

Seven Tragedies of Sophocles

Oedipus at Colonus

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Oedipus at Colonus

(Dramatis Personae)

Oedipus

Antigone

Xenos

Chorus of Attic Elders

Ismene

Theseus

Creon

Polyneices

Messenger

Oedipus

Antigone, my child, since I am blind and old,
what is this place that we have reached, to whom
belongs the city here and who will entertain
the vagrant Oedipus today with meagre gifts?
My wants are small and what I win is often less,
but that small gain is yet sufficient to content me;
for my experience combines with length of life
and thirdly with nobility, teaching patience to a man.
If, though, my child, you see some resting place
beside the common way or by some precinct of the gods, 10
then place me there and set me down, that we may learn
our whereabouts; our state is such we must ask that
of the natives here and what our next step is.

Antigone

Long suffering, father Oedipus, as best as my eyes
can judge, the walls that gird the town are far away.
It is plain to see this place is holy ground, luxuriant
with laurel, olives trees and vines, while throngs
of sweet voiced nightingales give tongue within.
So rest your limbs here upon this piece of unhewn stone;
your journey has been long for a man as old as you. 20

Oe. Yes, settle me down and protect the blind old man.

Ant. That is a lesson I have no fresh need to learn.

Oe. And can you tell me where we are at last?

Ant. The city is Athens, that I know, but not this place.

Oe. Everyone we met has told us that at least.

Ant. Shall I then go to learn what this place is?

Oe. Indeed, my child, if it is inhabited, that is...

Ant. I am sure it is - but there is no need, I think,
for me to go - for I see a man not far away.

Oe. And is he coming here, in our direction? 30

Ant. Indeed, he has already come. Address him now
as you think fit, since he is present by your side.

Oe. My friend, I hear from this young girl whose eyes
do service for both herself and me alike that you
are opportunely come to clear our doubts, to see...

Xenos Before you ask me more, leave that seat of stone
at once! It is an impious act for you to tread that place.

Oe. What is this place? Which of the gods is thought to own it?

Xe. It is a place inviolate, where none might live. Dread goddesses
possess it, virgin daughters of the Earth and the Dark. 40

Oe. Tell me their holy name that I might pray to them.

Xe. The people here call them Eumenides, the goddesses who see

all things - but other euphemisms serve elsewhere.

Oe. Then may they welcome me, their suppliant, with grace;
for from this spot I would no more remove myself.

Xe. What does this mean? **Oe.** This place is set to seal my fate.

Xe. I lack the will to drive you out myself without the state's
authority, before I tell the people of your blasphemy.

Oe. By all the gods, my friend, do not reject me, poor,
sad exile that I am, but rather tell me what I seek. 50

Xe. Speak up, then. I for my part won't refuse your plea.

Oe. What then is this place in which we find ourselves?

Xe. Hear all that I myself have knowledge of and learn.
This whole place is sacred ground. Poseidon is
its holy lord. Here also dwells divine Prometheus,
the Titan, fire-carrier, but as for where you stand,
that place is called the brazen footed gate to Hell,
deep-seated stay of Athens, while the neighbouring fields
do honour to the horseman Colonus as their
heroic lord of old, and all around do bear 60
and share his name. Such is the way of things,
my friend, things honoured not in word alone,
but rather by and in the fact of our proximity.

Oe. There are then those that live around this place?

Xe. Indeed there are and they take their name from this god.

Oe. And do they have a king? Or is the people's voice supreme?

Xe. This region is subject to the city's king.

Oe. Who is this man who rules with reason and with force?

Xe. His name is Theseus, the son of Aegeus who preceded him.

Oe. And might you send a messenger from here to him? 70

Xe. What for? To take some news, or urge that he should come?

Oe. That by a simple service he might win great gain.

Xe. What gain can be had from a man with no eyes?

Oe. Whatever I say shall be said by one who sees all.

Xe. Be sure, my friend, you shall not come to harm.
For you are noble, it would seem, despite your fate
and circumstance. Stay here and out of sight, therefore,
until I go and tell my neighbours - not the city folk - about
your plight. For theirs will be the judgement whether you
must stay, or journey on your way once more. 80

Oe. My child, the stranger - has he gone from us?

Ant. He has and we are quiet here, so you may speak
with freedom, father, since I alone am close at hand.

Oe. Dread ladies, because yours is the altar where first
in this land I have set me down to rest, do not, I pray,
therefore, be less than kind to me or lord

Apollo, who, in prophesying many ills for me,
also declared that in time's fullness this very place
would be a place of peace for me, an exile's end
where refuge is beside the altars of the awesome deities. 90

Here should I bring an end to weary life, he said.
and bring advantages to those who offered me a resting place,
destruction, though to those who sent me on and drove me out.
Portents would come to show this place to me,
earthquake or thunder, Zeus's lightening bolt.
And now I understand that it cannot but be that you
have led me on my road by trusty omens to this grove.
For else my wanderings would never have brought
me first, ascetic and austere, to you the goddesses,
the wineless ones, and never have set me down upon 100

this unhewn stone. Therefore, according to Apollo's word,
allow me, goddesses, to turn about life's course
and end it here, unless I seem to you to be
unworthy, ever barking on and on and on
about man's life of utmost toil and misery.
Come, ancient daughters sweet of the olden Dark,
come, city, which is honoured most of all
of mighty Pallas and named Athens after her,
have pity on this paltry imitation of a man,
this Oedipus; for he is no more the man he was. 110

Ant. Be still! For certain men advanced in years
are making their way to spy upon your resting place.

Oe. I will be still, and you must hide me in this grove,
well off the track, until I overhear their conversation.
With such intelligence I may take care to serve
our interests the best in what is yet to come.

**Chorus
str.**

Look, look! Who was this man, where is he now?
Where is the stranger fled, who is of all mankind, of all
mankind the most intemperate? 120

Pay close attention, look for him,
yes, seek in every place!

A wanderer,
he was, a wanderer, this ancient man,
not of this land; for he would never else
approach this shrine where none may tread,
belonging to the maids that none may fight,
whose name we dread to speak,
whose shrine we pass with eyes

averted, 130
speechless, wordlessly
mouthing thoughts
of piety;
but word now is a man
has come who fears them not,
yet, though I search throughout
the grove, I cannot
find him out, nor yet his resting place.

Oe. I am that man. For my ears are as my eyes,
as men would have it said.

Ch. Ah! Ah! 140
The man is terrible to see, is terrible to hear!

Oe. Do not, I beg, look down on me as one who is beyond the law.

Ch. Lord Zeus, protector! Who is this ancient man?

Oe. A man whose life has not enjoyed the best of luck
that you should call him blessed, lords of Attica!
But this is obvious. For otherwise I would not creep
dependent on another's eyes,
nor make my weighty way supported on such feeble strength.

Ch. I pity your sightless eyes! 150
ant. And were you blind from birth, old man?

For I see that your years have been long.
But yet, in so far as is in my gift,
You will add no further curse to your lot.
You go beyond
what is right! So do not trespass more
on the grass of this speechless
grove - a place for the blending
of water brought from the well
with sweet honey to drink - 160
and be sure, my poor friend,
to remove
from that place and withdraw!
The distance between us is great.
Do you hear
me, poor wandering soul?
If you would meet with us
to speak where all may freely speak, abandon
that forbidden
ground. Until then silence keep.

Oe. My daughter, tell me what a man should think to do. 170
 Ant. My father, we must accommodate our ways to theirs,
 must yield where it is right and be obedient.
 Oe. Then take me by the hand. Ant. Here is my hand.
 Oe. Let me not suffer wrong, my friends, should I
 entrust myself to you and leave my sanctuary.
 Ch.
 str. No one will drag you from your resting place
 against your will, old man.
 Oe. Still further?
 Ch. Further still.
 Oe. And more?
 Ch. Child, lead him further out, 180
 since you can see.
 Ant. Follow me, father, placing your
 unseeing step where I may lead.
 Oe.
 Ant.
 Oe.
 Ch. You have suffered much, but now as guest
 in our land you must learn to dislike what our city
 has learned to dislike and honour the things
 that our city holds dear.
 Oe. Then lead me now, my child,
 that we may come where piety demands, that we
 may speak and also hear that which is said 190
 and fight no longer with necessity.
 Ch. There! You need not forge your step beyond
 that step of native rock...
 Oe. Thus far?
 Ch. And no further...
 Oe. And may I sit?
 Ch. Yes, move across
 and crouch down at the edge of the rock.
 Ant. My task, father, this and so match step
 with quiet step with me...
 Oe. Ah, ah! I, I...
 Ant. Support your aged body on 200
 my loving arm.
 Oe. I curse infatuation's fate.
 Ch. Since now you are at ease, my friend,
 declare what manner of man you are.
 Who is it that takes such a weary path?
 And might we learn the land of your birth?

