

# **CRY FURY**

**by Edward Mast**

**a new play  
freely adapted from Aeschylus' *Oresteia***

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## **characters**

### **in part one:**

Watchman  
Clytemnestra  
Chorus of the people of Atreus  
Soldier  
Agamemnon  
Cassandra  
Aegisthus

### **in part two:**

Pylades  
Orestes  
Electra  
Attendant  
Chorus of the people of Atreus  
Clytemnestra  
Aegisthus

### **in part three:**

Orestes  
Apollo  
Chorus of Furies  
Athena  
Jury of twelve people

## **setting**

The palace of Atreus in kingdom of Argos; and a temple of Athena near Athens.

## **notes**

The choruses refer to themselves freely as both "I" and "we". This does not necessarily indicate moments of single or choral voice. Let the distribution of solo and unison develop from the imperatives of performance.

CRY FURY can be performed with large cast as sung or spoken spectacle, or as a spoken oratorio by as few as four actors, with all performing as Chorus and stepping out to perform their named roles. With that small cast, doubling will be extreme, as it was in the time of Aeschylus. Instead of relying on masks, however, this format will rely on the dialogue to label the character.

WATCHMAN

The constellations always change.  
Dynasties of stars rising and falling  
each night, each season, each hundred years.  
Pry your eyes open all night long  
and watch them every night of the year,  
you'll see. They're never quite the same.  
Too slow and too vast for tiny humans.  
You have to watch them forever to figure  
their plan.  
It's not forever for me yet. Feels like it.  
I pray the gods to give me some rest  
but they don't listen. I sit like a dog  
on this palace roof, afraid of sleeping  
and missing the signal the queen's waiting for.  
Troy must still be standing. Ten years.  
Our river's fallen and risen ten times  
since the wind blew, and the wind stopped blowing,  
then started again and all our young men  
sailed off to settle a quarrel with Troy.  
Supposed to be easy, but ten long years.  
Can't even whistle a tune to keep me  
awake, cuz then my eyes fill up  
and only sad songs seem right these days.  
I learn the lights of the night sky,  
all but the only one I want,  
and my eyes grow blind from looking.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Look again.

WATCHMAN

Queen Clytemnestra.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Look there.

WATCHMAN

What is it?

CLYTEMNESTRA

The beacon light.

WATCHMAN

I'm sorry, Your Highness. I must have drifted --

CLYTEMNESTRA

Don't be afraid. You only see  
with normal eyes. You were only here  
in case Mother Night failed to change color  
at the first glimmer from far away.  
Mother Night woke me the moment she sent  
this new bright sun with its news. She knew  
I wanted to be the first to see it.

WATCHMAN

Is it the signal? Has Troy been taken?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Yes. Good news comes with the dawn.

WATCHMAN

It's hard to believe after all this time.  
It's like some vision in a dream.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Dreams tell lies. But this is true.  
You don't see them all, but I do.  
The god of fire from peak to peak,  
from Troy to Mount Ida, then west to Lemnos,  
then Hermes Point, then Mount Atheos,  
then arching across the ocean's back,  
to the cliffs of Makisto, and the watchmen there,  
never sleeping, like you, send the flameword  
on to Aulis, that little island  
where the wind stopped blowing then blew again,  
then cross the plain of Asopos like the moon  
to the peak of Kithairos, to Gorgon Lake,  
across the rock of Goat Run Mountain  
to sentinels at the Saronic Gulf  
who lit a bonfire bigger than ordered  
and sent the message around the gulf  
like a beard of flame, westward to Argos,  
and now the roof of this Palace of Atreus,  
the final child of a distant flame,  
fire outrun by fire, proof  
still hot from the burning ruins of Troy

WATCHMAN

It's true then. The good news is true.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Troy is in the hands of the Greeks.  
Good news, yes, good news, good news.  
The city's full of shouts and cries.  
Right now Trojans are gathering dead,  
wailing and sobbing, children screaming

and clutching at dead parents' bodies, all of them soon to be slaves. And our Greeks are roaring with hunger, bellowing, ravenous, grabbing whatever goods and food and plunder the town has left. First get, first got. They better be careful, and remember to honor the gods of the place they've taken. Or else they might find themselves ransacked after all. They better hold back their blasphemous greed and leave the temples unplundered. They still have to make their way back home and even if local gods aren't offended the avenging dead don't sleep.

WATCHMAN

Don't fret, Highness. You're a queen and we know you'll worry until your man comes home. But Agamemnon will come home safe. You'll see.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I'll see. That's true. I'll see. Until then I speak for those alone who understand. For those who don't I have spoken not a word. Your task is done here, soldier. Dismissed.

WATCHMAN

Yes Majesty. And thank you, if I may. Will you come to the river with all of your people and celebrate?

CLYTEMNESTRA

You go ahead. Bathe in the River Solemnos with everyone else in the city. I will celebrate in my private way.

WATCHMAN

Oh let it be true. Let the fire not lie. Let my king come home with his victory. Maybe I'll get to shake his hand.

CHORUS

Ten years passed. Ten years lost. Can the queen be correct? Is it over? We have purified in the River Solemnos and made ourselves ready for revelation. She's only a woman but the fires don't lie. Ten years gone forever since the two twin sons of Atreus, Agamemnon and Menelaus, set their thousand ships to sea and the wind stopped blowing, then blew again,

and all those young men set off for Troy  
 to retrieve the wife of Menelaus  
 who'd run away. Or was kidnapped by Paris.  
 Who really knows? Who ever will know?  
 All we know is the god of war  
 is a moneychanger in the bodies of men.  
 We send our sons and brothers off  
 and all we get in return are vessels  
 elegantly packed with ashes and dust.  
 Brave he was, strong, some will say.  
 The inscription will say He gave his life.  
 And some will say For another man's wife.  
 Who will come back? Mine, I hope.  
 Yours I hope too. And yours. And yours.  
 What if the message is false?  
 We've heard them say it's over before.  
 We're not foolish children  
 to leap on little rumors  
 and be crushed when the truth comes out.  
 Let's hope it's true. Let's hope.  
 This lack of knowing is horrible.  
 I'd rather lose and have it over.  
 Nonsense. Don't say that.  
 Only winning makes it worthwhile.  
 If we lose or give up now,  
 what was all the dying for?  
 Yes that's true. But if we win,  
 what was all the dying for?

Zeus of many names.  
 Zeus beyond our knowing.  
 You set down the truth  
 that wisdom comes through suffering.  
 We are wise against our will  
 in the difficult grace of god.  
 Cry sorrow but let the good prevail.  
 Cry sorrow but let the good prevail.

#### SOLDIER

Cry sorrow but let the good prevail.  
 Argos. Home.  
 So many shipwrecked hopes, all  
 but one: me here and alive on my homeland.  
 Ten years hoping. Zeus, thank you.  
 The palace of Atreus is standing, I see,  
 ready for the king.

#### CHORUS

Is it true? Is he coming?

#### SOLDIER

Yes, he's landed, Agamemnon,  
 the man who struck down Troy with the hammer  
 of Zeus. Like light in the dark he's returning,

the oldest son of Atreus, the king  
is coming home.

CHORUS

It's true then. Good news!  
We've won the war! Welcome, messenger.  
Welcome back from your glorious task.

SOLDIER

Glorious? No. A grim time we had.  
Quarters cramped on leaky boats,  
rations thin and blankets threadbare,  
huddled there under enemy walls  
damp from the ground, damp from the air,  
clothes rotting off and crawling with lice.  
In winter the wind blew cold from the snow,  
I swear that birds fell frozen from the sky.  
And the summer heat flattened the sea  
and sent no breath of a breeze to cool us.  
It's done with now, for living and dead.  
The king has taken Troy, the dead  
are at peace, we can hope.

CHORUS

We can hope.  
Has Menelaus come home to Sparta?

SOLDIER

No one knows. Menelaus hit storm at sea.

CHORUS

That's no good news.

SOLDIER

Don't be worried.  
If any man can make it through,  
that man will be Menelaus, you'll see.  
Zeus has not destroyed the line  
of Atreus, not yet anyway. Your king  
has landed on solid ground. He's coming.  
Cry sorrow but sometimes the good prevails.  
I've come through alive as well. I'm home.

CHORUS

You were homesick all those years?

SOLDIER

Broken with it, heartstripped with it.

CHORUS

Argos missed you too.

SOLDIER

You missed us?

## CHORUS

More than we can say. We needed  
an army here.

## SOLDIER

No one threatened you,  
did they? The princes were all in Troy  
with us. Who was left to fear?

## CLYTEMNESTRA

There's no fear now that you're home, soldier.  
Welcome and celebration is all.  
You who called me a foolish woman  
for trusting in beacons and torches:  
are you persuaded?

## CHORUS

Yes my queen.  
Your signal system brought the truth.  
This man confirms it. He brings home tales  
of all that happened.

## CLYTEMNESTRA

We won't need to hear  
the gruesome details from this poor man.  
My lord the King Agamemnon is coming  
and he will bring the story in full.  
I'm busy preparing his welcome.  
What joy is more sweet for a little woman  
than spreading the gates to receive her husband  
by the grace of god home from war?  
Soldier, take Agamemnon this message:  
Come soon, come quickly, your nation desires you.  
Come bathe your wounds in the River Solemnos.  
Your wife awaits you as loyal and loving  
as on that day when the wind blew again  
and you left her behind those long ten years.

## SOLDIER

A becoming message, my Queen.

## CHORUS

The queen has spoken the careful truth  
for those with ears to hear it.  
Agamemnon, king, come soon.  
This victory brings us joy, but still  
it's hard to hold in the mind, it fades,  
victory is fragile. Come soon, come soon  
and make us believe it. Victory saves us.  
Victory weighs the balance of all  
the sacrifices we had to make.  
Be true, Victory, come home, be true,  
the wind stopped blowing, it started again,  
all the doubters were wrong, victory,



come home soon, we are the victory,  
 come be with us so we may be with you  
 at Troy, victory make us young,  
 make us strong, we are with you,  
 come home, come home, King Agamemnon.  
 King Agamemnon. Smasher of cities.  
 Welcome King Agamemnon.  
 Welcome King Agamemnon.

