods?  For if such things are thought of as honourable, what point would my prayers to the gods have?    Why dance the holy dances?

How could I ever again go in reverence to pray at Apollo’s shrine – Earth’s holy heart – or to the shrine of Abas or to Olympia if all these things do not clear up for all the mortals to see and feel?

*(Turning to Zeus’ altar)*

Zeus!  If you’re worthy of being called “Almighty” let not all this injustice escape you or your eternal power! Gone are the oracles addressed to Laius –no one believes them any more and nowhere the people believe in Apollo!  Gone is the love for the gods!

*Enter Jocasta (SL door) with her attendant, holding garlands and burning incense.*

**Jocasta**:

Elders of Thebes, I thought I should come to the shrines with these wreaths of supplication and incense because Oedipus’ mind has taken wings due to all sorts of sorrows. He cannot think like other men of logic do, judging the old prophesies from the new but prefers to pay heed only to those men whose prophesies are the more dreadful.

 *(Turning to Apollo’s altar)*

Since I do nothing without first being advised by you Apollo, you, our closest ally, I come to you in prayer with these offerings.

Heal our wounds, Apollo. We all tremble in fear when we see the captain of our ship so shaken with dread.

*She places the wreaths and the incense on the altar.  The incense will stay smouldering for the duration of the play.*

*Enter the Herald. He is holding a rough, shepherd’s crook which he at times puts across his shoulders, left to right.*

**Herald**:

Strangers, can you please tell me where Oedipus’ palace is?

**Chorus**:

That there is his palace, stranger and this here is the mother of his children.

**Herald**:

Abundant happiness to you and to your husband, good Lady.

**Jocasta**:

To you, too, stranger. Tell me what brings you here. What news do you have for us?

**Herald**:

Good news, madam - for you and for your husband.

**Jocasta**:

Yes?  What is it?  Who has sent you?

**Herald**:

I’ve come from Corinth, Madam and my message will definitely give you joy… but then again sadness, too… I think.

**Jocasta**:

What is this message?  How can it have such double strength?

**Herald**:

The Corinthians have invited Oedipus to be their king.

**Jocasta**:

But why? Is not old Polybus still alive?

**Herald**:

No, madam.  Death has him in his grave grip.

**Jocasta**:

What?  Have I heard right then?  Is Oedipus’ father dead?

**Herald**:

By my own life madam!  He is indeed dead.

**Jocasta**:  *(To her attendant)*

Girl, go quickly and tell your master the news.

Well now, what of all the prophesies of the gods?

Oedipus left his beloved home in trembling fear lest he kills this man, his father, yet this man, Polybus died a natural death.  No murder done by Oedipus’ hand.

What then of the prophesies?

*Enter Oedipus, two of his attendants and Jocasta’s  attendant*

**Oedipus**:

You called for me, dear wife. What is it?

**Jocasta**: *(sarcastically)*

Oedipus, listen to this man here first and then see how well god’s solemn prophesies are accomplished.

**Oedipus**:

Yes?  Who is this man and what does he have to say to me?

**Jocasta**:

He has just arrived from Corinth to tell us that your father, Polybus is dead.

**Oedipus**:

Stranger is this true?  Tell me yourself.

**Herald**:

If this is what you want me to announce first, then let me tell you truly that Polybus is dead.

**Oedipus**:

Murder or sickness?

**Herald**:

Old bodies need no great cause to fall.

**Oedipus**:

And so, it seems, the poor old man has fallen by illness.

**Herald**:

And of his lengthy years, of course.

**Oedipus**:

What do you think now, wife?   How can one give credence to Delphi’s oracle, or to the birds that cry above us when all these have prophesied that I’d be my father’s murderer?  There he is now, beneath the earth and here I am, no sword in my hand.

Still, perhaps I’m a murderer nonetheless, if I’ve caused him unbearable grief and grief was the cause of his death. That would be my only contribution to his death.  And he took with him down to Hades all these useless oracles, worthless for anything at all.

**Jocasta**:

Had I not told you as much, often?

**Oedipus**:

Yes, wife, you did but still dread overtook me.