Oe. I am a stateless refugee, my friends, but do not...
Ch. What is it that you would deny us knowledge of, old man?
Oe. No, no, no...you must not ask me who I am, 210
nor question me further in your curiosity...
Ch. But why?
Oe. My very self is dreadful!
Ch. Speak!
Oe. My child, my child, what shall I say?
Ch. Tell me at least your lineage,
and your father's name.
Oe. My child, my child, what will become of me?
Ant. Declare yourself, since you have come to this extremity.
Oe. I will. I have no further place to hide.
Ch. Why both delay? Come hurry with your tale.
Oe. Have you heard of Laius' son?
Ch. Agh! 220
Oe. Yes, Oedipus, the damned...
Ch. You are that man?
Oe. There is nothing for you to fear in what I say.
Oh, wretch that I am!
My daughter, what is going to happen now?
Ch. Depart this land at once!
Oe. But your promises...how will you then redeem them?
Ch. No man can suffer fated punishment for promises that have 230
already caused him pain in keeping them; deceit piled on
deceit is like to bring disaster more than kindness in return.
And you, again, I say, make haste to leave this resting place
and get you gone, outside my land, and harbourless once more,
in case you lay some further obligation
on this state I call my home!
Ant. You are devout in hearts and minds,
I know, my friends, and so cannot endure
my father, aged though he is, because of hearing
rumours of his unintended crimes; 240
but yet, I beg of you, please pity me
in all my wretchedness when I
approach on his behalf alone, not mine,
approach with eyes that see and still
can meet your gaze, approach as if I were
your child in very truth, that he may win
some pity for his pain. Our fate depends
on you as on some god and so, please, nod
your head in unexpected kindness, I plead by all
that you hold dear, your children and your wives, 250

your fortune and your gods.
However closely you may look you'll never see
the man that can escape,
if some god it is that drives his fate.

Ch. Know, child of Oedipus, that we pity you both
and equally for all that you have undergone;
but because we fear what the gods might send,
we lack the strength to alter our decree just made.

Oe. How then to value reputation and good name
if all that it is worth is idleness and wind, when men
make idle boasts that Athens is so pious, capable 260
alone of keeping safe the stranger in his misery,
and capable alone of aiding him?
What are such pieties to me, when men like these
arouse me from my resting place and drive me out,
because they simply dread a name? It cannot be
they fear my strength, nor yet what I have done,
since all that has been done I suffered more than did-
if I should think it right to tell my parents' history -
for that is the reason for your fear of me, I know
it well! Yet how can I be evil in my very self, 270
if all I did was self-defence, when, even if I had done
what I did with full intent, I would have earned no blame?
The journey that I made I made in ignorance, but yet I was
destroyed by those who were aware of what they did to me.
And so I beg of you, by all the gods, my friends,
that in the spirit that you roused me from my seat,
so keep me safe, and do not as 'god-fearing men'
deny the gods their proper share of piety. Consider too
how they look down upon the pious of mankind
and on the impious alike, and that so far there never yet 280
was haven found to which the impious of men could flee.
Keep company therefore with the gods and so do not
shroud Athens' fame by giving in to impious deeds,
but even as you took the suppliant into care, just so
deliver me and keep me safe until my death. Although
my face is hard to look upon, do not therefore dishonour me.
For I am come an holy and a pious man and bring
advantage for these citizens. However, when your king
is here, the man who is the leader of your folk,
then shall you hear and know all that there is to know. 290
Meanwhile do not in any way betray your name.

Ch. The case which you have made, old man, demands we pay it great respect; it has been framed in words of moment and I am pleased to leave the judgement in this matter to those who are the rulers in the land.

Oe. Where is the man whose nod is sovereign here?

Ch. In Athens, his ancestral home; the man you first met here, who summoned me, is sent for him.

Oe. Do you believe that he will think the blind old man sufficiently important that he would visit him? 300

Ch. Of course he will, especially when he learns your name.

Oe. Who is there that would tell him that?

Ch. The road is long and many the tales derived from travellers are like to spread which, when he hears of them, be well assured, will bring him here. Your name, old man, has universal currency so that, were he a sluggard even, he would swiftly come on hearing it.

Oe. Then may his coming be of mutual benefit to both his city and to me. His generous will befriends itself.

Ant. Ah, Zeus, what shall I say? Oh, father, what to think? 310

Oe. What is the matter, child?

Ant. I see a woman come, hurrying towards us, mounted on a colt, a Sicilian, and on her head she wears a hat - from Thessaly - to protect her face from the sun's fierce heat. What can I say? Can it be her? It can't be true! I must be mad. It is, it is! It cannot be denied... I'm lost for words! Ah, fool that I am! It is none other. Her bright face smiles a greeting as she comes and shows herself 320 to be none other than my own Ismene.

Oe. What's that, Antigone?

Ant. I see your child, my sister. But hear her voice and know.

Ism. Father, sister, how these words are music to my ears! It has been difficult to track you down, but now I scarce can see you through my tears.

Oe. And are you come, my child?

Ism. And sad to see you so.

Oe. I see your image, child.

Ism. But only at some cost.

Oe. Touch me, my child.

Ism. Please, let me touch you both.

Oe. My children, sisters both!
Ism. Such wretched lives! 330
Oe. Her life and mine?
Ism. Mine too, a wretched third!
Oe. Why have you come, my child?
Ism. Through care for you.
Oe. Through missing me?
Ism. Also to bring you news,
alone but for this single trusted slave.
Oe. Where are your brothers then that they might help?
Ism. They are where they are and dreadful is their plight.
Oe. How like the ways of Egypt are the natures
and the style of life of my two sons!
For in that place the menfolk sit beneath their roofs
and weave the cloth; their wives, however, work 340
outside always to gain the wherewithal for life,
while as for these two sons, who ought by rights
to work, they keep themselves at home like maids,
while you, my daughters, labour in their stead
to ease my pain. The one since her childhood passed
into maturity relinquished care for self to be
a wanderer, sharing ever in my ill-starred company,
to guide an aged man, enduring much
in forests wild, an unfed, unshod nomad, prey
to storms of rain and the searing of the sun, 350
poor thing, quite careless of her style of life so long
as father had the means by which he might survive.
And you, my child, have ever come to bring
your father all the oracles that touched upon his fate -
the Thebans unaware - and have kept faithful watch
for me since I was exiled from the land.
Again, Ismene, what then is this message which you bring
to me? What mission roused you from your home?
You have not come here empty handed I am sure,
but rather bring your father dreadful news. 360
Is. I will not touch on all the sufferings that I
endured in seeking, father, where you'd made
your present home. I do not wish to live again
those pains, retelling them a second time.
Now rather is the time to tell the tale of ills
besetting your two wretched and unlucky sons.
At first it was their wish to leave the sovereign power
to Creon, so to spare the city more pollution yet,
in contemplation of the former taint upon the race,

which once had taken hold of your unlucky house; 370
 but now foul strife has come upon these thrice
 unlucky sons - some god or errant thought the cause -
 inspiring them to snatch the kingship for themselves.
 The younger of the two in years and temperament,
 Eteocles, has driven his elder brother Polyneices both
 from the throne and from the land in exile.
 And he, according to the tale that most has currency
 among us, went in his flight to Argos in its ring of hills
 and there procured new kinsmen and spear friends -his aim 380
 that Argos either should possess the land of Thebes
 with honour, or that Theban fame should reach the stars.
 These things, my father, are more than a sum of words.
 Deeds terrible they are, and I am no way competent to tell
 the point at which the gods will feel some pity at your fate.
Oe. You had some hope before then that the gods would set
 some time in which I might some day be saved?
Is. Because of present oracles I had that hope.
Oe. What oracles? What has been prophesied, my child?
Is. Some day the men of Thebes will need to seek
 you out, alive or dead, to bring them benefits. 390
Oe. But who could gain a benefit from such a man as I?
Is. In you they say there rests their future strength.
Oe. Precisely when I am no more I then become heroic?
Is. The gods that brought you down are now restoring you.
Oe. Restored in age means nothing when one's youth was lost.
Is. Still you should know that Creon anyway will soon
 or late be here because of matters such as these.
Oe. With what in mind, my child? Enlighten me.
Is. To plant you near the Theban border, that they might
 control you there without your stepping on the land itself. 400
Oe. What benefit can come from one entombed outside the land?
Is. They think your tomb itself could be a grievous curse to them.
Oe. Why that at least a man might understand without god's help.
Is. Therefore they want to set it in the ground close by,
 but in a place wherein you have yourself no sovereignty.
Oe. They will not hide me then in Theban dust?
Is. The father's blood you spilled does not allow of that.
Oe. Then never ever will they lord it over me at least.
Is. This matter will prove baneful to the men of Thebes.
Oe. What are your grounds for this conjecture, child? 410
Is. Your anger when they shall stand beside your tomb.
Oe. From whom did you receive this news, my child?
Is. Ambassadors from beside the Delphic flame.

Oe. And has Apollo spoken thus of me?
 Is. According to those who came to the land of Thebes.
 Oe. Has either of my sons got wind of this?
 Is. Yes, both of them alike are well acquainted with the news.
 Oe. And in their wickedness, on hearing this, they put
 their lust for power ahead of my recall?
 Is. I grieve to hear that said, but it cannot be denied. 420
 Oe. Then let not the gods put out the fated conflagration
 of their strife, but rather let in my hands be the means
 to bring conclusion to this war in which they are embroiled,
 where spear is raised against competing spear;
 so neither then would he who holds the throne
 and sceptre stay in power, nor yet would ever he
 come back again who now is fled; these sons, so called,
 did nothing to save me, forced headlong from
 my native land in shame, but I was sent
 away from home by them, proclaimed a fugitive. 430
 You well might say that in those days the city gave
 this exile as a welcome, kindly gift to me.
 Not so; for on that self same day when my heart
 and soul did burn, although it was my dearest wish
 to die that day, be stoned to death, no man appeared
 to help me bring about that which I so desired;
 in time, however, when my sum of pain had eased
 and I began to realise my rage had in its urge
 to punish far outrun the crimes that I had done before,
 why then it was precisely that the city forced 440
 me from the land, belatedly indeed, and they,
 their father's sons, who could have aided me,
 refused to help and I for the lack of one brief word
 was driven out by them, exiled in everlasting penury;
 but it is from these innocent girls, in so far as nature will
 allow them, that I receive the means to live, protection in
 my wanderings about the land, the help that kin should give;
 the brothers rather chose to seize their father's throne,
 to wield his sceptred power and lord it over Thebes.
 So they will never gain this man as ally to their cause, 450
 nor will they ever gain a benefit from 'lording' it
 in Cadmus' town; this I know both when I hear
 the oracles this maiden brings and think on those
 long since articulated words Apollo has achieved for me.
 Therefore, I bid them dispatch Creon for to seek me out,
 or any one who has some power in the town of Thebes.
 For if, friends, you are willing, with the help of these

dread goddesses that are your fellow citizens, to give me aid, then you will win a saviour for your city, bring confusion and distress upon your enemies. 460

Ch. You and your daughters both, lord Oedipus, deserve our sympathy and so, and since your words declare you as a benefactor to this land, I wish to render you advice regarding your predicament.