#### AGAMEMNON

Argos is still here. That's good.  
 The gods have brought me to my true home.  
 The gods cast their ballots in the urn  
 of blood and decided that Troy should fall.  
 The Furies are awake and lapping up blood  
 but the River Solemnos will silence their noise  
 and I look forward to rest and quiet.  
 For years I have dreamed of just this moment.  
 People of Argos. People of Greece.  
 Troy was the last of cities that stood  
 as a threat. We have struggled and conquered and won.  
 No city is left to bring us war.  
 War after war, but over now.  
 The long journey by all of you  
 that began long ago and ended  
 with ten years' slaughter and sacrifice  
 at Troy has come to an end at last.  
 We are safe. We have peace. Peace forever.  
 We'll set up assemblies at once with all  
 our major citizens here in Argos.  
 Whatever is working well will continue.  
 Whatever is not, we'll apply the skills  
 of a gentle surgeon of state to remove.  
 Right now I will go inside my palace  
 and greet the many gods with offerings  
 for giving the prize of conquest to Argos  
 and bringing me safe to my home again.  
 May the gift of victory stay with our city  
 for all time.

#### CLYTEMNESTRA

Even with the gift of victory  
 sorrows die slowly.  
 It is easy to forget, but I have remembered.  
 A woman alone is invaded by rumors,  
 each one worse than the last. I tell you  
 if my husband suffered every wound  
 those nasty stories would have me believe  
 he'd have to be full of holes as a net.  
 Hardest of all to believe was that he  
 would ever come home; and beyond belief  
 it's true. Your son is not here to greet you.  
 In my fear from all those tales of death  
 I sent him away, little Orestes.

If you fell in battle I wanted him safe  
 from vultures at home who might take advantage  
 of your absence. He's with your close relative  
 Strophios who lives near Apollo's oracle  
 at Delphi. I beg your pardon my lord,  
 but I think it was best. As for myself,  
 your coming has only delivered me  
 from miserable thoughts and visions. My dreams  
 were full to bursting with visions of stabs  
 and gashes all done to you. My husband.  
 But my heart is free of this suffering now.  
 Watchdog of Argos, pillar of this house,  
 landfall glimpsed at last beyond hope,  
 my lord and husband, step down from your chariot.  
 Let not that conquering foot touch dirt.  
 We've decked the ground with crimson fabric.  
 Let a stream of god's own color lead you  
 into the house you never had hope  
 to see. Let Justice lead you in.  
 Everything else I will arrange  
 as fate and your honor require.

AGAMEMNON

Daughter of Leda, queen and keeper  
 of my house and home, your speech of welcome  
 was like my absence: too long.  
 I don't need women kneeling on the ground.  
 I'm not some Asiatic despot.  
 A footpath of scarlet tapestry is fit  
 for the gods and the gods alone. Not me.  
 Pay me respect as a man, nothing else.  
 This excess ceremony sounds presumptuous  
 and that's how rumor will take it.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I hope  
 you won't be stubborn.

AGAMEMNON

I hope I won't  
 disappoint you, but my will is my own in this matter.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Tell me this: if Priam the king of Troy  
 were standing here victorious now,  
 what do you think he'd do?

AGAMEMNON

He would step  
 on your crimson carpet.

CLYTEMNESTRA

There, you see?  
 Why be afraid of what people will murmur?

AGAMEMNON

Even in murmur the people's voice  
has power.

CLYTEMNESTRA

They envy because you're great.  
Step down.

AGAMEMNON

Why so strong an urge to win?  
Does this little victory mean so much?

CLYTEMNESTRA

A conqueror may yield without disgrace.  
You have the power, my lord. Give in.  
It's only a carpet. We can replace it.  
Look at the sea. Who will drain  
the sea? Filled with scarlet dye  
costly as silver, an ocean of crimson  
to color the fabric of a thousand carpets  
and a special robe for your bath. We're blessed  
in this country by the grace of god,  
poverty is unknown here. But even  
if we were poor, I'd have sent our robes  
to be trampled, each one, if the oracle asked  
in payment for your life. When the root still lives,  
the leaves return and bring their shade.  
You have returned, you bring us shade  
in summer. The master is here at last  
and now we have warmth in winter as well.

AGAMEMNON

Well then. If you will have your way.  
Someone come here, unfasten these sandals.  
If I set foot on this wealthy cloth,  
let no jealous eye look down from heaven.  
There. It's done. I ask in return  
that you take special care of this young woman.  
She's not like the other women we've brought.  
This is Cassandra, daughter of Priam.  
She was a gift from my army. She is  
the chosen flower of all Troy's wealth.  
Treat her with kindness if you will.  
Here now, Clytemnestra, you've won.  
I'll follow your crimson path to the house.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Zeus. You gods. Everything lies  
in your will. You bring what I pray to pass.

CHORUS

May it be so, my queen.

## CLYTEMNESTRA

Cassandra. Welcome. Daughter of Priam.  
 My husband's companion. Come in the house.  
 Zeus in his wisdom has willed that you  
 will share the holy water of our home  
 with all the other servants. Come now.  
 Don't be proud. We're all servants  
 in our way, as long as we're women.  
 Be thankful you're slave in an ancient house,  
 not some newly rich vulgarians.  
 We know how to care for our property here.

## CHORUS

She's speaking to you. Can't you hear?  
 You'd better obey her. If you can.

## CLYTEMNESTRA

I'm speaking clearly enough, unless  
 she only speaks some swallow's twitter  
 from Asia. Cassandra: I ask you  
 once again. Please come in.

## CHORUS

You better go with her. Step out of the wagon  
 and go.

## CLYTEMNESTRA

I have better use for my time  
 than chattering here with some birdtongue woman.  
 The sacrifice is ready inside.  
 Come in the house. Now. Do you hear?  
 Can you make some sort of sign with your hand?

## CHORUS

She needs an interpreter is all. She sits  
 like an animal caged.

## CLYTEMNESTRA

She's no animal.  
 She's just gone mad with brooding. She comes  
 from a captured city and won't be tamed  
 till the bit draws blood in her mouth. That's enough.  
 I won't stand wasting words on contempt.

## CHORUS

We're not angry, child. We have pity.  
 Come on now, step out. You have to, you know.  
 The yoke is new to your neck, but still --

## CASSANDRA

wwwwww

## CHORUS

She's speaking. What is she saying?

CASSANDRA

wwwwwwhyyy  
thiiss  
house

CHORUS

This is the House of Atreus.

CASSANDRA

aaaaaa  
pooooo  
loooo

CHORUS

Why is she calling Apollo?

CASSANDRA

whyyyy  
bring meee heeeeere

CHORUS

They say she's a prophet. Can you hear me?  
You've come to the House of Atreus.

CASSANDRA

houuuuse of blood  
floor  
covered with blood  
city of blood  
torture butchery blood  
from children kindred blood

CHORUS

She's mad with scent like a hound.

CASSANDRA

the gods hate this city  
babies are crying  
out  
stop  
children eaten by father

CHORUS

That's enough from you.  
We don't need prophets here.

CASSANDRA

some new plan now  
atrociteee  
this house already filled  
horrors

## CHORUS

What?  
Does she know some secret?

## CASSANDRA

husband a baaath in bright water  
one hand grips then next and next

## CHORUS

Nothing but riddles. I'm lost.

## CASSANDRA

a net to capture death  
noooo  
a net the trap  
the woman who shares his bed  
the bed has been shared

## CHORUS

Make her stop. I'm scared.

## CASSANDRA

keep the bull from his mate  
her black horns tangle his robe  
she gores him through his blood  
blackens the water red

## CHORUS

Prophets always bring evil.  
Tricky thickets of words  
to make men tremble.  
Some god is raging inside you.

## CASSANDRA

inside me  
the wedding of death for paris and helen  
the ruin of all we loved  
oh my city crushed and devoured  
all for nothing  
me too i  
will be crushed and trampled  
in my own steaming blood

## CHORUS

Some demon is pressing your voice to his service.  
He wants some death song. I don't know why.

## CASSANDRA

you argos people  
you listen now  
my words no more hide and peep  
like bride behind some veil  
no riddles now  
you listen and you believe

how prophecy sniffs out ancient evil  
 that haunts this house  
 a chorus of demons up there on your roof  
 they cackle a song of rage and spite  
 on the man whose bed was spoiled by his brother  
 and drove his brother out  
 do i hit the mark or shoot wide

CHORUS

Atreus.  
 Agamemnon's father.

CASSANDRA

atreus yes that name that unclean stain  
 you see i know some truth by now  
 children though you see them there  
 no no you don't see them  
 you don't see them but i do  
 shadows meant just for me  
 sitting in front of your palace young children  
 slaughtered by those most dear to them hands  
 filled with meat of their own poor flesh  
 holding their own vitals their meat  
 that was served to their own poor father

CHORUS

Thyestes.  
 Brother of Atreus.

CASSANDRA

thyestes that name  
 children killed and served by his brother  
 atreus brother  
 you know me now bear witness i charge you  
 i see the ancient crimes of this house  
 apollo gave me this gift

CHORUS

Apollo? Why?

CASSANDRA

lust of course  
 in payment he pinned me down and breathed  
 his hot god breath in my mouth

CHORUS

Were there children?

CASSANDRA

i promised him so  
 but i lied

## CHORUS

You cheated a god? Did he punish you?

## CASSANDRA

punish  
to see the future that no one ever  
believes that is my punish

## CHORUS

You've told us things that seem to be true.

## CASSANDRA

in the past but now in the present i tell you  
i see an avenger return to this house  
a brother to all those dismembered children  
his name is his name is i don't know his name  
a clawless lion lolling in bed  
with his kingwife mistress waiting his time  
to spring his coward trap on the king  
who smashed my city who made me slave  
look how the dogwife licks his hand  
cry death you daring woman  
smile your smile now before  
you bring down war on your murderous husband  
now how well you believe what i say  
you don't believe me you don't but you will

## CHORUS

About Thyestes. And Atreus serving him  
feast of his children's flesh. We heard  
some rumor. But the rest. We don't know.

## CASSANDRA

i say you will see agamemenon dead

## CHORUS

Be quiet! You'll bring down a curse.

