

**Watchman:** Oh, god, cold I am so cold. The night hates me, and it's night again, the night who spits freezing dew in my face, distaining me with her cock-curling cold and awful hours that only offer the final promise of giving in and letting her rest my eyes in ice.

Night again, and I am so very cold. Ten years I've stood here. Night upon night, never sitting, standing wrapped in frozen wet and clutching a waste-paper scrap of hope that these eyes that see too much and too little might at long, long last see a light that's not a star.

A slave never sees what he wishes to see. I've watched the unceasing, unchanging paths of the stars, riding in the chariot-ruts worn into heaven. Freer men than I tell me our fates are written in these cold stars. This is what god has to say about me. Fate had no new intention for me. I am bound to watch until I'm worm shit.

My king, shares this fate with me, though his body is surely soil in the green gardens of some foreign land. All men come to cucumbers. That's the only justice there is.

Look there. Do you see that? Of course you don't. Fast-flying Hermes, god of liars, finds his fancy with me every so often by painting a false light in my eyes. Yet it grows brighter.

Dawn so soon? It's the east, but the hour isn't here. The beacon? Have we won? So it is. So we have have. The war is over.

Oh god - the war is over. Oh, wake you sleeping dogs, the beacon, the beacon, the war! Wake the queen, the king is coming home! Wake the queen, Agamemnon is...

Oh, What these stones have seen. I speak to those of you who know. The rest, block your ears. Do not listen. Know nothing and you and I might yet live. The cold night is over. The firey day begins.

**(Shouting)** The war is over ! Agamemnon is come home!

**(EXIT WATCHMAN. ENTER CHORUS)**

**CHORUS:** Listen! We've got something important to say!

**LEADER:** Two brothers -

**STROPHE:** Lord Agamemnon.

**ANTISTROPHE:** And mighty Menelaus -

**CHORUS:** The sons of Atreus, ten years ago set forth from these walls to repay the coward Paris -

**LEADER:** Lustful seducer!

**CHORUS:** For his theft of pearl-white Helen.

**LEADER:** Lustful wanton!

**STROPHE:** He took her in the night!

**ANTISTROPHE:** He was a guest in their house!

**CHORUS:** Actions appalling to the blessed gods!

**LEADER:** An act so unrighteous that the blood of a thousand thousand sheep could not appease the sacred anger of Zeus!

**CHORUS:** Bless us, O Zeus, Protector of guests!

**LEADER:** Any insult to a god risks wrath and undermines the very security of our state! If the Trojans were not repaid in kind we, as a people, would no longer exist!

**CHORUS:** We had no choice but war. Wood upon bronze, bronze upon leather, leather upon flesh - we heard the sounds From every corner of every kingdom of this god-blessed land.

An army marching from all Greece, with Mycenae proudly bearing the highest banner! Our King - the best blood of our bold nation - rose up willingly to conduct this coalition to filthy foreign lands and there put an end to Priam's tyranny.

**LEADER:** This is what Greece is. This is what Greece does. We shoulder the burdens that weaker nations shun!

**STROPHE:** We, that is the company present, could not accompany those bold fighting men at that time.

**ANTISTROPHE:** We had other priorities.

**STROPHE:** We were old and flat footed. All that heavy bronze would have broken our backs and a spear from our arthritic hands couldn't hit the side of a granary.

**LEADER:** Besides, someone had to stay and here and run the city! You can't leave that to slaves!

**ANTISTROPHE:** But listen, there's more to the story - we must tell of portents, of odd omens and of signs seen by those twin kings when the men of Greece pointed their bright bronze spears towards Ilium.

**STROPHE:** It happened in the sky.

**CHORUS:** The furious rush of wingbeats, a sound sent from heaven, offering more calamity in its cacaphony than even than the clanking din of marching men.

Two eagles, two kings with wings, broke the silent sky with the sound of their striking at one another, battling over the battered body of a slaughtered hare.

Rabbit guts spilled on the roadside - the cruel talons submerged into the warm, wet pool of the life-quick womb to wrench out the new life waiting within.

They devoured the babies. They threw their proud beaks back and snapped down the aborted prey with a gleeful swallow.

**STROPHE:** It was an omen!

**LEADER:** Of course it was an omen!

**ANTISTROPHE:** Why else would an eagle eat a hare?

**CHORUS:** We cry for the truth of suffering, we believe that good will win in the end.

**STROPHE:** This telling portent -

**ANTISTROPHE:** This truthful omen -

**LEADER:** We know it was an omen, but gentlemen, what did it mean?

**CHORUS:** Zeus, Pan, Apollo - The world is full of gods. We walk under the will of gods. A will to us that unbendable and unknown.