**Jocasta**:

Forget all this nonsense then.  Cast it out of your mind.

**Oedipus**:

But how can I forget the marriage to my mother?  She’s still alive.

**Jocasta**:

But of course you’ll be afraid if, instead of thinking you leave everything to Fate and oracles!  Come now,  best for you to live as much as you can while you can.  As for your mother, many have gone to bed with their mothers –in their dreams!

Give no further thought to such things and live an easier life.

**Oedipus**:

These would be good words if mother was not alive but alive she is and so it is natural for me to be afraid.

**Jocasta**:

But surely, your father’s tomb is undeniable truth – a shining light - that the oracles are all wrong!

**Oedipus**:

I know. A shining light.  Yet the woman is alive and so the dread is still real.

**Herald**:

Excuse me, sir, which woman frightens you so much?

**Oedipus**:

Meropi, old man.  The woman with whom old Polybus lived.

**Herald**:

Why are you afraid of her?

**Oedipus**:

Because of a dreadful oracle from Apollo, stranger.

**Herald**:

Can you speak of it or is it one of those that must stay unspoken?

**Oedipus**:

Yes, I can speak of it.  Apollo told me once that I would be my mother’s husband and my father’s murderer, so I left Corinth a long time ago.  I’m happy here, of course, but it’s a sweet thing to be able to see your parents’ eyes.

**Herald**:

Goodness!  Is this true? Is THAT what you were afraid of?  Is that what sent you away from us?

**Oedipus**:

I had no wish to be my father’s murderer, old man.

**Herald**:

But have I not eased your fear, my Lord with what I’ve just told you?

**Oedipus**:

Of course you have, old man and for that you’ll be rewarded handsomely.

**Herald**:

But of course. That’s exactly why I’ve come, so that I’ll have something of yours when you return back to your home.

**Oedipus**:

I’ll never go back to live with my parents.

**Herald**:

My child.  It’s most obvious you don’t know what you’re doing.

**Oedipus**:

What do you mean, old man?  For God’s sake explain what you mean.

**Herald**:

Well if this is the only reason you’re afraid to come back to your own palaces –

**Oedipus**:

I fear the accomplishment of Apollo’s oracles.

**Herald**:

Afraid you might commit sacrilege with your parents?

**Oedipus**:

Exactly that, old man.  Always that!

**Herald**:

So you don’t know that you have no reason at all to be afraid of that?

**Oedipus**:

What do you mean?  They gave me my life.

 **Herald**:

Polybus is not of your family.  No relation at all.

**Oedipus**:

What? Was Polybus not my father ?

**Herald**:

He was as much your father as I was.

**Oedipus**:

But how can a stranger be equal to a parent?

**Herald**:

Because neither he nor I had anything to do with your birth.

**Oedipus**:

Why then did he used to call me his child?

**Herald**:

Learn this, my king.  Old Polybus received you as a gift from my hands.

**Oedipus**:

How then having received me from a stranger’s hand he loved me so much?

**Herald**:

Not having a child of his own taught him to do that.

**Oedipus**:

And you, old man. Did you buy me from someone or found me somewhere?

**Herald**:

I found you in the crags of Kitheron.

**Oedipus**:

What were you doing there?

**Herald**:

I took highland herds to graze up there.

**Oedipus**:

So you were a hired shepherd then.

**Herald**:

And, at the same time, your saviour, my boy!

**Oedipus**:

What state was I in then, when you found me?

**Herald**:

Look at your ankles. There lies the evidence of your state.

**Oedipus**:

Ah!  What an old piece of an evil memory you threw into my mind!

**Herald**:

I undid your feet, let loose the chains from the holes in your ankles.

**Oedipus**:

A great shame that I’ve carried from my cradle days.

**Herald**:

It’s what gave you your name.

**Oedipus**:

By Apollo! Tell me old shepherd who gave it me?  My mother or my father?

**Herald**:

I don’t know. Only he who gave it to you would know that.

**Oedipus**:

So, did someone else hand me to you or did you find me yourself?

**Herald**:

Another shepherd like me handed you to me.

**Oedipus**:

Who is it?  Can you tell me who it is?

**Herald**:

He said he was one of Laius’ servants.