Oe. My friend, I will abide by what you say in all respects.

Ch. Make cleansing offerings appropriate to these divinities into whose precinct you first came and trespassed here.

Oe. With what kind of rituals? Pray teach me, friends.

Ch. Bring sacred drinking water from a spring that does not fail, and bring it here in hands that are clean. 470

Oe. And when I have procured this virgin draught?

Ch. There are bowls, the work of a man well skilled in his craft, the rims and both handles of which you must adorn...

Oe. With branches or with offerings of wool, or something else?

Ch. With wool fresh shorn from a young she lamb.

Oe. So be it - and then to what last rite must I proceed?

Ch. You must face the dawn's first light and pour the offerings.

Oe. Am I to pour them from the jars of which you speak?

Ch. In three streams, yes; and empty the last completely out.

Oe. Tell me with what I should fill this before I set it down. 480

Ch. Mix water and honey, but add no wine to it.

Oe. And when the shaded ground has had its fill of these?

Ch. Place three times nine of olive sprays from both your hands upon the earth and make these prayers then.

Oe. I would be pleased to hear them. For they are critical.

Ch. Pray that these that we call the Kindly Ones, Eumenides, with kindness in their saviour hearts receive the suppliant, yes, pray for this yourself - or whosoever else prays in your stead, and pray beneath your breath, do not lift up your voice. Return then here without a second glance, and I will stand beside you as you sacrifice to give encouragement. 490

Oe. For otherwise I would feel fear for you, my friend.

Oe. My children, did you hear the strangers' words?

Ant. We did; so tell us now what we must do.

Oe. I cannot go myself. For I am left quite helpless on two evil counts - I am enfeebled and I can not see; One of you two must go and do this thing for me. For I believe it is enough for a single soul to pay this debt on the part of thousands, if that soul is well disposed; make haste, however, and do not leave me by myself. 500

My body does not have the strength to crawl

if left alone, without some helping hand.

Ism. I will go to fulfil this task, but I would like
to know where is this place I needs must find.

Ch. Over there, beyond this grove, my child. There is
an attendant there to give advice, should you require it.

Ism. Then I will go and do this thing and you, Antigone,
protect our father here; we must not take account
of toil, if toil we must upon our parents' part.

Ch. Dreadful it is to arouse the memory of crimes
str. long buried, friend, 511
but still I yearn to know...

Oe. Know what?

Ch. The agony that came and knew no cure
in which you were...involved.

Oe. By your friendship shown,
do not unlock the shame I felt.

Ch. The tale lives on and is widespread, my friend,
and I would learn the truth of it.

Oe. Oimoi!

Ch. Bear with me, I beg of you.

Oe. Pheu, pheu!

Ch. Indulge me, even as you have been by me indulged. 520

Oe. I have endured such misery, my friends, such misery,
ant. all unwilling and unwitting,
(god witness that) and nothing of my choice.

Ch. In what respect?

Oe. In my ignorance the city made for me an evil union
and shackled me to sin.

Ch. The rumour is that you have filled
your mother's bed, made it notorious?

Oe. O gods, these words are death for me to hear,
my friend, and my two daughters here... 530

Ch. Yes...

Oe. These children, damned...

Ch. O Zeus!

Oe. Sprang from the pain and womb that mothered me.

Ch. These then are both your daughters and..
str.

Oe. Yes, and sisters to their father too.

Ch. Oh, no!

Oe. The twists and turns of countless ills.

Ch. You suffered...
Oe. Dreads intolerable.
Ch. Your crimes...
Oe. No crimes!
Ch. No crimes?
Oe. I won
 a gift and now, distraught, I wish that I had not,
 nor served the city so. 540

Ch. Distraught and wretched too... Was it a father's...
ant.
Oe. What is that you still would know?
Ch. blood you spilled?
Oe. Again, a second blow
 of hurt on hurt you wreak!
Ch. You murdered...
Oe. Yes, I murdered him, but...
Ch. But what?
Oe. There was some justice on my side.
Ch. Justice?
Oe. I'll tell you how.
 The man I killed I killed in ignorance;
 Innocent in law and all unknowing I am come to this pass.

Ch. Here comes our master, Theseus the king,
 the son of Aegeus, answering our call. 550

Theseus

From many have I heard in time gone by
 of how you worked the bloody ruin of your sight,
 and further information had upon this road
 and so I know and recognise that you are Laius' son.
 Your rags and ruined face betray
 the fact to us of who you are and so I would
 in pity ask, unhappy Oedipus, what you
 would have of me and of my city here that brings
 you to this place, both you and your companion.
 Declare yourself. For you would have to tell 560
 a story terrible indeed for me to turn away from it.
 For I like you experienced an exile's life when still
 a child, and wrestled in that foreign land
 with fatal dangers, like no other man before or since.
 And so I would not turn away from giving help
 to any man who like you is suffering the exile's fate.

I know I am a man and that I have no surer share
than you in what tomorrow brings.

Oe. These few noble words have demonstrated, Theseus,
that I need feel no shame to answer briefly too. 570
You have identified correctly who I am
and who my father was and what my home;
So nothing else is left to me but this, to tell
you what I want and then my tale is told.

Th. Then tell just that, that I may know.

Oe. I am come to give my worn out corpse to you, a gift,
but not a pretty sight; and yet the benefits it brings
are greater far than beauty could alone bestow.

Th. What is the nature of this benefit you claim to bring?

Oe. In time you will discover that, not now. 580

Th. When will your kindness be revealed?

Oe. When I am dead and you provide a grave for me.

Th. Your sole request is for last rites, but what precedes
you count as nothing, have no care for it.

Oe. That sole request will guarantee the rest.

Th. This favour that you ask is limited in scope.

Oe. Consider though the struggle that it brings is great.

Th. You mean the war between your sons and me?

Oe. Those men will force my way from here to Thebes.

Th. But if you wish it so... this present exile is not good. 590

Oe. But when I did want Thebes, they would not have me there.

Th. To harbour grudges when one's out of luck is foolishness.

Oe. Restrain your good advice until you hear me through.

Th. Then teach me! For I must not speak in ignorance.

Oe. I have suffered grave indignities compounding wrong.

Th. You mean the ancient curse upon your race?

Oe. No, I do not - for that is common knowledge now.

Th. What sickness blights you more than other men?

Oe. This is my history: the very offspring of my loins, my sons
have driven me from my home and, as a parricide, it is 600
impossible that I should ever go back there again.

Th. How can they summon a fated exile back to them?

Oe. Apollo's oracle will force their hand.

Th. What is the fate they fear will come to pass?

Oe. Necessity will strike them down in Attica.

Th. And how should bitterness arise between your sons and me?

Oe. Dear son of Aegeus, only the gods are free
from the threat of age and death, while time
that rules all things confounds all things.
The land's strength dies, the body's strength decays, 610

trust is dead and mistrust comes to be,
and neither does that consistent spirit live
among the congregations of men and nation states.
For already now and in the time to come
men's pleasures bring them pain and pain reverts
to joy and if the sun shines brightly now on you
and Thebes, why, endless time gives birth
in time to endless days and nights in which
the spear will soon for trivialities disrupt
the pledge of present peace and harmony.

620

And on that day my corpse in death's
cold sleep will drink their hot blood spilt,
if Zeus is Zeus and Zeus' son Apollo true.
I have though no desire to speak of mysteries,
so let me stop where I began and simply keep
the promise which you made; and never will
you say that you were not well served to harbour
Oedipus, unless the gods shall play me false.

Ch. My lord, this man has given promise all along
of being one to work advantage for the land.

630

Th. What man would throw away the generosity
of such a one, with whom, as ally first of all,
our hearth is ever shared in mutuality?
He also comes as suppliant to our gods
and brings no little benefit to this land and me.
So, honouring his claim, I never shall reject
his gift, but rather settle him in the land as citizen.
And if it suits the stranger to settle here, I lay on you
the task of guarding him, or he may come with me.

I grant you, Oedipus, the chance to make your choice
and pleasure. I will fall in with what you wish.

640

Oe. Lord Zeus give rich reward to such as these.

Th. What is your choice? To come to my home?

Oe. If it were right for me... but this is the place...

Th. Where you must...what? I shall not hinder you.

Oe. Where I shall conquer those who threw me out.

Th. Rewards of victory for housing you would benefit indeed.

Oe. If you stay true to the promises you made.

Th. Fear not on my behalf. I'll not betray your trust.

Oe. I will not put you under oath like any common man.

650

Th. You'd win no greater guarantee than from my word alone.

Oe. What will you do?

Th. What causes you most dread?