## CASSANDRA

no curse will bring it no god will stop it

## CHORUS

May the gods forbid such things.

## CASSANDRA

you pray while the murderers set their plan

## CHORUS

Murderers? Who?

## CASSANDRA

you do not hear so much as a word



CHORUS

What murders? Who are the murderers?

CASSANDRA

i speak your greek more well than i like  
but you will not act no matter my words

CHORUS

Oracles always speak Greek  
but still they confuse us.

CASSANDRA

aaaaaaa ooooo  
what more  
what more  
the wind

CHORUS

What about the wind?

CASSANDRA

the wind stopped blowing

CHORUS

Then started again.  
That's right.

CASSANDRA

what was her name

CHORUS

Whose name?

CASSANDRA

what was her name

CHORUS

Whose name? What are you asking?

CASSANDRA

you know you know this much you know  
the wind stopped blowing and then the wind  
blew again and your ships were able  
to sail and come destroy my city  
the wind blew again  
what was her name

CHORUS

Iphigenia.

CASSANDRA

iphigenia that name  
agamemnon his daughter

## CHORUS

What could he do?  
 The wind stopped blowing.  
 The ships couldn't sail.  
 They sat there useless  
 while food ran low  
 and men got sick.  
 The flower of Greece  
 sat wasting in Aulis  
 puking and sullen  
 letting hull  
 and cable rot.

## CASSANDRA

artemis goddess sent the sign  
 sacrifice the daughter you love  
 or the wind sits still forever

## CHORUS

What could he do?  
 Necessity's yoke  
 clamped on his neck.

## CASSANDRA

iphigenia that girl that name  
 she had sung to them all  
 in her girl's voice  
 am i right  
 and they watched  
 as priest did blood work  
 lifted the girl like a sacred goat  
 and took his knife  
 they watched  
 and agamemnon watched

## CHORUS

The wind had stopped  
 But when it was done  
 this terrible thing  
 the prophets were right.  
 and the wind blew again.  
 The ships could sail.  
 We won the war.  
 What else could he do?

## CASSANDRA

iphigenia

## CHORUS

No prophet here.  
 We know this already.

## CASSANDRA

but

What? CHORUS  
 others CASSANDRA  
 No. CHORUS  
 more names CASSANDRA  
 What names? CHORUS  
 cleodora CASSANDRA  
 berenisa  
 merope  
 evadne  
 Who is she naming? CHORUS  
 castalia CASSANDRA  
 deidamia  
 eurybea  
 anaxibia  
 polyxo  
 alcippe  
 What are those names? CHORUS  
 what god called for this CASSANDRA  
 She's babbling now. CHORUS  
 Just frightened words.  
 dryope CASSANDRA  
 phyllia  
 oh you all of you how  
 stand and watch  
 how  
 oh may your river give you comfort  
 you children of argos all you you  
 all of you  
 oooo the reek of blood from this place

## CHORUS

The girl's gone crazy.

## CASSANDRA

like an open grave  
 like an open grave  
 i will not see this  
 apollo your gift is nothing but curse  
 this robe these flowers nothing but pain  
 i will not see this I will not wear  
 the badges of god apollo apollo  
 your robe your garland in the dirt there  
 your prophet cast you aside as you  
 cast her aside long back  
 all years you watch me wearing your glory  
 all men mocking and laughing and i  
 stood under it all in the name of you  
 no more i am nothing now  
 but one more sheep led in to slaughter  
 for all that i am no prophet i know  
 that my death and his death too will not  
 go unavenged one will come  
 who is born to bring the death-makers death  
 how should i weep for this people  
 they spilled a river of blood from my home  
 let judgement find them in turn  
 when vengeance comes  
 let strike in revenge  
 for me as well  
 one poor slave  
 a small thing  
 simply killed

enough life now  
 i call on the sun  
 one last time  
 by your light grant me  
 release from this place  
 only the stench  
 holds me back  
 not the dying  
 for dying i'm ready  
 oh you poor race of humans  
 clinging to darkness  
 blind to fortune  
 blind to sorrow  
 a sponge can blot you away  
 your joy and your grief  
 i am sad oh sad for them both

## CHORUS

What can the mad girl possibly have meant?  
 Crazy girl trying to spoil our triumph.  
 Was she even speaking our language?

Bird babble, raving, meaningless words.  
 Berenisa. Cleope. Cleodora  
 Be quiet!  
 Don't repeat her frothymouth chatter.  
 Our king's been blessed. That's certain.  
 The gods allowed him the glory  
 of conquering Priam's city.  
 He came home covered with honor.  
 The gods won't ask our king  
 to pay for blood of the past  
 with his own blood now. If they do  
 then who can ever believe  
 he's safe from the darkest fates?

VOICE

Death! Murder! I'm cut apart!

CHORUS

The king!  
 His voice!  
 Is it his voice?  
 Don't hesitate!  
 Ring the alarm!

TWO VOICES

Aaaaaaaa!

CHORUS

Agamemnon's voice  
 And Cassandra, that girl's voice too!  
 It's done! It's too late!  
 What should we do!  
 Take action!  
 Break in now!  
 We have to be certain.  
 Someone decide what's best.  
 We're wasting time!  
 First be certain.  
 Find out what happened  
 to Agamemnon . . . .  
 Agamemnon  
 and the girl Cassandra . . .  
 dead?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Words and words I have said and said,  
 I will say and unsay them all now.  
 Years and years and years I have planned  
 to pierce the boil of this festering wrong.  
 I stand where I struck the blow. It is done  
 and nothing will make me deny it.  
 I knitted the crimson robe  
 that caught him like a net.  
 He squirmed like a haul of fish.

I struck him once and he screamed,  
 I struck him again and he fell  
 and then to make all proper I gave him  
 one last blow as a prayer to Hades  
 the Zeus of the Underworld.  
 He dropped and vomited out his life  
 in a spew of red drops that spattered my dress  
 like dew in springtime, like welcome rain  
 that showers the new-planted earth and lets  
 the buds strike up.  
 Here are the bodies.  
 Rejoice or not as you please.  
 In their blood they lie below me now.  
 This glory is mine for all time.  
 Perhaps we should pour some libation for the dead.  
 He filled our cup with horrors enough  
 and now he has drunk it himself.

CHORUS

We're taken aback by your tongue.  
 The king your husband is dead  
 and you stand over him gloating?

CLYTEMNESTRA

You're not addressing some witless girl.  
 Do you think your scolding can scare me?  
 My heart is steel to your fury.  
 Here lies Agamemnon the tyrant.  
 He's dead and mine was the true right hand  
 that brought him the death he deserved.

CHORUS

What poisonous plant or cancerous salt  
 from the sea have you eaten to drive you mad?  
 Who will shelter you now?  
 You cast off the life of your king  
 and your country will cast you off.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Oh you will banish me now, will you?  
 Where was your justice when this man lying here  
 gave up my daughter Iphigenia  
 with no more thought than killing a beast?  
 Iphigenia was the pain of my womb  
 grown up into love. He set her on the block  
 like one of his sheep to buy some wind  
 for his fleet of murdering ships.  
 Where was your verdict then?  
 Judge me now, if you think you can.  
 Get your stones and clubs prepared  
 and we will see who's stronger in the end.

CHORUS

The smear of red across your eyes

has made you blind to your pride, your mind  
is choked with this murder that makes you clamor  
so loudly. Judgement or not, you'll pay.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Judgement or not, he has paid.  
By the death of my child, by the justice due,  
by the goddess and gods of wrath and fury  
in honor of whom I killed this tyrant,  
I swear this act was nothing but just.  
Here before me the murderer lies,  
the darling of all the golden damsels  
of Troy. And here his all-seeing mistress,  
Cassandra his prophet, his faithful mate  
to the last. She sang her death like a swan  
and now together in their eternity  
the couple who brought such pleasure to my bed.

CHORUS

You killed your husband  
and his mistress too.  
How will you honor him?  
Where will you find the tears?

CLYTEMNESTRA

The hands that killed him will bury him too.  
There's a river of tears below the earth.  
Maybe he'll meet his daughter there.  
Maybe she'll hug him welcome.

CHORUS

Terrible yes,  
one daughter gone.  
You have another,  
a living daughter,  
but now you will have no more.

CLYTEMNESTRA

My living daughter Electra would have been  
next. Like all the other daughters.

CHORUS

What others?  
What daughters?  
What insanity now?

CLYTEMNESTRA

You sad people, drunk on your river.  
How can you so forget? Even I  
remember the names, each one.  
You: your daughter Cleomyne.  
You: your daughter Pelopea.  
You: Evadne.  
You: Melanthe.

## CHORUS

What are those names?  
 What is she saying?  
 She's babbling now.  
 What is she trying to say?

## CLYTEMNESTRA

Dorcas, Polyxo, Phyllia, Berenisa.  
 Your daughters, you mind-stolen creatures.  
 Your river has done its job well,  
 your river with headwaters under the world.  
 One of your daughters for each new war.  
 Iphigenia my firstborn girl  
 was not the first. One for each conquest.  
 Agamemnon the tyrant was afraid  
 and he found some oracle to tell him his triumph  
 relied on the sacred gift of a girl  
 each time to the gods, each country he conquered,  
 Mycenae, Peloponessus, Argos,  
 many others and now Troy.  
 Each new war, one of your daughters,  
 new spilled blood, and then troop down  
 to the River Solemnos to bathe and forget.  
 Who created that ceremony, tell me?  
 The river here was one time called  
 Inakos, but Agamemnon your hero  
 asked some god to name it Solemnos  
 and give it the power to make his people  
 forget. He was on his way there when I killed him.  
 He wanted to clean his memory of his daughter  
 and all your daughters. You mindless corpses.

## CHORUS

This can't be so.  
 She's making this up.  
 A ridiculous story!  
 Cleodora. Berenisa.  
 Shut up! Stop saying those names!

## CLYTEMNESTRA

But I refused, I took no water  
 from the River Solemnos. I brought in water  
 from another spring, and I kept the memory  
 of Iphigenia and Berenisa  
 and yours, and yours, and yours, and yours,  
 each girl taken in their turn,  
 some brave and quiet,  
 some shocked and trembling,  
 some screaming with rage,  
 some whimpering and begging for help,  
 begging their mommies and daddies to save them,  
 couldn't believe we'd do that to them  
 but we could and we did.