**Oedipus**:

Laius, the man who was once the king of this country?

**Herald**:

That’s right.  That shepherd was that king’s servant.

**Oedipus**:

Is he still alive, this shepherd?  Can I see him?

**Herald**:

The locals here would know better about that.

**Oedipus**:*(To the chorus)*

Is there anyone among you who knows this shepherd?  Could he be in the fields or somewhere around here?  Speak!  It’s time for all things to be revealed!

**Chorus**:

I think it’s the same man you were asking to see earlier. Your kind wife, Jocasta would know better though.

**Oedipus**:

Wife, do you remember the man we were earlier asking to come here?  Is this the man this herald is talking about?

**Jocasta**: *(Dismissive)*

Who cares what man he’s talking about?  Forget him and forget all that has been said. You’re worried for nothing!

 **Oedipus**:

Forget it?  How can it be possible for one to carry such marks as these *(indicating the wounds on his ankles)*and not try and find his parents.

**Jocasta**:

For God’s sake, Oedipus!  If you love your life, search no further!  I have suffered enough for both of us.

**Oedipus**:

Courage, my dear wife.  Courage.  Even if by this search I discover that I was a third generation slave, it will not affect your standing in our city.

**Jocasta**:

Oedipus, I beg you, stop!  Search no further!  Stop!

**Oedipus**:

No!  Not ‘till I discover the whole truth!

**Jocasta**:

Oedipus!  It’s for your own good I’m giving you this advice.

**Oedipus**:

It is this “good” of mine which gives me so much pain for so long.

**Jocasta**:

Poor, luckless being!  I hope you never live to learn who you are.

**Oedipus**:

Will no one bring me this shepherd!  Let this wealthy woman enjoy her high birth. Bring me the shepherd!

**Jocasta**: *(despondent-she has now discovered the truth herself)*

You’re a poor, poor man, Oedipus! A wretched man!  That’s all I can say to you! I have no more for you.

*Jocasta leaves in anger (door SL)*

**Chorus**:

Such a harsh sadness took her inside, Oedipus.  I wonder if perhaps some new disaster will emerge from that silence of hers.

 **Oedipus**:

Let emerge what will!

I need to know the womb that carried me, even if it’s that of a slave.   Perhaps Jocasta’s pride is touched by shame because of my lowly birth.

She’d be wrong, for I consider myself the son of wide-armed Fate, so why should I feel any shame?  I am Fate’s son and she has given me both, the pains of being poor and the comfort of being rich.  So, I’ll have no other birth, no other unknown birth-womb.

**Chorus**:

If I were a seer myself and if my brain would be at all wise, I’d bet by Olympus, Kitheron, that by tomorrow’s full moon, we’ll make you our great friend!

Kitheron, who lived upon the same land as Oedipus, his father and his mother.  We’ll dance to your honour, Kitheron because you bring such joy to our kings.

Apollo, our saviour, may our prayers suffice.

Who gave birth to you, Oedipus, my son?  Which of the eternal nymphs coupled with Pan of the mountains? Or was it some daughter of Apollo, the god who loves the widely spread grazing lands?  Perhaps it was Kyllini’s protector, Bacchus who’s often seen on the mountain peaks?  Perhaps you were given to him as a gift by some nymph from Elikon. He loved to play with them.

**Oedipus**: *(Looking behind the curtain SL)*

Ah! I’ve never seen him before but if I’m right, I think I can see the shepherd we’re after!  His age is similar to this man here… yes, my servants are with him also. You’d know better than me, though.  You’ve seen him before.

**Chorus**:

Yes, I know him well.  He’s the one. He’s one of Laius’ most trustworthy shepherds.

**Herald**:

Yep, he’s the one all right!

*Enter Shepherd with two of Oedipus’ servants.  He too has a rough shepherd’s crook, just like his friend. As soon as he sees everyone, particularly the other shepherd and Oedipus, he snarls and tries to withdraw but the king’s servants stop him.  The other shepherd greets him with a smile.*

*This is the only scene possible where some humour (otherwise known as light relief) might be injected in the play.  This should be done via the two shepherds who at least at one point they may come to stick-blows!*

*This shepherd answers all the questions reluctantly and thoughtfully, trying to escape the deadly revelation.*

**Oedipus**: *(To the Shepherd)*

Come old man, come here and tell us. Were you ever Laius’ servant?