Oe. Some men will come...

Th. Then these will look to that.
Oe. Be careful if you leave...
Th. Don't tell me what to do.
Oe. Fear presses me...
Th. No fear consumes my heart.
Oe. You do not know the threat.
Th. I know that none
will drive you from this place against my will.
Threats blurted out in rage are just so many
empty words and when the mind regains
composure, blusterings prove vain. As for these men, 660
it may well be that, though they found the hardihood
to speak harsh words concerning your return, the sea
will prove, I know, to be too wide and hard to cross.
For my part I urge confidence and not on my
say so alone, if Apollo was your escort here.
But still, without my presence here, I know my name
itself alone would keep you safe from any harm.

Ch. You have come, my stranger friend,
str. to the staunchest home in this dominion, rich
in horse - Colonus, blond of soil - wherein 670
the clear voiced nightingale
flutes constantly beneath
green groves,
her home the wine dark ivy and the god's
untrodden greenery, so rich
in grapes and shaded from the sun,
untouched by any storm
where Dionysus
ever keeps his reeling company
with nymphs divine. 680

ant. Beneath the heavenly dew
the clustering narcissus daily ever blooms,
of mighty goddesses time honoured
crown, and golden
flaring crocuses; nor do
the sleepless springs
of Cephisus run dry
that daily distribute her quick
and fertile stream across the plain,
a pristine flood 690
upon the land's broad breast;

nor do the Muses in their dance mislike this place,
 nor Aphrodite of the golden rein.
 And there is something here
str. unheard of in all Asia's lands,
 unheard of too throughout the Doric isle of Pelops,
 as ever being born,
 a plant indomitable, spontaneous its growth,
 a foreign army's dread,
 luxuriating best of all in Attic soil, 700
 the grey green olive branch that feeds our young;
 no man, nor youth nor any else that dwells with age,
 shall damage it with ravaging hand; the ever seeing
 eye of Zeus who guards
 the sacred trees looks over them,
 as does the grey eyed goddess Athena.
ant. Still further praise I have to tell
 of this our mother city, of a gift
 most potent from a god most potent in himself,
 a gift to glory in within the land, 710
 of horses fair and horses young, Poseidon's gift.
 Yes, son of Cronos, Lord Poseidon, you
 established Athens in this glory, contriving first
 in Attica the reins that guide, control
 the horse, invented too the well
 turned oar that fits the hand
 to leap amazingly
 across the sea, to trail
 the hundred footed Nereids.

Ant. Land granted warmest acclamation 720
 match now with deeds these shining words.
Oe. What new circumstance, my daughter?
Ant. Creon comes
 upon us, father, his retinue a company of guards.
Oe. My aged friends, the time has come
 for you to guarantee my safety now.
Ch. Be sure our promise stands; although I may be old,
 the strength of this our land has not decayed with age.

Creon
 Noble citizens of Attica - gentlemen - I see
 from your expressions that you have conceived
 some fearfulness at my arriving unexpectedly; 730
 do not, pray, shrink from me, nor speak harsh words.

For I am not come as one with any untoward
 designs, for I am old and know that I am come
 upon a city strong as any that exists in Greece.
 No, I am sent, despite my years, to convince
 this man to follow me back to Cadmus' land,
 sent not by any individual, but under orders from
 the citizens at large, because I, most of all of them,
 did grieve through kinship for his sufferings.

740

So, Oedipus, unhappy man, pay heed to me,
 come home. All Thebans summon you
 and justly so, but none more fervently than I,
 by that degree, unless I am by nature born
 the worst of men, that I feel pain at your distress,
 old man, on seeing you in exiled wretchedness,
 always the wanderer, in straitened circumstance,
 but one attendant, this daughter whom I thought
 could never fall to such a pitch of misery
 as these sorrowed depths she now has plumbed,
 poor child, forever looking to your needs

750

in blindness and in daily poverty, unwed, though of
 an age, and prey to any passing predatory man.
 And is not this a harsh reproach that I have harshly
 laid against myself and you and all our race?
 It is not possible out here to hide a patent shame
 and so, by our ancestral gods, obey me, Oedipus,
 and hide it by returning willingly to Thebes,
 and your father's house. Farewell this city here.
 She is deserving. Though, by rights, your home
 deserves respect, which was your nurse of old.

760

Oe. Is nothing then beyond your nerve that can produce
 a cunning plot devised from specious rhetoric?
 Why try this ploy again and wish once more to trap
 me, taken in those very toils that cause me greatest pain?
 In former days when I was sick with self inflicted ills,
 and when my dearest wish was but to flee
 the land, you then refused to gratify that wish,
 but came the time my passion all was spent
 and it were sweet to spend my life at home,
 why then you chose to thrust me out, refused

770

to take account of kinship then as something worth.
 And now again, on seeing Athens well
 disposed to me and all my family, you try
 to snatch me 'home', smooth talking villainy.
 Perverse the pleasure here, in pleasuring unwilling men!

A man might just as well refuse to gratify
 your eagerness or give you anything, but then,
 when all your heart's desire was satisfied, bring gifts,
 when favours bring no favour then at all!
 Would you not gain an empty pleasure then? 780
 And yet such are the benefits you bring to me,
 in theory fine gifts, but false in actuality.
 I'll speak to these and prove how false you are.
 You have come to take me away, but not to take
 me home, but set me down as neighbour so
 to keep your city free from threats from Attica.
 Yet this you may not have, but rather, yes,
 my ever living curse inhabiting the land
 while the only portion of my land my sons
 will win will be enough to bury them. 790
 Is not my care for Thebes superior to yours?
 By far and by as much in fact as my advisers are
 superior, Apollo and his father, Zeus himself.
 The words you bring are counterfeit and edged
 with steel, and yet these very words are like
 to bring disaster rather than salvation on your head.
 I know you cannot be persuaded though, so go!
 And leave us be to live in Attica; for even living as
 we are our life would not be bad, were we content.
 Cr. You think the damage I may suffer will outweigh 800
 the harm you do yourself by talking in this way?
 Oe. One thing alone is best for me: that you cannot
 inveigle me, nor influence our neighbours here.
 Cr. Ill-starred you are, whose native wit has not improved
 with time, who grows to be a shame to reverend age.
 Oe. You are clever with your tongue, but I know of no
 just man whose rhetoric is match for any theme.
 Cr. Much talk and talk's effectiveness are poles apart.
 Oe. As though your talk was brief and to the point.
 Cr. A mind like yours might well think thus. 810
 Oe. Oh, go away - for I will speak also for them -
 and set no guard to watch where I must live.
 Cr. I call these men to witness - not you - the words
 with which you answer kin...if ever I lay hold on you...
 Oe. And who would force me away from allies such as these?
 Cr. You will suffer grief enough without my touching you...
 Oe. What gives you confidence to make such boasts?
 Cr. Of your two daughters one I've just now seized
 and sent away and shall the other presently.

Oe. No, no! Cr. And soon you'll have more cause to weep! 820
 Cr. You have my child?
 Cr. And shortly this one too.
 Oe. My friends, what will you do? Will you betray
 my trust, or will you drive this villain from the land?
 Ch. Leave, stranger, now and quickly! Your actions past
 and present are unjust and criminal.
 Cr. Time now for you to drag her off.
 Unwilling or not, it makes no difference.
 An. No, no, no ... where, where to...? Can any god
 or mortal help me?
 Ch. Stranger, what...?
 Cr. I shall not touch this man, but only what is mine. 830
 Oe. Athenians!!
 Ch. This is rank injustice, stranger.
 Cr. No, justice!
 Ch. How is this just?
 Cr. I take my own!

Oe. Athens, Athens!
 str.
 Ch. What are you doing, stranger? Let her go! Do not provoke
 a test of strength.
 Cr. Stand clear!
 Ch. Not when you contemplate this crime!
 Cr. War with Thebes, should you lay hands on me!
 Oe. Did I not prophecy this fact?
 Ch. Release that girl
 immediately!
 Cr. No sanctions when you have no strength!
 Ch. I tell you, let her go!
 Cr. And I tell you to get you gone! 840
 Ch. Friends, fellow citizens, advance!
 My city is outraged in all its strength...
 Advance to help!!

An. They are dragging me away...friends, help me, friends.
 Oe. My child, where are you?
 An. Here, here forced to leave...
 Oe. Stretch out your hands, my child...
 An. I can't...no strength...
 Cr. Away with her!
 Oe. I am destroyed, destroyed...
 Cr. You never more shall walk with help of these

twin crutches! Now since you want to best
your native land and people - on whose authority, 850
as king, of course, I act in this - why, have
your way. In time you will, I think, begin to see
that you do yourself no favours here, nor did
you so before, indulging in your rage, despite
your friends' advice, that rage that ever did you harm.

Ch. Wait there, my friend!

Cr. I suggest you leave me be...

Ch. I will not let you go until you free these girls.

Cr. You soon will give to Thebes an even greater pledge
of good behaviour. I'll lay my hands on more than girls.

Ch. So, meaning what?

Cr. I'll seize and drag this man away. 860

Ch. A blasphemy...

Cr. And all too soon fulfilled.

Ch. Not if the ruler of this land gets in your way.

Oe. Have you no shame? Would you lay hands on me?

Cr. Be silent, I say!

Oe. I pray these goddesses to give
me voice to utter still my imprecation on your head,
you villain, who leave this place a violent thief,
who robbed me in my blindness of my child, my eyes.
So may the sun who watches all grant
you yourself and all your race the kind of life
to bring at last an old age such as mine. 870

Cr. Do you see this, people of the land?