We watched and clucked and bathed and forgot,  
 we scrubbed our memories clean and lived  
 and allowed it again and only hoped  
 it wouldn't be ours, not yours, not yours,  
 not mine, not mine, only not mine,  
 but then it was mine, my girl, my first girl,  
 and no river water would wash it away,  
 my little girl that I cared and cuddled,  
 my Iphigenia, my little girl,  
 I couldn't stop them, nothing I could do,  
 watching all those other girls murdered  
 had sucked away all my strength.  
 I couldn't save her but she was the last.  
 No more. His terror regime is over.  
 You remember now. You remember.

CHORUS

Some Fury, some crimson demon sits  
 perching above this bitter house.  
 Some demon comes from Zeus on high.

CLYTEMNESTRA

The spirit held my hand in his hand,  
 the demon of Argos, bringing revenge  
 for generations of children.

CHORUS

Some evil demon guiding your knife  
 but you were the hand, you were the mind  
 that brought this vengeance to life.

CLYTEMNESTRA

This husband stole my daughter and yours.  
 Let him hold his peace in the house of death.  
 He killed and killed and the sword has repaid.

CHORUS

Daughters, daughters,  
 what daughters? What daughters?  
 Cleomyne. Phyllia.  
 Lying, lying,  
 she's making up lies.  
 Berenisa. Melantha.  
 Lying, lying,  
 no such thing here,  
 no daughters, lying!  
 Evadne. Pelopea.  
 Lying! Lying!  
 The queen of lying!  
 The queen of lying!  
 Don't let her twist our minds!

CLYTEMNESTRA

You refuse to remember, you idiot fools.

You would rather deny your children than remember  
 what you did, and did again, and again.  
 This dead Trojan boyprize Cassandra  
 understood better than any of you.

CHORUS

We will not let this stand!  
 We will not let this stand!  
 Our king has been killed by a woman!

CLYTEMNESTRA

Aegisthus! Come now! Aegisthus! Aegisthus!

AEGISTHUS

I'm here. Everything's put in place.  
 Agamemnon's personal guard  
 has been put to rest, right beside him.  
 Welcome me home, people of Atreus.  
 My name is Aegisthus. I am the son  
 of Thyestes. My uncle Atreus your king  
 cut open my brothers' throats and then  
 mashed them in stew to feed to my father.  
 Atreus did that. Agamemnon's father.  
 And after his stomach-twisting crime  
 he and your fathers drove us out,  
 all the people of Thyestes into exile  
 or staying as servants and handmaids and slaves.  
 You forget where your slaves are from  
 but your slaves remember, your slaves are not  
 allowed to bathe in your river of forgetting.  
 That's why Agamemnon was afraid.  
 He knew we'd be back. He was right.  
 And his stupid war on Troy made it happen.  
 Thank you Helen. Thanks, Agamemnon,  
 and your hunger for conquest. Argos is ours.  
 The people of Thyestes have returned at last  
 from our scattered exile and scrubbing latrines  
 and your slaves are now your masters.  
 The reign of Atreus the usurper is over.  
 This is the Palace of Thyestes now.

CHORUS

You are the usurper!  
 Murderer! Thief!  
 Thyestes ate his own children!

AEGISTHUS

You ate your children. You gave them up  
 for wealth and fine food and spices and jewels.  
 from Thrace and Syros and Naxos and Troy.  
 You killed your children for wars to keep rich.  
 Your dead king Agamemnon took  
 our children first, the children of slaves,  
 and not one of you Atreus people complained,

it was only the children of slaves after all.  
 And then it finally turned to your daughter  
 but by then you had the habit of fear,  
 the addiction to your river of oblivion and cowardice.  
 We hope you enjoyed your long sleep. It's over.  
 Now you're awake and now it's too late.  
 Thyestes and his children are avenged. We  
 have come back in triumph to our ancestral homeland  
 and never again will we be slaves.  
 Never again. Never again.  
 My name is Aegisthus. I'm king here now  
 with my queen Clytemnestra. Any objections?

CHORUS

We never will serve you.

AEGISTHUS

You serve me now.  
 In fact you may thank me if you wish:  
 no more little girls will die  
 to bring good wind for warships. You're welcome.

CHORUS

Agamemnon.  
 Agamemnon.  
 He was our king.  
 He was killed by a woman.  
 The Palace of Atreus.  
 Agamemnon

CLYTEMNESTRA

They will not remember. They insist on forgetting.

AEGISTHUS

Let them. Let them bathe in their river.  
 This palace is ours now. We will set things in order.  
 Let them forget.

**end part one**

PYLADES

Orestes. Be careful. They watch everywhere.  
We're safe here a short time only.

ORESTES

Pylades. Is that my father's grave?

PYLADES

Once each year they open the gate  
in the wall that surrounds the palace now.  
Sometimes she comes out. Sometimes not.

ORESTES

Anyone else?

PYLADES

Sometimes a few.

ORESTES

No one at all today. Why not?

PYLADES

Those who come to pay respects  
usually find themselves in trouble  
later on. Thus the grave  
is honored, and thus the grave is used  
to enforce forgetting, all at once.  
Most choose the river instead.

ORESTES

What if everyone came together?

PYLADES

Under the reign of Thyestes' son  
the people of Atreus are not allowed  
to assemble in public in large groups.  
The people of Atreus are not allowed  
inside that wall around the palace,  
where Thyestes' people mostly stay.

ORESTES

What if she doesn't come?

PYLADES

Find another way.  
Or wait another year.

ORESTES

Will she help us?

PYLADES

Nobody knows.  
She's kept in the palace. Servant or princess,  
we don't know. Always well dressed.  
If she comes, you go by yourself. No spectacle.

ORESTES

Who's watching?

PYLADES

Those guards on the wall. Always.

ORESTES

Eight years. Will she recognize me?

PYLADES

You are the hope of this house and this city.  
Bring her the truth. Make her know you.  
Look. She's coming. This is the day.  
Succeed. You must. We will be waiting.

ELECTRA

What shall I say to you under the ground?  
Do you hear? Do you have some spirit with ears?  
Or are you just a terrible thought  
for those still walking the earth?  
Mother had a terrible dream. She gave birth  
to a serpent. She gave it her breast to suck  
but the serpent sucked blood along with the milk.  
She sent me here with libation for you.  
Did you send that dream? Do the dead send dreams?  
Do the dead still nurse their angers from life?  
Do you think you can change my mother with a dream?  
Do you think you can wipe the stains away  
with dreams? You're mistaken. They only make her  
fearful and spiteful and then she creates  
fear in others. Aegisthus also.  
He does the same. That's how we live.  
Are you spiteful too? Is that why you  
create fear in the living? How awful to be dead  
and still have desires but have no power.  
Just to send dreams, like angry letters.  
Powerlessness. Powerlessness.  
Maybe you should sleep instead.  
Sleep is best. Sleep brings comfort.  
Anger is only a habit. Of the living.  
Sleep. Be dead in the underworld.  
Let us pour this wine on your grave.  
Drink this libation. All for you.  
Rest. And let the living rest.

ORESTES

Electra.

ELECTRA

Someone still knows my name.  
You come to pay respect to the grave  
or just for me?

ORESTES

For you.

ELECTRA

Yes I see. Your clothing is shabby.  
I'm sorry for you. I can help.  
My name Electra might as well mean  
some little occasional help for those  
like you.  
Mostly that's what people come for,  
when they come. Not the grave.  
Maybe I'll stop coming. But still  
I can help you at least. We have plenty.

ORESTES

Thank you. Princess. But.

ELECTRA

But what?

ORESTES

Nothing.

ELECTRA

What? Go ahead. Say.

ORESTES

What about others?

ELECTRA

Who?

ORESTES

All the rest.

ELECTRA

All are welcome.

ORESTES

They can't come here.

ELECTRA

Who can't come?

ORESTES

Those who were driven out to make room  
 for the conquerers here. All those who live  
 outside that wall, away from the palace.  
 Unwanted here or anywhere else.  
 You won't know about them, Princess.  
 Some of them work growing barley and olives.  
 They harvest their crops to be sent off and eaten  
 at palace tables they'll never come near.  
 They live on the edges of distant cities  
 with scraps and charity for food. Or else  
 they live where no one else will live.  
 Wasteland places where all the trees  
 have been levelled for lumber or fire  
 and nothing grows but sand.  
 I travelled here through the places they live,  
 their wilderness prisons outside of walls.  
 Homes of sticks they've twined together  
 against the wind. They can't come here.  
 I'll take you to them if you like. I'll show you.

ELECTRA

I don't know who you are or what  
 you want. Yes. Whatever you like.  
 Bring them all. We'll clothe them all.  
 And feed them too. That will be fine.  
 They can eat those special olives from Thessaly  
 and barley we get from fields near Corinth  
 or from the island of Crete. Oil  
 from Samothrace, much the best  
 for flavor or keeping your skin alive.  
 Though the oil from Antioch has its proponents  
 and the Jaffa oil is rich as well.  
 Almonds from Jebus and Antioch also.  
 Perfumes from Knossos and Lydia and Rhodes.  
 Woven cloth from the women of Phrygia.  
 Silk from beyond Babylon. All this  
 from him there under the ground, and now  
 from King Aegisthus, it comes every day,  
 more than we need. They surround me with it,  
 I throw away food, I throw away clothes  
 to make room for more, enough for all,  
 or not, I don't know. Nobody knows.  
 It comes, we use, and more comes then.  
 Come to the palace and let me dress you  
 and you can go back among your fellows  
 with gifts and robes and baskets of figs  
 and tell them you're king of Argos,  
 whatever you like, whatever they like.

ORESTES

I don't want your clothes.

ELECTRA

Do you not.

ORESTES

No. I keep this one garment to wear.

ELECTRA

Is it some kind of badge?

ORESTES

My sister made it.  
 She embroidered all these little beasts.  
 If you'd look at me for a moment you'd see.  
 This leopard here. We'd never seen one.  
 And this running deer. She made the color  
 to match my hair.