Shepherd:

Yes, born and bred in the palace, not bought into it.

**Oedipus**:

And you were doing what exactly?  How did you earn your living in this palace?

**Shepherd**:

I usually guided the palace’s herds.

**Oedipus**:

Taking them to which fields?

**Shepherd**:

Around Mount Kitheron and the surrounding places

**Oedipus**:  *(Indicating the Herald)*

Look at this man here.  Have you ever seen him before?  Met him anywhere around there?

**Shepherd**: *(Feigning ignorance)*

What? Which man?

**Oedipus**:

This one here.  Have you ever seen him before?

**Shepherd**:

No.  At least, not that I can remember him… immediately.

**Herald**: *(enthusiastically)*

Nothing odd about that, my Lord.

Wait, I’ll remind him of some past events.   I know full well that he’ll remember that he and I would get together for three six monthly periods, from spring till the star Arctouros would appear, in autumn.  He, with two herds and I with one.  Then, in winter, I’d return to my winter stables and he to Laius’.  *(To the shepherd)*Am I correct or not?

 **Shepherd**:

Yes, you’re right.  Though, this happened a long time ago.

**Herald**:

Well, then, tell me. Can you remember giving me a baby to raise as if it were mine?

**Shepherd**: *(Angrily)*

What’s going on?  Why are you asking me such things?

**Herald**:  *(Indicating Oedipus)*

Because, old man, this is that boy! This man here, my old friend, is that little boy! Look closely.  It’s king Oedipus!

**Shepherd**: *(Waves his crook angrily at the herald)*

Away with you, stupid man! Away and shut your mouth!

**Oedipus**: *(To the Shepherd, angrily.)*

Don’t get angry with him, old man.  It is he who has that right, not you!

**Shepherd**:

What have I done, my great Lord?

**Oedipus**:

Answer him on the matter of the child.

**Shepherd**:

He doesn’t know what he’s talking about, my Lord.  It’s all hot air!  Hot head, hot air!

**Oedipus**:

So far, my questions were put to you politely, shepherd, yet you have not answered one of them.  Perhaps your own tears will make you talk.

**Shepherd**:

By the Gods, my Lord, don’t hurt me!

**Oedipus**:

Someone please tie his hands behind his back!

*Oedipus’ servants move threateningly towards the Shepherd.*

**Shepherd**:

Damn my luck!  What is it, my Lord?  What is it you wish to know?

**Oedipus**:

Did you give the child to this man?

**Shepherd**:

Yes.  I wish I had died that day.

**Oedipus**:

You’ll die today if you don’t tell the truth.

**Shepherd**:

It’ll be even worse for me if I do tell the truth!

**Oedipus**: *(To the Chorus)*

Looks to me as if this old shepherd wants to escape.

**Shepherd**:

No, really.  I did say, I gave the child to him.   But it was a very long time ago.

**Oedipus**:

Where did you get the child from? Was it yours or was it someone else’s?

**Shepherd**:

Mine?  O, no!  No, no, no. I mean, no.  Not mine.  Someone else gave it to me.

**Oedipus**:

Who gave it to you?  From whose house did it come from?

**Shepherd**:

No, my Lord!  By the gods, no more!  Ask me no more, please!

**Oedipus**:

Don’t let me ask you again, old man!

**Shepherd**:

It was from in there, my Lord.  From within Laius’ palace.

**Oedipus**:

Was he the son of a slave or one of his own children?

**Shepherd**:

Damn this luck of mine!  Here comes the worst of it!

**Oedipus**:

For me, too, old man but I need to hear it!

**Shepherd**:

They said it was his own child but… your own wife would be able to tell you better about this.

**Oedipus**:

So… was it she then who gave you the child?

**Shepherd**:

Yes, my king.

**Oedipus**:

And why did she do that?

**Shepherd**:

To make it disappear.

**Oedipus**:

Its very own mother asked you to do this?