Oe. They see us both and understand my injuries
are actual, but my defence can be but words.

Cr. I will not check my rage and though I am alone
and slowed by age I'll take that man by force.

Oe. Help me, please!

ant.

Ch. Fraught with arrogance, stranger, you have
come, if you intend to carry this through!

Cr. I do intend.

Ch. Then I shall no more believe in Athens.

Cr. In a just cause even the weak can overcome the strong. 880

Oe. Do you hear his words!

Ch. Yes, threats he won't fulfil, if Zeus
is sensible to this.

Cr. Oh, Zeus is far more sensible than you.

Ch. Is this not arrogance?

Cr. Arrogance perhaps, but yours to bear.
Ch. Help, citizens all, help, leaders of the land!
 Make haste, make haste! These men
 are making their escape.

Th. What are these shouts, and what is going on? What fear
 has prompted you to keep me from my sacrifice beside
 Poseidon's altar, lord of Colonus? You, tell me all! For I
 have had to run much faster than I'd choose to find this out! 890

Oe. O dearest of men - for yes I recognise your voice - just now...
 oh, I have suffered dreadful treatment at his hands.

Th. What kind of treatment? Tell me who has done you harm.
Oe. This man, Creon, whom you can see is leaving, snatched
 from me my daughters, both of them, and all I have.

Th. Your daughters?
Oe. Yes, you heard my injury.

Th. Go, quickly, one of you, go quickly as you can
 to the place of sacrifice and order all the people there,
 on foot and mounted too, to leave the sacrifice
 and speed their urgent flight near where the roads, 900
 twin highways come together, meet, to stop
 the passage of his daughters and save me from ridicule
 at this stranger's hands, as one outdone by force.
 Go quickly now on my command! And as for him,
 if I were to deal with him as angrily as he deserves,
 he would not leave this land of mine unscathed;
 But now he will be dealt with in accordance with
 those self same rules he brought with him himself.
 For you shall not depart this land until such time as you
 restore those girls and bring them back before my eyes. 910
 Your crimes are a source of shame and embarrassment
 both to me and to your countrymen and to your native land,
 in that you have come to Athens, a city that observes
 the rule of law and justice absolutely and yet set at nought
 her sovereign principles by this invasion and this rape,
 by seizing what you would and taking it by force;
 it seems to me you either thought my city was devoid
 of men or slavish in mentality, and I a man of no account.
 And yet it was not Thebes that schooled you in iniquity;
 for it is not the Theban way to nurture lawlessness, 920
 nor would the men of Thebes approve of your misdeeds,
 if they should learn that you had plundered what was mine,
 and what belonged to the gods, abducting helpless suppliants.
 Nor, should I set foot upon your land, would I snatch -

had I a case as just as any case could be - or take away
 one thing without the sanction of the ruler of your land,
 whoever he might be, since I would know just how
 a foreigner should act when living in a foreign land.
 But you have brought an undeserved disgrace
 upon your native Thebes, and time in its fullness will set 930
 you down as a man both old and quite bereft of sense.
 I have spoken once and will do so again:
 let someone bring the young girls here as fast
 as possible, unless you wish to share our hospitality,
 enforced against your will; these words I speak
 come spoken with the sanction of my heart and mind.
Ch. You see your situation, stranger? Your origins
 should show you just, did not your crimes prove otherwise.
Cr. Not because I thought this city cowardly, lord Theseus,
 nor lacking in good counsel, as you claim, did I do 940
 this thing, but in the knowledge and belief that your
 own folk could never be so moved by love for mine
 that they would wish to harbour them against my will.
 And furthermore I knew that you would never welcome
 here a man polluted by his patricide, convicted of
 unholy marriage ties with her that gave him birth.
 I also knew the native wisdom of the Areopagus
 was such that it would not allow such wanderers
 as these to take up residence within the state;
 this gave me confidence to undertake this chase. 950
 And even then I would not have done these things
 had he not hurled sharp curses both at me and mine.
 My response was justified as payment for these hurts.
 For anger grows not old, does not decay,
 can only die, while only the dead can feel no rage.
 And your response will take what shape you will;
 the fact I am alone reduces my effectiveness,
 whether or not my words are just. Yet weak though I
 may be, I'll try to combat you as best I can.
Oe. Such shameless arrogance! Who bears the stigma more, 960
 do you think, of your insults - me, old as I am, or you?
 Your lips have hurled the slurs of parricide
 and incest against me and all my fate, which I
 endured in misery perforce; for such was the will
 of the gods who were ever hostile to my race.
 You could not find in me, if taken by myself,
 a cause for insult based on real, objective guilt
 for any of the 'crimes' I did against my kin and me.

Instruct me, pray, how you might find just cause to hurl
 abuse at me, if some god spoken oracle had come
 to my father saying he should die at his son's hands, 970
 when I was not yet even born, had not been sired,
 nor even planted in my mother's womb?
 And had you been shown, as have I in my wretchedness,
 to have come to blows with your own father and killed
 him, unaware of what you did, though, and to whom,
 how could you properly condemn that involuntary act?
 Nor are you ashamed, you wretch, to make me speak
 about my mother and the match I made with her,
 your sister, as speak of it I shall; for I shall not be still, 980
 when you have emerged to talk with such impiety.
 Yes, she gave birth to me, yes, gave me birth, accursed
 as I am, but neither of us knew, and having borne
 me she bore sons by me to be a cause of shame.
 But this one thing I do know well, that you have willingly
 reviled both her and me in this, while all unwittingly
 I married her and do not wish to even speak of it...
 but even in this marriage people do not call me criminal,
 nor even in respect of that which you forever charge me with,
 my father's murder, bitterly taunting me with that. 990
 So answer me one single question that I ask.
 If some man attacked you now, yes, you, "just" man,
 with murderous intent, would you first ask if the would
 be murderer had fathered you, or punish him at once?
 No, I believe, as you love life, you would subdue
 the guilty one, and not look to justify yourself.
 Such were the exact circumstances that I met,
 when driven by the gods; and so I do not even think
 my father's spirit, did it live, would contradict my case.
 But then you are not just, but think it right to talk 1000
 of anything, what should be said and what should not,
 and to taunt me in this way before these men.
 You think it right to flatter Theseus' name, and Athens,
 how well regulated is the place, but while indulging
 in this flattery the fact escapes your notice that of all
 the city states this Athens knows the honours due
 to gods, excelling in their rituals, yet from this very place
 you would attempt to snatch this aged suppliant, try lay
 your hands on him, abduct his daughters and flee.
 Wherefore I now appeal as suppliant to these 1010
 dread goddesses and assail them with my pleas
 to come as allies to my aid that you may learn

by what manner of men this city is sustained.

Ch. The stranger is a noble man, my lord; his fate was truly terrible, but he deserves our help.

Th. Enough of talk! The perpetrators of this crime have fled, while we, the victims are stock still.

Cr. I am helpless in your hands. What should I do?

Th. Lead off in their direction with me to escort you that if you have those children hereabouts you can come to them yourself and show me them. But if your men have taken them and fled we need not be concerned. For others of our troops will make such haste they never will escape this land to gratify their gods. So, on your way! The biter has been bit and fate has trapped the hunter. Ill gotten gains cannot be kept - and you will have no other help in this, since I know well you did not come unarmed and ill prepared for such a daring and outrageous act. You had another trusted partner in this crime. I must look into this and not allow my city to seem far weaker than a single man. You understand my meaning then? Or perhaps you think the threat I pose is as empty as those made when you plotted this.

Cr. One must, of course, take seriously what you say in Athens, but at home I too will know my duty.

Th. Brag on but go now! Oedipus, remain secure, our guest in Attica, and be assured that I, unless I die before I shall leave no stone unturned until I return your children to your care.

Oe. Gods bless you, Theseus, for your nobility of heart and your kind care of us.

Ch. Would that I might see
str. the enemy forces wheel
and mix in bronze and clanging war
either by the Pythian shore or the torch
lit side of the sea,
where reverend goddesses establish rites
consecrated to the dead,
lips sealed in golden peace
by attendant priests;
I see there Theseus provoke the fight
and twin unmarried girls
surrounded soon

1020

1030

1040

1050

by battle cries opposed
 within the land.
 Perhaps their path

ant.

is westward on to Oia's rocks 1060
 and snow grassed heights
 on horseback or on chariots so rapid
 in their flight.
 His plans will fail! The men of Colonus are dread
 in war and dread is Theseus' might.
 The bridles glitter in the sun;
 loose reined the whole
 contingent headlong hurls
 in hot pursuit, the knights 1070
 who hold Athena high,
 horse goddess, and the sea born earthquake lord,
 loved son of Rhea.
 Is the action under way or close to hand?

str.

My premonition is
 I soon shall meet these
 daughters who have suffered so, have found
 ill treatment at a kinsman's hands.
 Lord Zeus will have it so, will have it so today.
 I prophecy our victory in the fight. 1080
 I wish I were a dove, storm swift and strong
 that I might command and gain
 a vantage point of cloud
 to cast my eye as witness
 of the battle that is formed.
 All seeing Zeus, lord of the gods

ant.

supreme, ensure
 the rulers of this land
 ensnare, with strength in victory,
 the prize for which they seek
 I pray to Pallas Athena too, the holy child of Zeus, 1090
 and Apollo the hunter to come,
 with his sister by his side, yes, Artemis
 whose quarry is the parti-coloured deer
 so swift of foot, twin source
 of aid to Athens and her citizens.
 My wandering friend, no need for you to claim
 my second sight is flawed; I see your daughters both,
 they are under escort and drawing nearer now.