Priests who stare into sacred smoke to see our fates formed in shifting flame, they know such things, but we are blind.

Priests who split the stomach of the scarificial lamb, they know such things, but we are blind.

Priests who catch the truth dropped in morsels from flying eagles' claws, who translate the wingbeats of mad-moving birds into immediate, undoutable truth - they know such things, but we - but we - but we -

**LEADER:** Fortunately, the army had Calchas, that unstained seer, with liquid eyes to read the meaning of the action, to decode the coursing, holy will and to describe those things that will be -

**CHORUS:** Those things that must be.

**LEADER:** Calchas, in whose white robes flowed a master of mysteries, spoke to our ornamented king, thus -

**STROPHE:** Great Agamemnon!

**ANTISTROPHE:** I am he!

**STROPHE:** My lord, we have beheld an omen.

**ANTISTROPHE:** So I have gathered. Tell me what it means.

**STROPHE:** I shall!

**ANTISTROPHE:** Do so!

**STROPHE:** Here spoke the mistress of the beasts, here showed the hand that hovers over suckling cubs. Womb-blessor. Unsullied queen. Virgin mother.

**ANTISTROPE:** Artemis.

**STROPHE:** Artemis, who protects the innocent.

**ANTISTROPHE:** Yes, Artemis! In wild woods and secret valleys I know I've felt her hand, guiding me as I happily chased a tawny-hided stag kicking acorns, while my hounds bayed at his hooves. We all honor Artemis.

**LEADER:** Gentlemen, we've established our piety. Less hooves, more venison. Relay the prophecy as Calchas spoke it.

**STROPHE:** He began by speaking of birds -

**CHORUS:** By speaking of eagles.

**STROPHE:** Of eagles whose cries ripped the sky more sharply even than their talons that cut through that innocent prey.

**CHORUS:** Two birds. Two kings. The meaning as clear.

**ANTISTROPHE:** The meaning is of the war?

**STROPHE:** The mistress of the beasts is enraged.

**ANTISTROPHE:** But what of the war?

**STROPHE:** Kings tearing at the innocent. Tearing at her blessed virgin heart.

**ANTISTROPHE:** Yes, and the war?

**STROPHE:** Wet blood must have wet blood! Innocent blood must have innocent blood!

**ANTISTROPHE:** Priest, the war!

**LEADER:** Your daughter's blood!

**ANTISTROPHE:** Iphigenia? That hardly seems probable.

**CHORUS:** Omens are echos from sounds yet unheard. The cries of Trojan girls ripped open in bloody rape, of infant skulls smashing on rocks, watery gurgling cries coming from split throats, of old women's bones cracking under a slave driver's raw lash.

This messy necessity of war offends all Artemis protects. Innocent blood must have innocent blood. Repay your crimes

before they are committed with this most-dear sacrifice or the winds will never stir and these ships will never sail for Trojan shores. Artemis demands your daughter offered as a willing sacrifice on her altar.

**LEADER:** Lord Agamemnon!

**STROPHE:** Great Agamemnon!

**LEADER:** The air around us is strangely calm - there's no wind to lift our ready sails.

**ANTISTROPHE:** What sort of sea is this that does not stir? Where are the waves? This sea is polished stone.

**STROPHE:** Innocent blood demands innocent blood! Raise your daughter on the holy rock, lower the sacred blade into her untouched body. Wrap the white bones in the glistening fat and burn this body from your body as a righteous offering. Only then will the still air stir again. Only then will the justice of this war wash upon the seducing Paris and all his kin.

**CHORUS:** This is the certain meaning of our most strange and awful augury. Obey.

**ANTISTROPHE:** The sea is calm because it is calm. Priests are superstitious fools. The wind will resume tomorrow. tell anyone else about this and I'll watch you eat your own tongue for breakfast.

**LEADER:** But there was no wind, And the beams of our boats bent And creaked beneath unforgiving noon.

**STROPE:** We dined and we drank. We fought, and spent ourselves in the bottoms of pretty camp boys. Anything to pass the time.

**STROPHE:** Lord Agamemnon! Our armor rusts in this wet salt air!

**ANTISTROPHE:** Then polish it, man! And let every man know any soldier too lazy to maintain his own equipment will be bound to a hard oak post and lashed until he waters the ground with his blood.