**Shepherd**:

Yes, from fear of some bad oracle or other.

**Oedipus**:

Oracle?  Which oracle?

**Shepherd**:

One which said he’d kill his parents.

**Oedipus**:

So… why did you leave the child with this man?

**Shepherd**:

I felt for the child, my Lord.  I thought, well, he’d be taken to another land, one far away from his father’s and so he’d be free of that oracle.  No problems that I could see. Unfortunately though, my Lord, it looks like that was a bad decision, saving the child, I mean because if that child is you, then, I fear gravely for you, too.

**Oedipus**:

O, how gruesomely clear it has all unravelled!  O light! Let me enjoy you for one last time.  One last time from the time I was born for I was born from the wrong parents, I was bonded with the wrong people and I’ve killed those I should have never killed.

*Exit Oedipus into the palace (Central door)*. *Exit Shepherd and Herald*

**Chorus**:

Wretched mortals!  Your lives are of no consequence. What man can ever feel that his joy is any more than a dream, since all it does is to appear and then disappear almost immediately?  I look at your life, luckless Oedipus, and take it as an example.  How can I look at your Fate and praise the Fate of any other human?

**Oedipus**: *(within)*

Ohhhhhhhh!

**Chorus**:

This man, Zeus!  This man has aimed high and highly he achieved. He has escaped Apollo’s sharp-talloned oracle and gained great joy.  He stood like a great tower, protecting our city from the many deaths.

Since then, my Lord I can think of no other man more honourable than you in our great Thebes.

Yet now!  Who can be called more unfortunate than you, Oedipus?

One twist of Fate, Oedipus and now no one can be called more wretched. A twist which brought you amidst wild sadness and pain.

Both of you, Oedipus -father and son- how did the same awful harbour manage to receive you both?

How did your father’s bed manage to keep you there, in such silence and for so long?

Then the years came and found you, my King and now they condemn this unholy marriage from which you were born and in which you gave birth.

**Oedipus**: *(within)*

Ohhhhhhhh!

**Chorus**:

Poor child of Laius!  I wish I had never met you because my heart cries bitter tears for you. Yet, to tell the truth, it is you who gave me some comfort, since you came to Thebes, enough for me to be able to sleep.

*Enter a very distressed, male attendant. (door SR)*

**Attendant**:

O, dear elders! What horrible things you’ll hear and see, what grief you’ll suffer if you still care at all for this palace in.  Neither of the huge rivers, Istros nor Phasis could wash away the evil things going on under its roofs, nor what will be revealed soon under the light.  Evil things done willingly and not.

The most bitter suffering, elders, comes by our very own hand!

**Chorus**:

We suffer enough from what we know already. What more is there for you to tell us?

**Attendant**:

I’ll use the quickest possible manner of speech. Jocasta is dead!

**Chorus**:

Gentle Jocasta is dead!  So poor in fortune?  How?  What happened?

**Attendant**:

She died by her own hand –but there’s more to tell. I’ll tell you all that I can manage.

When she crossed this threshold here, leaving you with that anger in her soul, she rushed to her bridal bed and began immediately to tear at her own hair.  Behind shut doors she cried the loss of old Laius, her true husband, wailing and calling the memories of their wedding, lamenting his death which had left her to deal with his son and bring up a new generation.

She mourned the bed upon which from a husband another husband and from a son another son were born...

After that, I have no idea what happened because just then Oedipus rushed in, groaning dreadfully with pain, so no one could look at Jocasta’s pain any more but turned to him.  He kept calling out for a sword and for his wife – alternating between the words “wife” and “mother,” a double seed, as well as for his children; and someone, surely a god for no mortal would have dared speak to him when he was in the grips of such an anger, showed him the double doors of Jocasta’s room.  He screamed wildly and crashed at the doors till the latches broke asunder.  Then he rushed into the room.

That’s when we all saw the poor woman hanging by a thickly platted rope.

Oedipus, thoroughly beaten by sadness now, cut the rope and let the woman down onto the floor.

Dreadful!  Dreadful were the things we saw just then.