Oe. Where, where? What did you say?
Ant. O father. father!
 I wish some god might grant that you could see 1100
 this best of men who has brought us here to you!
Oe. My child, you're really here?
Ant. Because these hands,
 yes, Theseus' hands have saved us and his faithful friends.
Oe. Approach your father, child, and let me hold the form
 that I despaired would ever come to my embrace again.
Ant. But ask and win! Your wish is matched by mine.
Oe. Where are you both?
Ant. Together we come to you.
Oe. My dearest ones.
Ant. A father always loves his own.
Oe. My sole support!
Ant. We shared in your unhappy fate.
Oe. I have what I love most and should I die, I now 1110
 would not be sorrowful with you, together, at my side.
 Cling close on either side, my darlings, hold
 your father close, be calm, our separation now
 is ended and your unhappy jeopardy is past.
 So tell me, quickly as you can, what happened;
 for modesty forbids young girls to talk at length.
Ant. This man did rescue us and so it is from him that you
 should hear his exploits, father... so, my brief task is done.
Oe. Do not be surprised, my friend, if I so earnestly extend 1120
 my greeting to my girls - restored against all hope.
 For I well know the joy I have in them
 is come from no other benefactor but you.
 For you it was and no man else that rescued them.
 So may the gods provide for you as I would wish,
 for you yourself and for your land, since all alone
 among your folk have I found piety of heart,
 fair-mindedness and men that tell no lies.
 My praise is conscious acknowledgement of this.
 I have that I have from you and from no mortal else.
 Stretch out your good right hand to me, my lord, 1130
 that I might touch it and, god willing, kiss your cheek.
 But what am I saying? How should a man, accursed as
 I am, dare to lay his hand on one who has no stain
 nor share of infamy? I would not wish it so,
 nor yet will I allow it. Only those experienced
 in my plight may share in comforting my grief.

Do you receive my welcome where you stand, and for the rest, remain as just as you have been to me today.

Th. I am not surprised that your delight in these
your children should provoke a lengthy salutation, 1140
nor that you should prefer their speech at first to mine.
There is absolutely nothing here to hurt my pride.
We do not exercise ourselves for noble reputation
based on words alone, but rather based on deeds.
My proof is this: on not one promise made to you,
old man, have I defaulted. These, your daughters, safe
and sound, untouched by their ordeal, I have returned
to you. And as to how their kidnapper was caught, why boast
in vain of that, when you will learn it anyway from these.
There is, however, a fresh report that I have chanced upon 1150
while hurrying here regarding which I would appreciate
advice - a minor tale perhaps, but surprising all the same.
A mortal man should not treat any thing as trivial.

Oe. What is it, child of Aegeus? Inform me, since
I am myself in ignorance of what you ask.

Th. They say a certain man, no countryman of yours,
but of your family, has hurled himself as suppliant
and taken up his place beside Poseidon's tomb, where I
was making sacrifice when I set out for here.

Oe. What is his land? And what the object of his plea? 1160

Th. I only know one thing; my people tell me that
he wants brief audience with you, a minor thing...

Oe. But why? One does not fall at altars seeking trivia.

Th. They say his sole request is to speak with you
and then depart in safety from this place.

Oe. Who can it be that would make such a plea to the god?

Th. Have you by chance a kinsman living in Argos who
might wish to gain some favour from your hand?

Oe. My friend, I beg you, stop...

Th. But why, what is it now?

Oe. I beg you, do not ask!

Th. Not ask for what? Speak, speak! 1170

Oe. From hearing what you say I know the suppliant.

Th. Who is this man to whom I might object?

Oe. It is my son, my lord, a villain, to hear whose words
would cause the sharpest pain to me of any man.

Th. But why? Can you not give a hearing but yet refuse
to act against your will? What harm in hearing him?

Oe. My lord, his voice has become his father's bane;
do not require me to yield as to necessity in this.

Th.	Consider his state and its necessities: perhaps your own devotion to the god must be conserved.	1180
Ant.	Though I am but a young girl, father, listen to me. Allow this man to gratify his wishes and grant whatever service to the god it is his will to grant; give way to us as well and let our brother come. Be sure he will not move you from your resolve by force of arguments that bode no good to you. What harm then in hearing him? His evil plots will be betrayed, discovered through his tone. You fathered him and so were he to do to you the foulest wrong a villain might commit, why you must not retaliate and match a wrong with wrong. No, let him come! For other men have evil sons and an impetuous heart, but still are mollified and change their mood when gently guided by their friends. Think not of now, consider rather what you have suffered at a father's and a mother's hand, and, if you do, I know that you will recognise the evil end that is an evil temper's lot. For you have ample evidence of this - in rage you once did ravage sight from eyes that see no more. Be ruled by us! It is not right nor fair that those whose cause is just should have to plead too long, nor that a man, whose plea was met, should refuse to pay his debt.	1190
Oe.	My child, your plea will win from me consent, but grudgingly; but let it be as you would wish it so. But, friend, should that young man come here, let no man ever be the master of my soul.	
Th.	I do not wish to hear such prayers more than once, old man. I have no wish to boast, but know your life is safe, so long as any god shall keep me safe.	1210
Ch. str.	Whoever wants to live beyond life's normal share of years, rejects that modest span, in my view he shall be patent in his guilt of courting phantom goods. Excessive length of days sets much in place of closer kin to pain, while joys shall find no place for witnessing, when life befalls a man beyond the limit due; eventually the self same helper comes, when Hades' fate is manifest,	1220

unhymned, undanced, unwed,
yes, Death delivers at the last.
Not to be born is far the best

ant.

scenario; but if a man appears,
next best to go as swiftly as he may
back down the path from whence he came.
For once his thoughtless youth
is spent and gone in idleness, what blows
of wretched fate are strange to him?
What grief is not his lot?
Spite, discord, strife, disputes
and deaths; then friendless and unloved old age,
abused and weak and separate,
obtains possession, age-old
participant in woe on woe.
Such this man's wretched fate he shares with me,

1230

ep.

like some north facing cape that from all sides,
surf struck, is lashed by winter's echoing surge,
just so the dreaded curse,
his fellow traveller, assails
his head with constant serried storm tossed blasts,
some from the setting of the sun,
some from the eastern dawn,
some from the noontide's rays,
some from shadowed northern hills.

1240

Ant.

I do believe the so called stranger is approaching us...
all unattended and alone and from his eyes stream
floods of tears to keep his journey company.

1250

Oe.

Who is the man?

Ant.

The man we always have in mind,
my father. Polyneices is the man who comes to us.

Polyneices

But what to do? Should I bemoan, my sisters, first
the ills afflicting me, or the sight of this old man's,
my father's tragedy? I find him in a foreign land,
with you alone to share his exile, dressed in foul
and squalid clothes that match his old man's age,
unhealthy on his flesh, while on his sightless head
the uncropped hair blows wildly in the wind;
as if as kin to these, it seems, he carries bits of food
with which to soothe his wretched hunger pangs.
I learn these things all far too late, wretch that I am.

1260

And I confess I am the worst of men in all that has
to do with care for you. Learn this from me alone.
But since Compassion shares the throne of Zeus in all
his works, then let her sit by your side, father, too.
There is a remedy for all the errors we have made,
but no way at all in which we can compound them. 1270
Why this silence?

Say something, father, do not turn away from me.
No answer then? You'd send me off dishonoured then,
without a word of explanation for your rage?
My sisters, offspring of this self-same sire, I beg
you, try to move to speech our father's heart
that is so hard to deal with, so implacably set, and pray
that he may not dismiss, disgrace me so - although I come
as suppliant to the god - without a word's response.

Ant. Reveal yourself what need and sorrow brings you here. 1280
Words freely flowing can themselves bring joy,
show rage, or even pity in a man and so provide
a voice for those who thought their voice was lost.

Pol. Then I will speak. For your advice is sound, Antigone;
I must at first enrol that god as ally to my cause from whose
shrine Theseus, Athens' lord, did send me out to come,
with conduct safe upon the road, to speak to you and hear.
And so I wish that I might gain from you my friends,
and from my sisters - and my father too - this privilege. 1290

I wish to tell you, father, why I came.
I have been driven as an exile from my native land,
because I did demand by right of primogeniture
my lawful place upon your seat of power.
It was for this your younger son, Eteokles, did drive
me from the land, although he had not won his case
in argument, nor come to test me hand to hand,
but yet he tricked the citizens. I declare the cause of these
events to be the curse that dogs your house;
such also I have heard from oracles divine. 1300