**LEADER:** Great Agamemnon! The joints of our ships creak and split from sitting in these still-choked waters!

**ANTISTROPE:** Well then, swab the decks and tar the beams! A mop and some pitch shouldn't break the backs of the bravest fleet Hellas has seen!

**STROPHE:** Still the same pale, unmoving cloud held its watch in the air for days. An unchanging sky, Mocking our might.

**LEADER:** Still the sails held slack and the ropes rotted, the foul stench of the stagnant waters and the air of rotting sea things breathed into the camp and clung to our skin.

**CHORUS:** The fire of warlike Greece paled, outshone by the unforgiving sun.

**ANTISTROPHE:** Zeus. Or what we call Zeus. An imagined mask covering some universal good. We may call it Zeus, whatever it is, we know its laws. We know we must obey.

The winds will raise when I slaughter my child. Troy will fall only when my daughter dies by her father's hand.

A king is a man if a man is a king. A man would only know her running through the olive groves in spring, her sparrow-legs flying her to his arms. A man who did this would drown in a bath of his tears if he were a man. But a king. The king is the life that brings the very spring to that grove.

One daughter, when each thousand sword in these Achaean ranks was a son drawn from a mother's womb! A king is man who may weep for a daughter, yet when that more precious child is stolen and the honor of the state abused, how much more than a man weeps a king. And I am a king among kings.

These Achaean ranks without me are sons of hard Sparta, sons of proud Athens, sons of stern Thebes - but I am father to their greater glory, they are a single people, a single race, and a single army. And Greece, my son Greece, is cradled in these arms.

So if the war is aborted that boy will be broken, and I will have delivered men hungry to suck plunder out of the land.

A man may love a pretty daughter, but a king above all must love his land. As every man must have a master, so the king should master the man.

**CHORUS:** Zeus! Or what I call Zeus! A revealing light that shows us the law! We all worship Zeus - we all obey his laws! A stranger who finds shelter and a friendly door - who's given food and fire and fine red wine, that man is honored under Zeus' law. To whore his host's wife breaks the bonds that bind Man to his only good, his highest god.

**ANTISTROPHE:** It is blasphemy! A desecration of a man's best-blessed temple, His own sacred hearth and most holy home!

Don't mistake that pretty boy Paris for just another silk-suited seducer - his crime is a foul crime and an unforgivable sin. What he and that whore Helen have done tears at our bonds with the gods, rips to shreds and the very cloth that swaddles our entire society.

That foreign prince has pissed on all your household gods! Soldiers - I have seen an omen! These ships will sail when our virgin goddess is properly appeased, when she has from me a pleasing sacrifice, one I could not find more displeasure in, yet I am your king and the child of this state, and so for your sakes, we will commit these bloody rites and offer our own blood on the holy stone, and the winds will come and carry us on to trample unholy Troy!

**LEADER:** So under the suggestion that she would be wed to great Achilles, we - that is, the company present, carried the willing virgin Iphigenia to her father and her father's stranded fleet.

**CHORUS:** And there the father escorted the daughter to the holy altar, blushing with sweet joy.

**STROPHE:** We stood with our robes sweat wet in the salt sea air.

**ANTISTROPHE:** We stood between her and the stone so she would never see that it wasn't Achilles waiting at the end of the aisle.

**STROPHE:** We stood as he bound her hands.

**ANTISTROPHE:** And gagged her mouth.

**LEADER:** So her dying cries would not curse the house of Atreus.

**(CLYTEMNESTRA ENTERS)**

**CHORUS:** We stood as in her father's arms she was raised onto the cold holy stone

**STROPHE AND LEADER:** Her white gown flutted around her, even wrapping round her strong father. Mute, but for her eyes that were pleading to her slaughterers.

**LEADER:** The priest at the ready with the bronze bowl to catch the warm fountain of gushing blood and her father there with the sharp, steel -

**(NOTICING CLYTEMNESTRA)**

The rest I did not see, nor did I wish to see. Well, you go to war with the omens that you have, not the omens you want.

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** Gentlemen, rejoice! And those of you who hold holy offices attend now to your sacred duties. Today I declare a holiday, and order general sacrifice throughout Mycenae.

**STROPHE:** Gracious queen, in the absence of our lord Agamemnon we have been obedient to your rule these ten long years.

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** I thank you for it.