He took out the golden broaches that held her dress and plunged them deep into the sockets of his own eyes so that they’ll never again see what evil things he’s done nor any of those deeds he might do in the future. In darkness they’d always be and therein they’d receive those they didn’t want and not receive those he wanted.

Again and again he hit hard at his eyes, plunging the broaches until the blood began to flow like black rain and black hail and the clods and gore rolled all over his great beard.

This evil sprouted from both of them –man and woman equally- and upon both this evil broke. Equal and similar to both.

The happiness they’ve enjoyed earlier was true happiness but now, this day, we see only deep sadness, curses, death and shame.  Name what evil word you want and it won’t be missing from this scene.

**Chorus**:

How is he now, the poor man?

**Attendant**:

He groans with anger to open the doors so he can show all the Cadmians the real patricide, the real murderer of his own father and of his mother –how hard it is for the words to be uttered!  He says he’ll throw himself out of his land, an exile and he won’t remain here while he’s fallen in the grips of his own curses.

He has a need, however of some guide who’ll help him.  Such suffering is too hard for one to endure alone.

*(From within we hear Oedipus’ loud groans of pain and anger. He bangs at the door from within with his staff until the door opens.)*

See for yourself.  He’s coming out now.  A sight even an enemy will feel sorrow for.

 *Enter Oedipus.Blood is still dripping from his eyes and beard. His eyes are gouged out.*

*He is made to look as similar as possible to the Life Traveller at the beginning of the play: Bare footed, long, sparse, grey hair, holding an old, shepherd’s crook instead of his golden staff, no head piece and dressed in tattered hessian rags.*

**Chorus**:

Hideous sight! More frightening then all the sights I’ve ever seen before.  What frenzy took hold of you poor, luckless man? What evil creature jumped so gruesomely upon your sad Fate?  Poor man!   Poor Man!  Oh how insufferable must be your pain. I have so many questions to ask you, so much I need to know, yet I just can’t look at you.

**Oedipus**:  *(In agony)*

O!  O! What pain!  What loathsome Fate!  Appaling Fate! Into what land will my madness cast me now? Where are my feet taking me?  Where is my voice cast?  Black Fate!  Black Fate, Black Fate, in what dark abyss have you thrown me now?

**Chorus**:

In dreadful misery, Oedipus.  Dreadful, unheard of, never-seen-before, misery.

**Oedipus**:

Ahhhh! What an unbearable pall of darkness!  How secretly, how wildly you fell upon me! How swiftly the wind carried you about me!  How this wound of memory hurts both the mind and the flesh!  Ahhhhhhh!

**Chorus**:

Such circumstances bring about double suffering, double pain and double burdens!

**Oedipus**: *(softly)*

You!  You!  Still my trusted friend! The only one!  You still stand by me, a blind man, and still you try to help me.  Even in darkness, my friend, I can still recognise your voice!

**Chorus**:

What brutal courage you must have, Oedipus, to erase the light from your own eyes!  What God has made you do it?

**Oedipus**:

Apollo did this my friends! Apollo! He is the one who’s sending me these foul pains. As for my eyes, no one else has struck them.  No one but me.  What is the good of them now when I saw no good with them before?

**Chorus**:

True, my Lord.  Things are as you say they are.

**Oedipus**:

What’s there left for me to see, to love to speak with and to listen to with joy? Come friends, take me out of here, as quickly as possible. Take me, the utter wretch, the worst cursed, the most hated of all mortals.

**Chorus**:

Ill-Fated man! Ill-Fated in mind and flesh.  How I wish I had never met you!

**Oedipus**:

Cursed be the man whoever it was, the man who saved me from the wild hooks on my feet, saved me from the wilderness, from those grazing lands, from death, so as to give me this detestable end. Had I died then, I’d be no burden of melancholy, now, neither to me nor to my friends.

**Chorus**:

Yes, that would be far better.

**Oedipus**:

I wouldn’t be my father’s killer then, nor would those who gave birth to me would call me their son.So! Here I am, without a god, a son of sacrilege, sharing the nuptial bed of my very own parents.If there were anything even more evil than this, it, too, would strike Oedipus!

**Chorus**:

Yet, I can’t say what you did was wise, Oedipus.  Better to be dead, I should think, than to be alive and blind.