ELECTRA

Your hair.

ORESTES

Yes.  
 We used to play a game of jumping.

ELECTRA

A game of jumping.

ORESTES

One time I almost  
 knocked her down but jumped aside  
 instead. I fell and cut my forehead.  
 It was bad and she took such care of me, my sister.  
 She was only a tiny girl, we were  
 so young. But she brought me cloth and water  
 and held my head and stayed with me  
 as if we two were the only two  
 left alive in the world.  
 I still have a scar. On my forehead. Right here.  
 Do you see it?

ELECTRA

What was her name?

ORESTES

My sister.

ELECTRA

Yes.

ORESTES

Electra.



ELECTRA

What is your name?

ORESTES

You say. You say.  
Electra. Say my name.

ELECTRA

Orestes.

ORESTES

Yes.

ELECTRA

Am I dead?

ORESTES

No.  
You're alive on earth with your brother.

ELECTRA

Orestes.

ORESTES

Look away now. Make no sound.  
Stay here kneeling side by side.  
The guards on the wall are watching.  
Speak softly when you speak. Electra.

ELECTRA

Orestes. Have you come punish me at last?

ORESTES

Punish you? No. Punish you for what?

ELECTRA

For being alive. For allowing myself  
to live in this life, in this palace, with them.

ORESTES

I haven't come to punish you.

ELECTRA

I was helpless. There's nothing I could do.  
You were dead, as far as I knew.  
I was alone. They buried me here  
with silk and fig sweets and wine.  
I tried to remember but they made me drink,  
they pinned my arms and made me bathe  
in Solemnos, over and over again,  
how I tried to remember, how the river made me  
forget.

## ORESTES

I don't believe in that river.

## ELECTRA

Do you not? Oh try it. They used to have guards  
by day and night. For me. No more.  
I'm choked with clothing and jewels. No threat.  
Why do they keep me alive? I don't know.

## ORESTES

Electra. I was asleep as well.  
I only woke up when Apollo spoke  
and told me I had to come to Argos  
and set this right. Our cousin Pylades  
showed me the way. He came from Argos  
but lived in exile. He showed me our people,  
the people of Atreus, scattered in despair.  
I came through their barren places to you.  
Some came with me. They are waiting. Ready.

## ELECTRA

I live each day in betrayal and cowardice.  
Helpless and weak. Waiting always  
for a dream of my brother to come from the grave.  
My brother Orestes. My one true family.  
You are my father, you are my mother,  
not her, not her that I hate, you  
are my sister, the one they killed.  
You are my life and my waking day.  
You are all of my loves in the world.  
What else did Apollo tell you to do?

## ORESTES

Death for death, his oracle told me.  
Avenge the dead or face the Furies  
with eyes of pus and hair of snake.  
Do not leave Argos to languish under  
the tyrant fist. Avenge your father.

## ELECTRA

Apollo tried to tell me too.  
But I was unable to listen.

## ORESTES

Electra. Help us get inside that wall.  
Remember who you are and help us.  
You and I are the hope of Atreus  
and all his people. Help us, Electra.  
Help us get inside that wall.

## ELECTRA

Father. Father in the grave.  
I'm ready to listen to you now.  
Help us take this kingdom back.

Remember the net they trapped you in.  
 Mother Earth, let him arise.  
 Queen of the Dead, let him arise.  
 There is no cure  
 for this bloodsoaked house  
 but the cure of blood.  
 My heart is the heart  
 of a wolf. It came  
 from my mother. We children  
 are savages born  
 of a savage mother.  
 And I was kenneled  
 like some mad dog  
 with teeth pulled out.  
 Blood for blood,  
 death for death.  
 Orestes. Orestes. Orestes! Orestes!

GUARD

Is there some problem. Princess?

ELECTRA

No. Thank you, guards and attendants.  
 Take this stranger to the queen my mother.  
 He comes from the land of Phocis.  
 My mother will want to see him He brings  
 news of Orestes. My brother. Come stranger.  
 Queen Clytemnestra, who is my mother  
 will want to hear your news right away.

CHORUS

Are we allowed to walk the streets?  
 The watchers haven't rung the bell.  
 They will.  
 Past time.  
 Why should today be different?  
 Maybe the market is open.  
 Don't go.  
 They might be holding it back on purpose.  
 Then they'll ring it and catch you outside.  
 Better make do with what you have.  
 It's more than our cousins have  
 outside the city, not allowed back.  
 Inside that wall they have more than they need.  
 The people of Aegisthus. The people of Thyestes.  
 Inside that wall they have more than they need.  
 Outside here, the children of Atreus,  
 all we can do is hear them singing.  
 When will the Furies rise?  
 I saw Electra dancing.  
 What was she wearing?  
 Silk brocade.  
 When will the Furies rise?  
 Electra belongs to them now.

She's not one of us. We have no leader.  
 Murdered and scattered and driven to exile.  
 All but those of us who remain  
 as slaves.  
 They killed another this morning.  
 Why?  
 They don't need reason. Maybe only  
 for us to notice. And cower. And remember.  
 When will the Furies rise?  
 When will the ground rise up?  
 When will the Furies appear?  
 For Agamemnon, killed with an axe.  
 For young Orestes, lost or dead.  
 For Electra's soul no more.  
 Shh. Whisper.  
 When will the gods remember?  
 When will the rage of the Underworld  
 break the crust of the ground we walk?  
 When will the ground break open?  
 When will the Furies rise?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Welcome, stranger. I'm told you have news.  
 Say what you need, you shall have it here.  
 The comforts of our palace are yours.  
 If you come on matters of state and insist  
 on speaking to men, we have men too  
 and will bring them.

ORESTES

Madam. I come from Phocis.  
 I was on my way to Argos for business  
 when a man fell in with me on the road.  
 He asked where I was going. When I told him  
 he gave me his name and asked me to carry  
 a message. His name was Strophios, from Phocis.  
 He asked me to tell the parents of Orestes  
 that Orestes is dead. "Don't forget this"  
 he told me. "Tell them Orestes is dead  
 and ask them whether they want him brought home  
 or whether they'd rather us bury him here,  
 foreigner though he'd be in our soil."  
 He was properly mourned. His ashes are safe  
 in an urn of bronze. I can take the answer  
 back when I go. That's my message.  
 Are you the one it concerns? I think  
 his father ought to be told.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Hah. Hah. Your message means  
 we are overcome now. Root to crown.  
 The curse that sits on this house, so hard  
 to wrestle down, what eyes it has

to see so far to one who was kept  
 so far from the range of harm. What arrows  
 to cover this distance and strip away  
 my last secluded bit of loved one.  
 My son Orestes was a sensible boy.  
 He kept his foot well clear of this trough  
 of slaughter. We had some hope that he  
 might be some tonic to heal the frenzy  
 that dances this house around. But hope,  
 you may tell the world, is a traitor as always.

ORESTES

I wish I'd brought some happier news.  
 I have family of my own, you know,  
 and I know how it feels to lose someone dear,  
 even if they were far off at the time.  
 I'm sorry your boy is gone.  
 I wish we might have gotten acquainted  
 some other way. I'd be glad if I could  
 prevent this sorrow. But my pledge was sacred.  
 You wouldn't want me to go back on that.  
 Would you?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Of course not. You're welcome still.  
 We'll treat you as we treat family.  
 You. Tell King Aegisthus to come.  
 Tell him he won't need his guard of honor.  
 Open the gates to the palace as well.  
 We will not ring the bell today.  
 The people of Atreus may walk outside  
 freely, if they will. Yes, I mean it.  
 Dismiss the soldiers guarding the gate.  
 Prepare my bathing clothes please.  
 I'll visit the River Solemnos soon.  
 Then go off duty yourselves for a while.  
 Declare a holiday, if you like.  
 A national day of mourning.  
 This stranger has brought us sad news. It means  
 we have nothing to fear anymore.  
 He has taken away all fear. With all hope.  
 We have nothing to guard against now. Nothing  
 to protect. Nothing. Nothing at all.  
 Go now.  
 Stranger, you won't understand  
 the many meanings your message holds.  
 Happy news for some. But for me.  
 He wasn't only my little boy.  
 I guarded him. I protected him.  
 We had trouble here. He might have been killed.  
 I wanted him here but sent him away  
 to keep him safe. I gave him life  
 not once but twice. And bore my own loss.  
 That's why I sent him away.

Keeping his sister Electra with me  
 has been difficult enough. I was able to keep her  
 because she's a girl and so no threat,  
 as people seem to believe. Still,  
 I'm vigilant every day for her.  
 For danger to her. Or from her.  
 I couldn't bear to part with them both.  
 I hoped that maybe I might have one friend  
 in the middle of all. My daughter.  
 But it seems the river only makes  
 her mind forget. And somewhere below that  
 my daughter was lost to me long ago.  
 I had hoped I might see Orestes again.  
 Someday. Even some unhappy day.  
 What else in the world was left to want?

ORESTES

You sound as if you had a wish  
 to be free of all this, past and present,  
 and live a simple life with your children.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I'm glad to hear you understand.  
 Come inside our palace, stranger.  
 Bathe in our River Solemnos if you like.  
 Forget your bad news. Since my husband died  
 I have stepped in the river more often. It's nice.  
 Come in the palace. You can tell me your name  
 and set about the business you came for.

ORESTES

Apollo. I need your voice in my ear.  
 Father. Speak loudly to me now.  
 Pylades. Friends and family in exile.  
 I need to hear you. I need to hear you.

CHORUS

Sad news for the queen.  
 Is it sad?  
 She can rest easy now. Her, not us.  
 We're the ones who have sad news.  
 Any small hope we had is gone.  
 The never-forgetting Fury forgets us.  
 The children of Agamemnon are gone,  
 one dead, one alive, both gone, both gone.  
 The queen has said there will be no bell.  
 No order to move inside off the street.  
 She's celebrating. Lucky for us.  
 No, she's not celebrating, she's mourning.  
 She's sad and happy and sad all at once.  
 But sad's on top, sad will show.  
 Wear black, if we know what's good for us.  
 No bells will ring. That's good for us too.  
 They're easy now. They'll change tomorrow.