For when I came to Dorian Argos, there I took
to wife the daughter of Adrastus and, by oaths
administered, allied myself with all the men of Apia
renowned and honoured for their deeds in war,
so that by raising such a sevenfold force of spears against
the town of Thebes I might in just cause die, or throw
the men who did this thing out from the land.
And so - what is the reason for my visit here?
To bring my prayers to you, my father, mine

and those pleas of my allies too who even now 1310
 with seven spears in hand and seven hosts drawn up
 behind invest the plain of Thebes in its entirety:
 they number Amphiaraus, strong of spear, foremost
 in battle with the spear and foremost too in augury;
 the second is Aetolian Tydeus, Oeneus' son,
 and after him Eteokles, one born of Argive stock;
 the fourth, Hippomedon, his father Talaos
 did send; the fifth, Capaneus, proclaims in pride
 he will demolish Thebes and burn it to the ground;
 From Arcadia Parthenopaeus next makes haste to war, 1320
 his name is from his mother Atalanta, virgin once,
 but who in marriage later birthed her trusty son;
 and I, your son, or if not yours, the progeny born
 of evil fate and notorious at least as yours, I lead
 the fearless Argive force against the town of Thebes.
 And so we beg of you in concert, father, by the lives
 of these two girls and by your very life and soul,
 give up to me your heavy rage as I set out
 to seek a punishment for him, Eteocles, who drove
 me out and robbed me of my native land. 1330
 For if validity exists in oracles of gods, why then
 the strength is theirs with whom you take your place.
 Now by the springs and by the gods that share
 our race, I beg you, be persuaded, yield to me,
 for we are beggars both and exiles too alike;
 We find a roof, the both of us, by flattery of
 strangers, share the self same fate allotted us - but he,
 he swells at home in kingly pride and mocks us both.
 Him I shall, if you ally yourself with me and my 1340
 design, dismember in a minimum of time and toil.
 Then taking you to your own house I'll set you there,
 and set myself up too, when I have forced him out.
 With you at my side me I may yet boast these things,
 without you scarce the strength I have to save my life.
Ch. For Theseus' sake who sent this fellow here, lord Oedipus,
 consider what is best to say before dismissing him.
Oe. My friends and guardians of this land, were it not
 for the fact that Theseus himself had sent him here
 to me, and judged that he should hear my words, 1350
 he never would have gained this access to my voice.
 But now he has been honoured with this audience,
 he will hear such things as never shall make glad his life;
 you are the reprobate who, when you held the throne

and sceptre, that your brother now does wield in Thebes,
 did drive me, your own father, out yourself and made
 me stateless, made me dress in rags like these, the sight
 of which inspires your tears, when now you find yourself
 to be surrounded by a mass of troubles similar to mine.
 I have no tears shed, but rather now must bear my lot, 1360
 so long as I shall live, and think of you as murderer.
 For you it was that set my life within this misery,
 who drove me out; you caused my wanderings
 and make me beg my daily bread from foreigners.
 For if I had not got these girls to give me sustenance ,
 I would be dead for all the help I got from you.
 But now they keep me safe and tend my needs,
 and work for me like very men indeed, not girls,
 while you behave like someone else's sons, not mine.
 A god of vengeance looks upon you now, therefore, 1370
 but not as fiercely as he will should come the time
 your host shall march on Thebes. There is no way that you
 will storm that city. Rather, you will fall before the walls,
 bespattered with a brother's blood, as he with yours.
 Such are the curses that I loosed on you both before,
 and now I summon them again as allies to my side,
 that you may learn the worth of honouring your sire,
 learn not to hold me worthless just because the man
 who fathered you is blind. These girls did otherwise.
 And so your pleas and powers are subject to my curse, 1380
 if Justice, of the ancient voice, still sits and dwells
 with Zeus, according to the laws long since set down.
 So go then and be spat upon and be disowned by me,
 your father, for your utter criminality, and gather up
 my curses, called upon your head, proclaiming you
 shall never conquer Argos with the spear, nor yet
 return to live in the Argive vale, but rather die
 by a sibling hand and kill the kin who drove you out.
 Such then my curse, and I invoke the dread paternal dark
 of Tartaros to drive you from this place, whose guardian 1390
 deities I also have invoked, and on Ares shall I call
 who has instilled in you this dread and mutual hate.
 Hear this then and go, and as you go pronounce
 to all the men of Thebes - and to your trusty host
 as well - the kind of gifts and privilege
 that Oedipus has shared between his sons.
 Ch. I never yet took pleasure, Polyneices, in past journeyings
 of yours, and also now I bid you quickly go from here.

Pol. My journey then is wasted and my failure damns
my friends, and this is the fated climax to my quest 1400
from Argos, cursed and unlucky that I am.
An outcome such as this I cannot tell
to my companions, nor turn them back,
but I must keep my peace and meet my fate.
My sisters, you have heard our father's harsh
curse launched against me and so, by all the gods,
I beg you, if his imprecations are fulfilled,
and you somehow do make your way back home
to Thebes, do not you dishonour me, at least,
but place me in my tomb with proper burial rites. 1410
And then the praise you win from him for what
you've done for him, you'll win again no less
from me for services you render to my corpse.

Ant. I beg you, Polyneices, listen and consent to what I say.

Pol. Tell me what is it that you want, Antigone, my sweet.

Ant. Return your force to Argos with all speed;
do not bring destruction on yourself and Thebes.

Pol. It is not possible. For how could I take charge of these
same men again, when I had once shown fear?

Ant. But why must you be angry for a second time? 1420
What gain for you in laying waste your native land?

Pol. Exile brings shame and also being mocked,
although the elder, by the younger son.

Ant. You surely see how this will expedite our father's curse,
which shrieks that you will cause each other's death.

Pol. That is his wish, but I must not grow soft.

Ant. My family is cursed! And who will dare to follow you,
when once they learn the nature of your father's curse?

Pol. I shall not announce his ravings, since the careful general
should only tell what boosts morale, not shatters it. 1430

Ant. Your mind is quite made up then, Polyneices?

Pol. It is - and you must not seek to hold me back.
This ominous deadly path awaits me now,
carved out by father's vengeful and furious will.
As for you two, may Zeus reward you well, if dead
you render me the services forbidden in my life.
Now let me go, and fare you well. No more will you
look on my living face again.

Ant. No, no, no...

Pol. You must not grieve for me.

Ant. Who would not grieve
you, brother, headlong in flight to a death foretold? 1440

Pol. Needs must, so I shall die.
Ant. There is no need, I say.
Pol. You must not say there is no need.
Ant. Then I am lost...
berefth of you.

Pol. Whichever way these things turn out,
they all are in the hands of fate. And as for you,
I pray the gods you never come to any harm.
For every man agrees that you do not deserve to suffer ill.

Ch. I have heard this wanderer speak fresh
str. a. disasters fresh to come and heavy with doom -
unless by chance Fate fails to strike. 1450
But I cannot proclaim that any of the gods' decrees are vain.
For ever Time keeps watch on watch, destroying some,
but daily raising others up in turn.
The sky reverberates... lord Zeus!!

Oe. My children, children, send some one of these
to summon and to bring the noble Theseus to us.
Ant. What is it, father, that you want from him?
Oe. This winged thunder of lord Zeus will speed 1460
me down to Death - so send for him at once.

Ch. Behold, the blast of Zeus is crashing down,
unspeakable - the terror - Hair crawls
erect upon my head... the heart
thumps in my chest... the sky is all ablaze again with fire.
What issue from the flare? I am afraid. For never in vain
does the lightning flash, nor yet without calamity. 1470
Great Heaven, lord Zeus!!

Oe. My children, there comes upon this man the end of life
as prophesied, from which there can be no escape.
Ant. How can you now? What proof have you of this?
Oe. I know! But quickly as you can let someone go
and bring to me the ruler of this land.

Ch. Again, again, the thunderclap surrounds us,
ear-piercing the blast. 1480
Have mercy, lord, have mercy should it be your wish
to bring untold disaster on our mother earth.
Lord Zeus, be merciful to us and do not, pray, condemn us with
a joyless recompense for looking kindly on this cursed man.
Lord Zeus, hear my cry!

Oe. Is Theseus near, my children, will he find
me still, alive, my mind intact?

Ant. What is the promise that you fixed in mind?

Oe. In payment for his kindness granted me,
I would make good the pledge I promised him. 1490

Ch. Come, come, my son, come to us from the sacrifice,
the sacrificial altar that is the Lord Poseidon's,
the sacred hearth within
the inmost reaches of the grove, yes, come!
The stranger thinks both you, our city and your friendly citizens
well worth the payment of just recompense for services received.
Make haste, my Lord!

Th. What is the reason for this summons ringing loud, 1500
both clearly from the stranger and my citizens alike?
Is Zeus's thunderbolt the cause, or the hail storm blast
that dashes down? For when the sky divine is in
a rage then all such things are possible.

Oe. My lord, your coming is most eagerly desired.
Some god has made this coming fortunate for you.

Th. What is this further new event, Lord Oedipus?

Oe. The crisis of my life - and I would wish to die,
and keep my faith towards your city and to you.

Th. What are the present symptoms of your fate? 1510

Oe. The very gods themselves announce my fate to me,
and keep their faith with all the signs foretold.

Th. What are these signs, old man? Reveal them.

Oe. Unbroken thundering peals and flash on flash
of lightning, hurled from Zeus' indomitable hand.

Th. I am convinced. For I see that of your many prophecies
not one is false. So tell me what it is that I must do.