**ANTISTROPHE:** Noble Clytemnestra, that absence still endures, is it proper to order a holiday while the war continues?

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** Devout citizen, it would be proper to tremble and fear god's wrath were I to order such general

impiety, but steady yourselves, even my hand holds firm and steady. There is no offence given by our joy.

**LEADER:** No offence? What can you possibly mean?

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** I mean the ships sail home from Ilium. I mean that the war is at an end. I mean today we celebrate victory.

**CHORUS:** Lady, it is too incredible to be believed!

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** Gentlemen, Troy is ours. I can say it no plainer than that.

**ANTISTROPHE:** A herald has come home from the front!

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** No man has yet come. The message outpaced any messenger.

**LEADER:** You have seen victory in a dream?

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** Gentlemen, I don't set policy in my sleep.

**STROPHE:** Then a god told you!

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** The god of fire spoke. Look up, gentlemen, The peak of Arachneus is alight. The beacon, gentlemen, the beacon!

**LEADER:** Well, then, so it is.

**STROPHE:** This beacon burns with the light of triumph.

**ANTISTROPHE:** We should pay more attention to these things.

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** Victory, gentlemen of Mycenae - victory is vinegar and oil poured into the same bowl, flowing through one another without even mixing. So it is today within the walls of Troy, where the shouts of victory and the wails of defeat pour into the same ears. Now mothers cry for sons and grandsons, for husbands and fathers, and cry for themselves, knowing their own cries they hear echoing off the doomed walls around them, are now the unheard cries of slaves. And the victors will feast in the fallen town. Good men, rising weary from their dry beds. Be glad for our boys, who slept in dry beds, undampened by dew, not frozen by frost, for this first time since the war began.

Be glad for our men, we trust that they will conduct their plunder with due reverence, and leave now unharmed the holy temples of the foreign gods.

We want all our boys to come home safe, now is not the time to risk divine wrath.

**LEADER:** Lady, you speak wisely. You speak as a man would.

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** Gentlemen, your duties.

**(CLYTEMNESTRA EXITS)**

**LEADER:** Justice. Justice. Holy Justice. Praise the gods. Praise Zeus. Praise him. Praise Justice. Praise lord Zeus. Lord of host and guest.

**STROPHE:** Praise night. Praise her. Goddess night. Praise our dark mother who brought the net down around the walls of Troy who gave our soldiers the cover to catch the Trojan rabbits  
in their own warren.

**ANTISTROPHE:** Justice. Praise Justice. The seducer Paris came perfumed to Sparta, welcome as a guest, a well-meaning guest, who feasted at the tables of Sparta, who bathed in the sweet oil of Sparta, who usurped the bed of Sparta's just king.

**LEADER:** No walls are so strong that they may shelter the man who would tread on the altar of vengeful Justice.

**STROPHE:** No quarantine is secure enough to prevent the plague of the sinner's guilt spreading contagion from sinner to city.

**ANTISTROPHE:** The hand of god drew the longbow's string tighter year by year, and now the arrow's flown and the sinner struck down!

**CHORUS:** Struck down the sinner! Struck down the wanton! Struck down the unholy desecrator and struck down his entire blaspheming town!

**STROPHE:** So the invisible hand of war guides his open market where men are corrected into corpses.

**ANTISTROPHE:** And futures are traded for urns.

**LEADER:** And Atreus' sons have bartered us a heavy price for a whore.

**CHORUS:** Oh, pray now we have done right - I hear a breathing in the night. When we weigh gains in lives we take, god sees all, and the furies awake.

**(ENTER HERALD)**

**HERALD:** So this is Argos? So I see it is. After ten years gone I have returned home. Well, we might then call this a happy day. I offer thanks to the gods, as I should - to Zeus, to Apollo, most though to Hermes, for it must have been he who guided me here, along the long path strewn with cold corpses, and so I am home.

**LEADER:** Welcome, friend.

**HEARLD:** Bury me now so I can be content! You want to know of Troy? There is no Troy. Her walls are stray stones. Her altars are slag. Her men are just meat. Her women are slaves. Her children bloody pulp spread to salt her soil. Agamemnon saw it all to an end. Give him glory, he follows fast behind.

**LEADER:** Argos appreciates your sacrifices.

**HERALD:** The gods keep the greater portion of joy for themselves and their own uses, men live below and snatch what scraps we can from beneath their set table. Down here we abide in suffering. That's just how life is.