They won't rest easy so easy. You'll see.  
Here comes the king. Here comes Aegisthus.

AEGISTHUS

Some stranger has come with a story.  
They're saying Orestes is dead.  
This is most unfortunate news.  
We've had our fill of death in this house.  
Too bad to bring more pain to the wound  
even if maybe to some it's relief.  
Is it true or just some rumor spread  
by women?

CHORUS

We've heard the same as you have.  
We don't know whether it's true or not.  
You'd better see for yourself, inside.

AEGISTHUS

Is there a body?

CHORUS

We don't know.

AEGISTHUS

We should see the body. I'll question this stranger.  
If there is no body, was he present at the death  
or is he just bringing a rumor himself?  
My mind is more wide awake than that.  
You're calm. That's good. Stay calm and peaceful.  
We'll have no demonstrations out here.

CHORUS

There is fury in the air. This is not what it seems.  
There are rumors we hear but don't say, don't say.  
There's a fury of hope, a fury of hope,  
we don't believe it, we can't believe it,  
something is wrong, something is wrong  
to make something right, be quiet, be quiet.  
No time for shouting just now, no time  
for saying what might be so or might not,  
some fury turns over our lives, just hope  
we live through the change, why do we feel  
this break in the sky? We have no reason  
to hope. We only have reason for sorrow.  
Cry sorrow but let the good prevail.

VOICE OF CLYTEMNESTRA

Oh my baby! The Furies, the Furies, the Furies!

CHORUS

What's happened?  
She's crying to her son.  
She's cursing her son.

She's begging her son.  
 I don't understand. I don't understand.  
 Cry sorrow. Cry sorrow. Let good prevail.

ORESTES

People of Argos. All you slaves  
 and you who enslave. Look here.  
 Behold the tyrants that ruled this land.  
 Majestic they were, lovers still.  
 They swore an oath to kill my father  
 or die together. Both of these oaths  
 they have kept.

PYLADES

Justice, justice, justice.  
 Justice crushed the city of Troy,  
 justice opened the gates of this wall  
 and brought the people of Atreus home.  
 My name is Pylades. People of Atreus,  
 I'm one of you. Our day has come.  
 This is Orestes, come back at last,  
 son of our king and king now himself.  
 This house was crushed by a twofold lion  
 and twofold slaughter has met them.

CHORUS

Orestes! Son of Agamemnon! Orestes!

ORESTES

Do you recognize this, citizens?  
 The robe of blood they made for his death?  
 Here were the holes for his hands. Here  
 for his feet. Spread it before me now.  
 Display this fishnet that caught up a king.  
 Not for my father to see, but the Sun,  
 let the Sun who is father of all look down  
 and see the unnatural handicraft  
 of my mother. Let the Sun be witness for me  
 that only with justice I brought this death.  
 The death of my mother. For the death of Aegisthus  
 I make no excuse. The usurper's punishment  
 is set out clearly in every law.  
 But this, who plotted the horrible murder  
 of the man who gave her children. Children  
 she carried beneath her heart, and onetime  
 loved them, maybe. Her act was sacrilege  
 and sacrilege met with sacrilege now  
 in her death.

CHORUS

Orestes has come back to Argos  
 The son of Agamemnon has killed  
 the son of Thyestes. The people of Atreus  
 are free. We're free. Is it true? Are we free?



## PYLADES

Victory, victory,  
 evil is gone,  
 corruption and curse  
 are defeated.

## ORESTES

Victory, father. Revenge. And yet  
 I'm sad for this thing I've done. For the death.  
 For the whole of our race. This victory now . . . .

## CHORUS

Poor boy. His own mother. What wretched work.  
 But the tyrants are dead. Argos is free.

## ORESTES

I tell you now. I don't know how  
 this will end. I'm gripping a chariot team  
 that wrenches me off the track. I'm too weak,  
 the thoughts of my heart are bolting off,  
 I can't control them, I can't hold on,  
 there's a fear in my heart that's ready to dance  
 and break free to a madsong of anger.  
 But now  
 while I think I still have some grip on my senses,  
 I say this in public, to all my citizens:  
 Apollo commanded me here.  
 His Pythian oracle at Delphi.  
 Apollo told me to do this and then  
 go off to one of Athena's temples,  
 wrap a branch of olive in wool  
 and go to the shrine at the goddess's temple.  
 I'll kneel at the center, on the navelstone,  
 and pray to the undying fire there . . . .

## PYLADES

You've done no wrong.  
 You set us free in Argos  
 with one stroke lopping off heads  
 of both those poisonous dragons.  
 The people of Atreus will not be slaves!  
 Never again!  
 Never again!  
 Apollo sent you.  
 Orestes is King of Argos now.

## PYLADES AND CHORUS

Victory, victory,  
 evil is gone,  
 corruption and curse  
 are defeated.

## ORESTES

Apollo sent me. My hand was god's.  
 My hand was a god of justice. My hand  
 will bring us justice now. What next?  
 Who next? Bring the betrayers again.  
 My hand, god, justice, justice,  
 the vengeance of god is justice,  
 bring the betrayers, bring the betrayers!

## PYLADES AND CHORUS

Victory, victory,  
 evil is gone,  
 corruption and curse  
 are defeated.

## ORESTES

Oh.  
 Oh.  
 People of Argos. Look. Look there.  
 Shapes like gorgons. Robes of black.  
 Tangles with wriggling snakes. I can't stay.

## CHORUS

What fancies are driving you off?  
 Our dearest son, you've won.  
 There's nothing you have to fear.

## ORESTES

This is no fancy. These are the demons  
 of vengeance, the hounds of my mother's hate.  
 They're right there. Look! Right there!

## PYLADES

Nothing is there. You're king now. You're king.

## CHORUS

The blood's still wet on your hands,  
 it's turning your mind.

## ORESTES

Oh no.  
 There are more of them now, their eyeballs are dripping  
 with blood, they're slithering toward me in packs,  
 Apollo, help me Apollo.

## CHORUS

Athena's altar will save you.

## ORESTES

You don't see them, but oh I do,  
 the Furies are here, let me go, they're herding me  
 out, let me go, I can't stay, let me go!

## PYLADES

We are threatened with madness and traitors within.  
But never again will this palace fall.  
The people of Thyestes no longer rule.  
Orestes our king will return.  
Until he returns, the people of Atreus  
will bring this city back to good order.

**end**  
**part two**

ORESTES

My sister doesn't see them.  
She did not lift the blade. She doesn't  
see their clotted serpent hair  
or eyelids dripping with blood, or hear  
their screeching voices or smell  
the pus on their lips. She didn't lift the blade.  
I did.

APOLLO

Orestes.

ORESTES

Lord Apollo.

APOLLO

Why are you still here? Go home.  
You went on your journey of penance.

ORESTES

I did.

APOLLO

You prayed at my temples. You prayed at the temples  
of the other gods as well.

ORESTES

I did.

APOLLO

You kept yourself away from humans  
as much as you could. The necessary time  
has passed. You're ready. Go home to Argos.

ORESTES

Will they be there?

APOLLO

Step in your river.

ORESTES

Will they still be there even then?

APOLLO

At first maybe. But then they'll fade.

ORESTES

The River Solemnos is only a legend.

APOLLO

Bring it to life. Your people will accept it.  
You need to take your place as king.  
Your cousin Pylades is doing his best  
but keeping order is hard in hard times.  
Your palace was burnt. It is being repaired.  
They clamor for you.

ORESTES

Who?

APOLLO

Your people.

ORESTES

The people of Atreus, you mean.

APOLLO

Yes.

ORESTES

And Thyestes' people?

APOLLO

You may choose to be  
benevolent toward them.

ORESTES

Whose temple is this?

APOLLO

Athena. Pray to her.  
It is good to have many gods on your side.

ORESTES

Will she hear me?

APOLLO

Yes.

ORESTES

Will she come?

APOLLO

She might.

ORESTES

Athena. Athena. Hear my voice  
wherever you are. Apollo says  
I may ask your help. I'm in your temple.  
I've taken the many steps of one  
who must be unpolluted of a crime.  
I've walked across the earth and waited

to find the silence that means they're gone.  
 But even when I don't hear them I hear them.  
 How will I know when I'm ready for home?  
 Something is still undone. Help me.  
 I'm out of strength. Help me resist them.  
 They're still too strong. They're here. They're here  
 Come forward you. I smell you. I taste you.  
 You're here. You're here.

#### FURIES

Of course we're here.  
 Why do you run, boy? We're always with you.  
 We follow your trail like drops of blood  
 or else we don't, we just arrive  
 wherever you are, before you're there,  
 below you, above you, around you, behind you.  
 We live all over the world, you know.  
 In Uruk and Phrygia with your slaves,  
 even in Troy with those you killed,  
 you conquering Greeks that make such feasting  
 for us. Under the ground we live,  
 in the air, invisible, forgotten, feared.  
 Why are you trembling, boy? Oh look:  
 the little mother killer's afraid.  
 Maybe because we're refugees.  
 You wandered those wasteland zones where your people  
 were scrabbling for life in exile.  
 You told your sister she should go look.  
 Go now, boy. Look again.  
 Your Atreus people are making ready  
 to drive out the people of Thyestes right now  
 and exile them in those same wastelands.  
 Will you care for them still when they're not your family?  
 Let them be driven out. We  
 grow stronger with each starving child,  
 each killing for skin or for name or for power  
 or just for the human love of killing.  
 Scared even more? Dear dear. Apollo,  
 why do you coddle this godless whiner?  
 There there child. We're not so scary.  
 What they say is not true. We don't have hair  
 made of snakes. Are we screeching and howling? No no.  
 It's all inside you, Orestes.  
 Your mother's blood calls out from the dirt  
 to her mother-murdering son -- that's you --  
 and of course you become a little crazy. Who wouldn't?  
 You can't suck up that blood from the dirt.  
 You're trembling not because we're ugly  
 but only because we do our job.  
 It is our function and therefore our joy  
 to take your blood as the only payment.  
 The living blood of your soul, we'll drink it,  
 clot by clot, you will waste  
 to a stalk

then living  
 still living  
 we'll draaag  
 yoooo  
 doooown,  
 your husssk,  
 your stillll  
 feeeling remnant  
 down  
 to the burning darkness  
 where yoooo  
 will payyyyy  
 ounce by ounce of agony for the pain  
 of your murdered mother,  
 hide in the bowels of the earth with the dead,  
 you will commmme  
 in the end  
 tooooo myyyyy claaaaaaaaaaws

APOLLO

Get away, you revolting vermin.  
 There's an arrowed snake notched in my bowstring  
 that will make you spew forth the poison clots  
 you've sucked from the blood of men. Get out  
 and go to some feast where eyes are gouged  
 and men are impaled to entertain  
 revulsive slime like you.