Oe. I will reveal to you those gifts that neither time nor age
can spoil, which you shall lay in store to benefit your city.
I shall myself at once and with no guiding hand 1520
direct you to the place where I must die.
Do not betray the secret of this place where it is hid,
nor yet the ground wherein it lies to any mortal man,
so that this place will make for you a bastion worth
many shields, worth more than a host of allied spears.
There are, however, mysteries that words may not reveal,
which you will learn when unaccompanied you visit there.
And these I cannot tell to any of your citizens, nor yet

to my daughters here, despite my love for them. 1530
 So keep the secret safe and when you come
 to the end of life, reveal it only to your closest heir,
 then let him teach his too, and so on in perpetuity.
 Thus you will keep this town of Athens safe
 from Theban warriors. Ten thousand cities take offence
 at trivialities, although well one governs them.
 The overview of the gods is keen, but slow to act,
 should a man run mad and neglect the rites divine.
 Be sure you never suffer such a fate, Lord Theseus -
 but I am teaching one who is well versed in government.
 Let us now make haste to the place itself, since the word 1540
 of god is pressing me, and let us not be turned aside again.
 My children, follow on - for I am now transformed
 to be your new found guide as once you guided me.
 So forward now and do not touch my hand, but let
 me hunt out my sacred resting place unaided where
 it is my lot to be concealed within the earth.
 This way, then, come with me! For this is the way
 that Hermes, guide of souls, and Death are leading me.
 Sun's light, no light to me, though once you were,
 now grace my body with your farewell touch. 1550
 For now I creep to this last chapter of my life,
 to hide myself in Hades' house - and you, most kind
 of stranger friends, and your land and descendants, blessed
 for ever be, and when good fortune smiles on you, think then
 of me and of my death that brought you lasting benefit.
 If it is right for me to honour the unseen goddess
 and also you with my prayers,
 dread lord of the dead,
 Aidoneus, Aidoneus, I beg of you 1560
 let the stranger's descent
 to death's enclosing plain
 and Stygian home below
 be free from pain and heavy grief.
 For many and undeserved were the ills
 that came on him before for which
 some just god should restore him.
 Earth Goddesses, and you their dread,
 strong bodied hound that rests and guards
 the hospitable gates and snarls 1570

Ch.
str.

ant.

from the caves of Hell,
unconquerable watchdog
of myth everlasting,
I call on you and on the son
of Earth, yes, Death himself, allow
clear passage for this stranger
down below to the plains of death;
I call on you that grants the sleep of death.

Messenger

Friends, fellow citizens, my message is
in essence briefly told: lord Oedipus is gone. 1580
But as to what occurred, the tale of that is neither brief
to tell, nor were the things that happened brief themselves.

Ch. Then poor Oedipus is dead?

Me. Be well assured
that Oedipus has left this lengthy life at last.

Ch. And did the gods grant him a painless death?

Me. Now there's a thing that one can justly wonder at.
For as to how he crept away from here, with none of his kin
to guide him, you were eye witnesses yourselves
and know how he was guide himself to all of us;
but when he reached that steep and broken cleft, 1590
where steps of bronze lead down to the root of earth,
he stopped at one of the many branching paths -
close by the hollow in the rock where ever stands the stone
that Theseus set to mark his pledge to Peirithous;
he stood mid way between the stone of Thoricus
and the hollow pear, between the tree and the tomb
of marble, and there he sat and shed his grimy robe.

He called aloud to his daughters then and bade them bring
spring water with which to wash and pour an offering;
so they made their way to a nearby hill - it was sacred 1600
to Demeter, goddess of green and tender growth,
and quickly carried out their father's wish and washed
and dressed him in the right and proper way.

When Chthonian Zeus was satisfied that Oedipus
had done all that he was enjoined to do and that no
wish else was unfulfilled, he thundered and they,
the daughters froze in fear on hearing this and fell
before their father's knees, burst into tears and beat
their breasts, gave vent to lengthy cries of fear.
And when he heard their sharp and sudden screams, 1610
he folded them in his arms' embrace and said,

"My children, on this day your father is no more.
 For everything that is of me is dead. No more
 will you have the tiresome task of looking after me.
 No easy task, I know, but one brief word transforms
 those hardships every one and makes them null.
 For such a love you had from me as you could have
 from no man else, but you shall lose me now
 and live through the rest of your days bereft."
 All wrapped in each other's arms they wept, 1620
 exchanging sorrows such as these. And when
 they came to the end of weeping, and their sobs
 were heard no more and silence fell, a sudden voice
 bayed out to him, so that in dread their scalps
 began to crawl and raise the hairs upon their necks.
 For the god called out aloud to him repeatedly,
 "You, Oedipus, yes, Oedipus, why do we hesitate
 to leave? This business is delayed by you too long."
 And when he heard that he was summoned by the god,
 he asked that Theseus approach, king of the land. 1630
 And when he came he said, "Dear man, I beg
 you, give your hand to my daughters in solemn trust,
 and do you children do the same to him. You must
 not ever willingly forsake these children, Theseus,
 and always be disposed to do the best you can for them."
 And Theseus immediately, the natural gentleman,
 with no demur, pledged he would this for his friend.
 When Theseus had made his promise, Oedipus
 placed blind hands upon his children and said,
 "My children, you must now be true to your brave 1640
 and noble hearts and leave this place and do not think
 to look upon that which you must not, nor hear it.
 Away with you as quickly as you can, for only Theseus,
 the king, may stay to learn what shall be done.
 All who were present there together heard
 his words and joined in weeping with the girls
 and followed them away. No sooner had we left
 than, turning round, we looked back and saw
 no further sign of Oedipus, while the king
 had placed his hands before his face as if to shield 1650
 his eyes, as if some dreadful vision had appeared
 that had proved impossible for him to look upon.
 After but a little while we saw him greet
 in single prayer and at one time his native earth
 and Olympus, home of the gods.

But of the final fate of Oedipus himself,
 no mortal man can tell but Theseus.
 For it was no fire-breathing thunderbolt
 of god removed him at that time,
 nor any storm arising from the sea, 1660
 but it was some god escorted him, or earth's
 deep base in kindness gaped painlessly for him.
 No cries of grief accompanied the man, nor pains
 from sickness sent him on his way - his death,
 miraculous... Perhaps you think my words run mad?
 But if you think that that is so, so be it.

Ch. Where are his daughters and the men who went with them?
Me. They are close by. Their cries of grief
 betray that they are drawing near.

Ant. Now we sad sisters both must grieve and grieve again, 1670
 utterly, utterly for the curse of our birth
str. and blood that afflicted our father.
 For him we bore
 the long labour so long stretching before us.
 And at the last must report on a vision,
 a vision of fate past all explanation.

Ch. What was this event?
Ant. We only can guess, my dear friends.
Ch. He is gone then? **Ant.** As best one could choose for him.
 For neither did Ares, nor tempests
 at sea overwhelm him, 1680
 but the blind plains of death
 snatched and carried him off all unseen.
 And the darkness of night
 has befallen our eyes in our grief.
 What far flung land,
 as we roam, or what sea
 will provide us with life's
 hard won means?

Is. I do not know, but wish 1690
 that Death would kill and pull
 me wretched down to meet
 my aged father; for meaningless
 my life left to live.

Ch. Most noble of children,
 two daughters, one must bear
 for the best what god wills, no need

to flush with an excess of tears.
No reproach can attach to your path.

Ant. So one can feel bereaved of sorrows even past and gone.
ant.

What was in no way dear in fact was dear indeed,
when in my arms I held him fast embraced.
My father, my friend, 1700
you have dressed in earth's cloak of perpetual dark;
you shall never want for our love
even there.

Ch. His fate...

Ant. His fate is as he had wished.

Ch. How was that?

Ant. He died as a guest in the land
he desired and has made his place
of rest beneath the friendly shadows here,
while we who remain shed the tears.
For my eye, fluttered up, father, groans
weeping and I to my sorrow 1710
know not how to lighten
this burden of grief.
I grieve at your wish
to die in strange lands, so you died
unadorned by my hands.

Is. Ah, wretch that I am, what fate
yet awaits you and me, my dear sister,
now bereft of our father?

Ch. No, since his end has been accomplished well, 1720
cease from grief, my dear ones.
All men fall swift prey to ill luck.

Ant. Dear sister, we must hurry back...

Is. To do what?

str.

Ant. Nostalgia seizes me...

Is. For what? Please tell.

Ant. To look once more upon our native hearth...

Is. On whose?

Ant. Our father's, wretch that I am...

Is. Can that be lawful? Can you
not see for yourself?

Ant. But why this reproach? 1730

Is. And also see...

Ant. Yes, see what else?
Is. He chose to die untombed apart from all.
Ant. Then take me there and kill me too!
Is. How then shall I keep a hold
on life, deserted and destitute,
poor wretch that I am?

Ch. Dear children, have no fear.
Ant. But where shall we fly?
ant.
Ch. But you have found a haven here...
Ant. Where, Where?
Ch. as has your fate, that will come to no harm. 1740
Ant. I know...
Ch. What is it then that troubles you?
Ant. I do not have the means to bring
us safely home.
Ch. Do not then seek to go.
Ant. It is all so hard...
Ch. And ever was before.
Ant. I was helpless then and am even more so now.
Ch. Yours has been an ocean of grief.
Ant. But where, oh where shall we go, Lord Zeus?
Is there any last hope to which
our fate is driving us still? 1750

Th. My children, cease your weeping. For when the grace
of the nightdark powers is granted us, we must not grieve
ungratefully, or else swift nemesis will come.
Ant. Lord Theseus, Aegeus' son, we beg of you...
Th. What is it that you want from me, my child?
Ant. We simply wish...
to look ourselves upon our father's tomb.
Th. But it is not lawful to go to that place.
Ant. How can you say such things to us, my lord?
Th. Your father himself forbade me ever to come 1760
again to that place or ever to tell any man else
of that holy site which he has as his grave.
He said that if my word was kept that I
would also keep safe my land evermore.
And the gods of the land did witness my word,
and Zeus's immortal Watcher of Oaths.
Ant. If this is in accord with his last wish,
then let it be so, and send us on our way

to ancient Thebes that we may stop
the coming bloody strife between
our sibling kin.

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- Th.** This will I do and all else that I can
to help you on your way and benefit him
with a kindness, who now is newly dead
and buried here. For that is my bounden duty.
- Ch.** Come , cease now from your lament
and lift it up no more.
For all is now as god wills.