**LEADER:** Tell us of the war. You must have seen great glory.

**HERALD:** Why tell what I can? Wet, if you want to know, it was wet. Ten years of being always soaking wet. Not a dry day passed from the moment we were packed on those uncertain ships and thrown upon the open water. At Troy there was no end to the salt and spray splashed up from the ocean. A hard salt tongue licking at your wet wounds, rotting away the clothes from your back. We were camped

close enough to the walls that the Trojans would fling their shit at us, and piss on us for target practice. There was no getting away from the stench. The smell of shit, vomit, rotting wounds, even to steal an hour in the salt marsh and endure the cuts of the sawgrass, the crabs bit at your balls for their fun.

And in winter the freezing winds blew down, carrying the snow down from Mount Ida. I saw birds frozen to the tree branches. Summers were no better than that, when the unending sun boiled the water into scalding hot lead.

It's over now. I've no cause to complain. Those that we left as ashes in the earth, You don't hear them complaining, do you?

**LEADER:** Friend, Agamemnon you say is on his way, what of the fate of lord Menelaus?

**HERALD:** Water is an angry, violent thing. A wave will snatch you off of a ship, offer blows that can break your bones and beat the breath from out your body. We are all welcome at the bottom of the ocean.

The gods gave us all of it and more, too. A gale called up from the angry sea the fleet was scattered. Agamemnon lives. I am here. I live. Of any one else, I've no news to give. Maybe they were lucky. Maybe so.

**(CLYTEMNESTRA ENTERS)**

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** Welcome, friend, Gentlemen, attend him - your king, your lord and your governor, the same man who is father to all my children- Agamemnon now returns to his homeland.

So now, then, is the fortunate time. As a child cries for her absent father, so our homeland has cried for her king. We who have remained, we who did not drown, submerged ourselves in tears spilt on the righteous Earth, but kept the land pure for our absent lord, now then we shall be satisfied. Now then Agamemnon shall return to his native earth.

But I know all of you will attest - each man here will attest - to my loyalty and faithfulness.

A woman's passions may burn brighter than that beacon burns on Arachnea. But the dim-lit oil lamp of duty borne by a wife and mother will burn true, and so will be justly seen by every eye.

**(CLYTEMNESTRA EXITS)**

**HERALD:** That was quite a speech. Does she always go on like that?

**LEADER:** Her words were quite plain. Their meaning can't possibly evade you.

**HERALD:** A queen's honor isn't something you talk about. It's Assumed, not boasted.

**LEADER:** A queen's honor is not her own thing, it is the property of the king.

**STROPHE:** The queen's public parade of her honor, is her displaying for all the king's thing.

**HERALD:** Is the king's thing so small that it must be brought out on parade for all to believe?

**ANTISTROPHE:** You've seen more of the king than we ever will. No, the King is honorable. It is Argos that has not slept well these past years.

**HERALD:** There has been trouble?

**STROPHE:** We don't speak of it.

**HERALD:** I saw no enemy at the gate.

**ANTISTROPHE:** There are two lions on that gate. The enemy isn't facting their heads, it's under their tails.

**LEADER:** This chatter! This brave man must be tired! Friend, will you rest now?

**HERALD:** So I will. And thank again the gods that brought me to my home. Does that fig tree still stand on the hill over where the river rest and slows to a cooling pace?

**LEADER:** It does.

**HERALD:** Bury me there. A good enough spot.

**(HERALD EXITS)**

**STROPHE:** Justice is a strange sort of thresher, to make chaff of two nations just to harvest one poppy seed of a woman.

**LEADER:** A seed, let me remind you, friend, which if it had taken root would have grown to a vine that could have choked the whole of our land!

**ANTISTROPHE:** Justice could have drowned the whore on the ship on the way over to Troy, and saved us all from a lot of pain. Ten years of suffering all for this - and Menelaus probably beds his bitch at the bottom of the sea.

**LEADER:** We don't know that yet!

**STROPHE:** Then what do we know?

**LEADER:** We know that we know that we don't know!

**STROPHE:** Do we know the count of soldiers slain to make amends for a proud king's shame? When reckoned the body count of that cunt will equal a whole generation of Greeks. That, soon enough, is what we'll know we know.

**LEADER:** Presumption makes justice an abortion. Obey your king and perform your duty. Give no board to any question that your faith can not sustain.