**Oedipus**:

No, old man! Don’t preach me all that. Don’t tell me that what I did was wrong!

If I still had my eyes, old man, how could I face Hades in the underworld?  How could I face my parents after what I had done to them both? For such atrocious acts, suicide is too small a price to pay. And my children.  Could I still have the yearning to see my children, born as they have, in such an unholy marriage?

No, such things are not for my eyes, old man.  No!  I cannot face the city nor its high towers, the sacred shrines of our gods –not even them did I leave out of my curse, I the incomparable king, the king of Thebes, most repugnant of all mortals.

Let the gods send this arrogant man away.  They’ve discovered him, this foul scion of Laius’ generation.

After all this, after all this vile discovery which I, myself brought out to the brutal light of truth, how can I stand before them and look at them with clear eyes?

I cannot!

Even my ears! If there were some way by which I could stop my ears, stop the wound which sounds loud in my ears, I would not hesitate to do it.

Stop the ears… stop the eyes!  How sweet it would be to shut them both from thoughts of disaster.

Sweet mountain, Kitheron! Why did you accept me?  Why not kill me at once? Why let me show to the world from whose womb I came?

Polybus!  Corinth!   Ancient palaces that would be mine –what brilliant beauty!

Brilliant beauty but scarred by hidden wounds beneath them.  You raised me only to show me in the end what a monstrous being I am!

That three-way crossing where I spilled my father’s blood –my blood, with my own hands; young trees, you, whose thirst I quenched with that blood, do you still remember what vile act I’d done back then?  Do you also remember what other vile acts I’ve done when I arrived here?

One marriage after another!  What marriage gives a birth and out of that birth and in the same womb you sow another seed that brings out into the light, fathers, brothers, children, mixed blood, brides –wives and mothers all at once, all the repulsive, shameful acts that shameful humans can commit.  One marriage, one bed brings out all these odious deeds.

Still, one mustn’t talk of things too foul for the ear or for the hand.

Shouts and waves his hands about, hoping to touch one of the men in the chorus. The Chorus moves back in horror.

Come, then! For gods’ sake, take me out of this city, take me, kill me, drown me so you won’t ever see me again.

Come!

Come, I ask you!  Take my hand.  Let this miserable man hold on to one of you!  Listen to me!  Don’t be afraid to touch me! No other man on earth can carry the burdens I’ve carried.

*Enter Creon from the central door.  He is dressed in the same manner as was Oedipus when he had first appeared on the stage.: golden crown, golden staff and regal manner.*

**Chorus**:

Here comes Creon.  He is the only guard of our city now and he’ll advise you on all your wishes.

**Oedipus**:

Creon?  What words should I utter to him?  How could I justly demand his trust?  I’ve done nothing but act badly towards him.

**Creon**:

I’m not here to either condemn you, Oedipus nor search into your past errors.

(To the chorus)

You, men, even if you feel no shame for things that humans do, respect the flame of the Sun God who gives life to all things!  Such pollution cannot remain uncovered because neither the earth nor the holy rain, nor the light will tolerate it.  Quickly, take him inside the palace.  Let his relatives and the relatives of them, see and hear his suffering.  That is their burden.

**Oedipus**:

By the gods, Creon, now that you’ve lessened my fear and behaved so kindly towards me, a most detestable man, please listen to me.  I shall speak for your own good, not mine.

**Creon**:

Speak, Oedipus.  Tell me your wish.

**Oedipus**:

Throw me out of this land quickly so that no other Theban eyes will see me.

**Creon**:

I would have done so, let me tell you but I find it necessary to seek the God’s advice on the matter.

**Oedipus**:

But his oracle is very clear: Get rid of the wound! Me the father-killer!  Me, the pestilence.  Me the polluter!

**Creon**:

That is true but the need is now for me to find out what I should do.

**Oedipus**:

So you’ll go to the god even for such a wretched man?

**Creon**:

Surely you, too, must trust him now!

 **Oedipus**:

And I need to trust you to do one more thing for me.