FURIES

You stripling boygods  
 roughshodding over your elders,  
 you told this boy to kill his mother.

APOLLO

My oracle told him to avenge his father.

FURIES

And you took him in with the blood still on him.

APOLLO

I did and I'd do so again.

FURIES

Us too, little lord. We do our duty  
 and we'll do it again, we promise.

APOLLO

What duty do ghouls like you ever have?

FURIES

To drive murderers out of their homes.

APOLLO

This man is under my protection.

## FURIES

Until he loses. We know your ways,  
 you callow prepubescent deities.  
 You ally yourself with the victor always.  
 Tell all sides to go and kill  
 then take the side of the one who wins.  
 We take the loser's side. The dead.  
 It's our job and it's older than all the regime  
 of you gods who only came to power  
 by crushing the generations of gods  
 who spawned you. Skythrone dripping with blood,  
 blood at the foot, blood at the head,  
 blood reeking down to the stone at the center of the earth,  
 this is the god who protects you, boy.  
 He'll scour your blotchy manprints from his altar  
 when we're done dragging your bone-dry body  
 to its rightful place, which is nowhere. With us.  
 See if he protects you, see if he can guard you.

## APOLLO

I warn you, step back.

## FURIES

We warn you back.  
 You cannot watch over this bloodstained boy  
 for all time. You will grow bored  
 and he will be ours. Give him now.  
 Give him now. Give him. Give him!

## ATHENA

Be calm. All of you. You are in my temple.

## APOLLO

Welcome Athena.

## ORESTES

Goddess Athena.

## ATHENA

I heard this noise from across the world.  
 My temple is meant as a place of peace  
 and justice. What is the argument here?  
 And what kind of creatures are you, that I  
 have never seen?

## FURIES

A girl god now.  
 You are the one called Athena.

## ATHENA

Yes.



## FURIES

We are the children of Mother Night.  
In our homes underground they call us Curses.

## ATHENA

I know your race and all your titles.  
On Earth they call you Furies.

## FURIES

Yes.  
You know what we do then, and why.  
This boy killed his mother.

## ATHENA

Was he under compulsion?

## FURIES

What compulsion compels such an act?

## ATHENA

He has a story too.

## FURIES

Hear both sides.  
It doesn't matter. The truth is clear.

## ATHENA

If we try this case, you'll accept my judgement?

## FURIES

Go ahead judge. Judge all you want.  
The facts are set. The facts won't lie.

## ATHENA

You there. Young man. Tell me why  
you chose to bring your trouble here.  
Are you confident you're in the right, or are you  
hoping for sanctuary from justice?

## ORESTES

Goddess. I don't come to dirty your altar.  
I have walked the roads of the world  
and kept my silence as the bloodguilty must.  
I have followed the ceremonies with care.  
I've been cleansed by proper sacrifice.  
Apollo sent me to many places  
and many people in all those places  
were no longer damaged by my being with them.  
I know the ways of purification.  
I have suffered to some understanding, I hope.  
Aging time has worn me away  
and scoured away my pollution as well.  
My name is Orestes. I was born in Argos.  
My father was Agamemnon, your captain

in the long war you fought against Troy.  
 He was killed by the woman who gave me birth  
 and my vengeance was an act of my love for my father.  
 Apollo's oracle warned me to it  
 and threatened me pain if I let the guilty  
 live in their victory. I freed my people  
 from tyranny. That is my case.  
 Give your judgment. I am in your power.

ATHENA

Apollo, you stand here with this man?

APOLLO

I come to protect him and testify.  
 This man did everything properly as told  
 and I myself have purged his guilt.  
 I am his witness and also his advocate.  
 Blame for his mother's death should extend  
 to me. Athena, I'm glad you have come.  
 Though a god, I am still partial in this matter.  
 You are the goddess of wisdom, and all  
 may trust you to navigate a true path.

ATHENA

Orestes has come of his own free will  
 confessing his actions freely and respecting  
 the rites of absolution and penance.  
 I shouldn't turn him away, and I will not.  
 But you Furies children of Mother Night  
 have rights as well, and you will be respected.  
 But what if judgement is fair and still  
 comes down against you? Will your venom infect  
 my temple and all of my temples and servants?  
 This matter is too complex for a mortal  
 and even a goddess must stop to consider.  
 A goddess might not be impartial enough.  
 All paths here lead to danger.  
 But the burden is mine.  
 I select neither mortal nor god  
 but a court of twelve mortal judges  
 bound by oath. I will set this tribunal  
 to last for all time. Gather your proofs,  
 both sides, and make your evidence ready.  
 I will make you swear as the judges will swear  
 that nothing that is not true will pass  
 in this court of justice.

FURIES

Have no fear. If your hands are clean,  
 you'll find we are truly just, and you'll pass  
 unharried for all the rest of your days.  
 But oh that's right: your hands are covered  
 with stains that shine like deepest night  
 and the muscle of all your gods will not

be enough. You will perish in spite of them all,  
 you will fall to the pit of Tartarus, shrunk  
 to a juice-drained, death-chewed, dessicated rind  
 without even memory of joy. No answer?  
 Fine. Save your strength if you want.  
 You're a sacrifice fatted especially for us  
 and the feast begins while you're still alive.

Over the victim  
 doomed to burn  
 we sing our song  
 of splitting the mind  
 frenzy and terror  
 the Furies sing  
 the strings of the lyre  
 snap and the life  
 sputters out

Mother who bore me  
 oh Mother Night  
 these gods want to steal  
 the prey from our clutch  
 that stole the blood  
 of his mother

Over the victim  
 doomed to burn  
 sing our song  
 splitting mind  
 frenzy terror  
 Furies sing  
 strings of the lyre  
 snap life  
 sputters out

We Angry Ones,  
 if we disappear  
 neighbor will murder  
 neighbor scot free.  
 Cry for justice,  
 no one will answer,  
 no one calm  
 the father's shriek  
 or the mother's pitious wail.

The killer will fall  
 His house will fall  
 When the god of war  
 that grows in the heart  
 turns knife on kin  
 we turn on him  
 and for all his strength  
 with the blood still wet  
 we bring him down

we bring him down

We save the gods  
 from painful work  
 They turn their backs  
 and cast us out  
 To Zeus we are only  
 blood-dripping dogs  
 He shuns us, spurns us  
 Let him

We melt men's pride  
 with our black robes  
 No man's pleading  
 bends or shakes us  
 Memory drives us  
 Darkness lights us  
 Wisdom is learned  
 from pain

Before the earth  
 before the moon  
 before the sun  
 our right was given  
 before the sky  
 before the gods  
 our place was given  
 absolute  
 though under the ground  
 in darkness that knows  
 no sun

Over the victim  
 doomed to burn  
 sing our song  
 of splitting the mind  
 frenzy and terror  
 the Furies sing  
 the strings of the lyre  
 snap and the life  
 sputters out

#### ATHENA

The jury of twelve is assembled. Mortals  
 from Jericho, Ashur, Ugarit, Sidon,  
 from here in Athens, from the island of Aulis,  
 one from the people of Atreus, one  
 from Thyestes' people, and even a survivor  
 from Troy. From all across the world  
 people have come to form a jury  
 for the first time now, and for all time to come.  
 Let citizens everywhere gather to witness  
 this case will be fairly tried.  
 Let the trial begin. Accusers speak first.

FURIES

This will not take long. You.  
Answer our questions one by one.  
Did you kill your mother?

ORESTES

Yes. I've already said that I did.

FURIES

That was easy.

ORESTES

I'm still standing.

FURIES

Tell us exactly how you killed her.

ORESTES

I stabbed her with a blade.

FURIES

There you have it.

ORESTES

I was ordered to do so.

FURIES

Who gave the order?

ORESTES

Apollo. Ask him. I have no regrets.

FURIES

You may have doubts when the verdict condemns you.

ORESTES

My father will send me help from the grave.

FURIES

Kill mother then call on the dead for help?

ORESTES

My mother and her adulterous lover  
killed my father and enslaved my city.

FURIES

Your father enslaved your city first  
and killed little girls to conquer others.  
Even your sister Iphigenia  
he killed. That's why your mother killed him.  
He paid the price. She paid the price.  
Your turn now. Say your goodbyes.

## ORESTES

When she was alive you didn't haunt her.

## FURIES

Oh but we did, and your father too.  
 He tried to stop us with shield and armor  
 and smashing cities. We were fewer then  
 but he multiplied us with his many crimes.  
 Your mother knew us. We tasted her blood.  
 She was stronger than you. Now you. Now you.  
 The worst we save for those who kill kin.  
 Even your mother didn't do that.

## ORESTES

Her husband was not her kinsman?

## FURIES

Not by blood. But you, little boy,  
 she nursed you beneath her heart, her blood  
 gave life to your body, the same blood you spilled.  
 Go ahead, child. Disown your mother.  
 Go ahead.

## ORESTES

Apollo. Speak for me now.  
 You commanded the bloodshed. Was it just?

## APOLLO

Learned jury, gathered by the wisdom  
 of my colleague and sister, Goddess Athena:  
 You know my gift of prophecy. You know  
 that Zeus himself determines the words  
 of my oracle.

## FURIES

This Zeus who cares for the rights  
 of fathers, but not of mothers at all?

## APOLLO

This mother butchered a king. Her husband  
 came home from a long grim war victorious.  
 She drew him a bath and tangled his limbs  
 in a tented robe and cut him down.  
 A king this was, by divine right,  
 the fleet commander, murdered in his own house  
 by a woman's treachery. Can the jury hear this  
 without some fury of its own?

## FURIES

And what about the murder of a mother?