You take charge of the burial of the body inside.  She’s your kin and it is proper that you should do so in the manner you wish.  As for me, let me not stay in my father’s land now or ever while I’m still alive. Let me, instead, go and live on Mount Kitheron, my own, true burial ground where my parents left me where my parents wanted me to die.

I know this well:  I won’t be dying from some illness or any other such thing.  No, Fate wishes me to die a horrible death somewhere.

Well then, let it be so.  Let the Fate of my generation take me where it will.

O, andas for my boys, Creon.  Don’t be concerned about them.  They are men and they’ll be able to look after themselves.  My daughters, though! My little girls. Poor little things, they have never sat at the table without my being there.  My plate was always theirs. My mouthful was theirs.  They are truly worthy of compassion.  Show that compassion to them.  Bring them to me now that I may hold them and cry!

Come on, Creon, please.

*(Creon waves at an attendant to open the side door (SL) from where two young girls come out, guided by a female attendant. They are Antigone and Ismene and they are gently sobbing.)*

Come now, kind Lord!  I know that if my hands touch them it will feel as if I can see them - as if I could still have eyes!

Ah! What’s this I hear?  Creon, are these my darlings I hear sobbing?  My Antigone and my Ismene?   Did you feel sorry for me, Creon?  Sweet children, is this true?

**Creon**:

It is. I knew they would bring you joy, just as they always did.

**Oedipus**:

May Apollo reward you for this good deed, Creon!  May he look after you, guard you, better than he did me.

Where are you my darlings?  Come, come, my dears! Come into these hands –your brother’s hands now. The brother who tore your father’s eyes out. Your father who knew nothing of what he was doing, nothing about his own birth or about his marriage or of your birth.

*(The children approach Oedipus and hold onto his clothes.)*

I can’t see you and I mourn for you because I know the bitter treatment the world will give you. What sort of public gatherings, what sort of celebrations will you attend, only to return home with tears rather than joy?  And then, when you’re the right age for marriage, what man will be brave enough to take upon himself the danger of such a shame and curse as that of my generation?

What’s missing in all this shame?  Nothing!  Your father killed his father, married the woman who gave birth to him and from that same woman he brought about your birth.  All this will be in the mouths of people.  Who then will marry you?  No one, my darlings and so, you’ll stay unmarried and without children.

Creon, I beg you, their true parents are lost and you are their only relative.  Don’t let them suffer the agony of the lost. Poor and unmarried, wandering the world.  Don’t let them suffer because of me. Feel pity for them –apart from you they have no one.

Come, kind sir, accept them.  Give me your hand on it.

*(Creon shakes hands with Oedipus.)*

To you, my children, if you were a little older I would have a great many more words of explanation to tell you but as it is, I can only give you my blessings.

Let Fate determine your life but let your life be better than your father’s.

**Creon**:

Enough tears now, come!  Go back into the palace, Oedipus.

**Oedipus**:

I obey, though with great sadness.

**Creon**:

What needs to be done must be done at the right time.

**Oedipus**:

You know though that I will agree on this, on one condition only and… do you know what that is?

**Creon**:

Tell me and I shall.

**Oedipus**:

You must send me out of the city.

**Creon**:

Your wishes can only be granted by Apollo.

**Oedipus**:

But the gods hate me!

 **Creon**:

In that case, your wish will soon be granted.

**Oedipus**:

Is this true?

**Creon**:

I never speak in vain.

**Oedipus**:

Take me away from here then.

**Creon**:

Walk ahead.

*(Oedipus moves and guides the girls with him but Creon stops him)*

No, no!Leave the children here!

**Oedipus**:

No, don’t take them from me! Not for a moment!

**Creon**:

Enough now. Don’t ask for anything more.  What you’ve been given so far has been a big enough burden to you.

*Exit all except the two girls.*

**Chorus**:

Citizens of my beloved Thebes.  See now your great Oedipus!   That famous man who knew the answers of great riddles.  That man whose good fortune every man in Thebes envied!  See now in what monstrous storm of misfortune he has fallen.

*(Indicating the stage and the play that was just run)*

What says all this, then?

Let’s not praise a man for his good fortune until he has arrived safe at the day of his death having escaped all evils.

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