## APOLLO

Who murdered her husband.

## FURIES

Who murdered their daughter  
Iphigenia, and all the many  
daughters of Argos, if you'll remember.

## APOLLO

And so his adulterous wife and her lover  
netted and gutted their king like a fish,  
not for justice, but for revenge,  
and so they could rule his kingdom together  
and become new tyrants of their own.  
Orestes acted on my command,  
not for his own sake, but for the sake  
of restoring justice and the order of the gods.

## FURIES

The gods don't care for those who are killed  
by kings, no matter how many, it seems.  
Burn a goat and the gods forgive.  
But the dead remember, and the living remember.  
Will you let this man go walking free  
with his motherkilling foot on your soil  
or his motherkilling hand on your shrine?  
Let motherkillers swarm in your city,  
let mothers be struck down right and left?

## APOLLO

Let fathers be killed then? Husbands and kings?  
Shall killers of men go unpunished in Argos?  
Will your city survive when that comes to be?  
Remember, I'm the voice of Olympus.  
The gods' commands are sacred and must  
be obeyed. Condemn this innocent victim  
and the Father of Gods who ordered his actions  
might not stand by in silence.

## FURIES

Ignore his threats, mortals.  
Remember some things in the earth run deeper  
than cloudy Olympus and its spoiled bratgods.  
Remember the call of the blood.  
It's the call of Mother Night.  
As all who know her know,  
you ignore Mother Night at your peril.

## ATHENA

Is there more to say?

## FURIES

Our bolts are shot.

## ATHENA

And from you?

APOLLO

You have heard what you have heard.  
Remember the oath you swore.

ATHENA

They will.  
People of the world, you are the first  
to listen as jury to a case of blood.  
Set the pattern for all time.  
Consider your oath and make your judgement.  
Defense and prosecution are done.  
Cast your votes and count them carefully.  
A single error may save or condemn.

ORESTES

Apollo. How will the verdict fall?

FURIES

Call on him still? He had no right to harbor you.

APOLLO

You will lose this case, you know. Your poison  
will dribble out of your mouths and drop  
without harm.

FURIES

You speak too soon, youngling.  
We'll wait for the verdict before we decide  
just who will receive our visits again.

ATHENA

This man has committed the awful sin  
of matricide. That much is true.  
It is also true that this man has suffered  
and undergone his journey of penance.  
If the court can reach no decision,  
then this prosecution must end.  
Shake out the ballots and count them.

ORESTES

This is the last of moments.  
Daylight now. Or death.

FURIES

Disgrace for us now. Or honor.  
Mother Night watch over us now.

ATHENA

The ballots are equal for each side.  
The court has not condemned and therefore  
must acquit.

APOLLO

Jury of the world: we thank you.



Athena, thank you as always for your wisdom  
 You looked your way through all the thickets  
 of father's death and mother's death  
 and found a way to offer justice.  
 Orestes is free under god's protection.  
 A blessing of all the gods on your court  
 and your jury established for all of time.

ATHENA

Members of the jury, your task is completed.  
 As I brought you I will take you back.  
 Orestes, you are free to go back to Argos.  
 Children of Night, do you honor this verdict?

FURIES

Yes of course, that's fine, that's fine,  
 no problem, no blame, we are all divine,  
 let the boy walk free, let him dance and frolic,  
 let victory mount to the starry sky  
 and only then fall and break and crush  
 to powder the bones of his head and all  
 the bones of his friends and lovers and children,  
 let victory boil in his gullet and fry  
 his eyes and his flesh to blackened grease.  
 You coltish untutored adolescent gods,  
 you have ridden down all the ancient ways  
 and grappled the laws from our hands.  
 The abuser wins, the sinner goes free,  
 the wail of the victim is choked and buried.

ATHENA

You have not been dishonored. The votes were equal.  
 We heard the oracles of Zeus and we heard  
 the ancient commands of your Mother Night.  
 This case was beyond decision, the court  
 could not agree to punish. That's all.

FURIES

The murderer walks the world.  
 The murderer steps across the ground.  
 The murderer free from worry  
 while victims live in fear.  
 Let him walk in the sun,  
 yes let him walk free,  
 let him joy in his freedom.  
 He will not pay.  
 Maybe even  
 his children won't,  
 no no, no no.  
 But we are the voice  
 of victim's pain  
 and that voice silenced  
 will grow, will fester  
 we are the mind

of the past, we are driven  
 under the ground  
 by usurping unripe gods,  
 we will lie forgotten  
 not gone.  
 This free man's children,  
 his children's children  
 and their children after  
 and after and after  
 will come to know us  
 unforgotten  
 with all the power  
 of ripening years  
 underground.  
 They will know us but  
 they will be too late  
 to escape. We will  
 inhabit them,  
 become what they are,  
 they will come to see  
 only us in each other.  
 The world will die to them.  
 No one hears me,  
 but they will feel me,  
 they will cry out  
 you will hear their shrieks.  
 from under the earth you will hear them,  
 we will hear them  
 from under the earth  
 waiting  
 waiting  
 waiting.

ATHENA

Orestes is under my protection  
 now, and all his children's children.

FURIES

Your power is not alone in the world.

APOLLO

Orestes is under my protection  
 as well, and that of the other gods.  
 Do not think little of our allied strength.  
 If you will not respect the laws  
 we have created, you will be made to.

FURIES

Glory in your power, while you have it.  
 Enjoy her protection, while you have it.  
 Why are you still here, boy?  
 Why aren't you riding home shouting out loud  
 your triumph over the oldest powers?  
 Leave us alone with your godly watchdogs.

They have threatened a war to end  
all thought of war, all thought itself.  
We surrender of course. Their power is eternal.  
Their power will never end. Till it ends.

ORESTES

Goddesses. Oldest powers of the world.

FURIES

What are you doing?

ORESTES

I am kneeling. I bow.  
My forehead touches the ground.  
If you go under the earth, take me with you.  
The jury's decision has set me free  
but does not erase what I did.  
The god commanded me, I had good reason  
and still I did what no man should do.  
I ask your mercy.  
I ask you to stay in the world with me.  
I ask you to come to Argos my city.

FURIES

Liar. Cheat. The gods protect you.

ORESTES

I reject their protection. Athena: Apollo.  
Thank you for helping me break this wheel.  
Now I ask you to step off the wheel  
and leave me alone here.

APOLLO

Why?

ORESTES

Because  
I understand now. They have made me see.  
Till now I believed I could not return  
to Argos as long as these Furies were with me.  
Now I believe I cannot return  
without them.

APOLLO

They will not forgive you.

ORESTES

Then I will go with them after all.  
I ask you to leave me and take no vengeance  
for whatever choice they make.

ATHENA

My family of gods on Olympus will not  
support this choice.

## ORESTES

I do not ask them.  
 I do not make myself an enemy of gods.  
 I thank you for all the protection you've given.  
 I've followed each and all your commands  
 I ask you now to let me make  
 this choice of my own. Without your protection.

## APOLLO

This is not wise. But make your choice.

## ATHENA

And you sisters. Make a good choice.  
 Goodbye.

## APOLLO

Goodbye.

## ORESTES

Now I am in your power and at  
 your mercy, if any mercy you have.  
 Chew me to pieces and live underground  
 till someone takes revenge for me.  
 Blight the land with your fury and leave it  
 barren, soil the bed and home  
 and spoil the power that might be yours.  
 Or come with me to Argos.  
 Be our goddesses of remembrance.  
 For all of time make us remember  
 that all these things that were done, we did.  
 That any triumph is built on defeat  
 and conquest brings more conquest in turn.  
 Help us build houses remembering that  
 instead of forever forgetting, forgetting.  
 Be our benefactors.  
 Be our kindly ones.  
 Let the memories we would rather forget  
 make solid the lives we build. Make them strong.  
 I stand here unprotected.  
 I will not see my home again  
 unless you come with me.

## FURIES

You will live in your palace and forget.

## ORESTES

The palace is burnt. I will stop them rebuilding.  
 Let the River Solemnos lose its power  
 and become the River Inakos again.  
 Let the children of Pelops, all  
 the people of Atreus and Thyestes,  
 all of them come back home.  
 Make my home your home.

## FURIES

The boy comes pleading to us, sisters.  
 His kneeling steps under my anger.  
 Does he kneel in his heart as well?

## ORESTES

Let sadness and all our memory of wrongs  
 live with us in honest peace.  
 Teach us justice.  
 Teach us mercy.  
 Teach us how to live.

## FURIES

Mercy.  
 Hm.  
 Mercy is not to be found and picked up  
 lying around on the ground.  
 To Argos.  
 Maybe we'll come to Argos.  
 But mercy.  
 Hm.  
 Mercy.  
 We'll see.  
 Mercy must be built.  
 Each day.  
 Mercy must be built.

## ORESTES

Come with me to Argos then  
 and build the day of mercy.

## FURIES

Come build the day of mercy.

## ORESTES

No household will prosper without your blessing.  
 Be the foundation rock of our city.  
 Your darkness, the darkness of Mother Night  
 will be the deepest vein of our earth.  
 The memory of suffering, which was your work,  
 will live in our hearts to the end of time  
 and bring us compassion and the chance for wisdom.  
 Bring Argos life with your words of grace.

## FURIES

Bring Argos life with words of grace.

## ORESTES

Let your power touch everything small and large  
 in the mortal world. Both tears and songs  
 will still be the way. We learn that from you.  
 Come to Argos.

FURIES

Come to Argos.

ORESTES

You have the power now. Decide.  
Take me and shrivel me, turn the wheel  
till even you are crushed by it.  
Or come with me. In honor. To Argos.

FURIES

Are your people ready for what we bring?

ORESTES

No. They will have to learn. Will you come?

FURIES

Not many things in the dark or light  
are unfamiliar to our ancient eyes.  
You are unfamiliar. You  
are some new thing we haven't seen.  
Maybe we'll walk above ground for a while.  
Even as far as Argos. And see  
what your people can learn. We will come.  
We will see. We make no promise.

ORESTES

We'll earn our promise from each other then.  
Come build the day of mercy.

ALL

Come build the day of mercy.

ORESTES

Lead me home then. You know the way.

**end part three**