**ANTISTROPHE:** There's little ease in that opinion.

**LEADER:** It will hold as long as we are comfortable.

**STROPHE:** The king!

**(AGAMEMNON ENTERS WITH CASSANDRA IN CHAINS)**

**AGAMEMNON:** First this - join us in prayer, giving thanks to the gods who favored Argos, who favored Greece, who lifted

us up in their hands as their instruments to strike down and destroy Troy for good. Those Trojan evildoers are no more. Our men, our sons, our soldiers Have returned to their homes. My brother Menelaus has set safely on these shores and Helen now sits at his hearth in Sparta. A just conclusion for a just war.

Now we ourselves are returned home, and our hand is ready for the reigns of our most neglected government.

Governing is what we kings do. Those who are envious of our position, our power, and our providence of wealth are a poison to the state and themselves.

So we'll now attend to any infection that has fevered the state in our absence. But pray with me now, here at my own gate - You, too, are participants in this triumph.

**(CLYTEMNESTRA ENTERS)**

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** Gentlemen, my husband is home. There is an empty pool of absence that I have tried to fill with tears through all these years. Gentlemen, do not be embarrassed for me, yes, I have wept. Any woman would. There's a purity in honest tears. My husband's death has come to me ten thousand times in my dreams, and borne by rumor. If every spoken spear had pierced his skin here would be no man, but guts in a fishnet. If each death that I dreamed were true, my husband would have been slaughtered each night since he sailed for Troy.

These past ten years my mind has been a plaything for horror. I have dreamt I was drowning in blood, I have gasped awake, swimming for my life in a sea of salt sweat and tears. Temptation has called me from the beams of my bedchamber, offering their use as a gallows, and offered to teach me the knots to make a noose from my sash.

The unfeeling night of the dead is better than a life burned by unending torment. But a mother's life is not her own, and a queen is a thing of the state. Rumor may kill a king, yet the king still lives.

Agamemnon - you should know there is one who is not here.

One who should have been. One who whom you should have met with love... Orestes. Our son.

With rumor flying into the city daily and a queen driven half mad by her beloved's absence, I thought him safer away.

He lives under the protection of dear Strophius in high-walled Phocis. He, at least, is safe.

Now husband, hero, king - welcome to your home and receive your welcome with right honor. Do not think to ascend to your triumph by trampling on the common ground -

Servants - lay down for these feet that trampled Troy a more proper path to tread. Roll out the crimson cloth, and may justice escort our king to all he thought had been lost to him.

**AGAMEMNON:** Daughter of Leda - wife - Your little speech there went on almost as long as I've been gone. Roll up your flattery, I'm not one of your foreign faggot-kings who thinks he's a god on earth for all to worship. I'm a man, and a Greek, and I know my place. In heaven gods walk on air, on earth they walk on silk. A man should keep his feet on the ground.

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** Blessed Agamemnon -

**AGAMEMNON:** Lord Agamemnon. Call me blessed when I am dead.

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** Why wait so long? Enjoy your victory. If Praxinos had won would he have hesitated?

**AGAMEMNON:** Priam? He'd have laid his bare ass on Gold tapestries torn from a temple and given a good fart in my memory.

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** Then conduct yourself with due dignity and accept only those honors awaiting you. You are a king and a hero, and your people expect this of you.

**AGAMEMNON:** The people hold me in such opinion?

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** It is only just. In this pageant the people act their part. Act yours, king. Consent. Let your will be bend to this performance.

**AGAMEMNON:** You seem to have set the stage.

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** My part is played. Paly yours now, and act as a king should. I will stand by. It is only just.

**AGAMEMNON:** If it means so much, very well. But let me take off my shoes. If I'm to play this uneasy part I'll offend as least as possible. There. Your crimson cloth is beneath my feet. Agamemnon stands on sea-dyed silk.

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** And so see our king - he walks on water. Oh, Agamemnon. The riches beneath your feet. Ten thousand sea-snails from the churning ocean their living shells crushed, thair substance reduced into crimson dye. Ten thousand leagues colored in ten times ten thousand seas I would have given for this one moment - Agamemnon home.

The gods have given you this life, this kingdom and this wealth - step willingly now into the home of your fathers. Come, be purified.

**AGAMEMNON:** I will. Someone attend to this snail - see if you can draw her from her silent shell. She was Priam's child, now a slave. That's life. She's given to strange forebodings, she sees phantoms. I wonder what prophecy she'd have on my path over holy cloth? No matter. Agamemnon, son of Atreus, King of Argos, Lord of Mycenae, Conqueror of Troy - has returned! Gentlemen, Victory!

**(AGAMEMNON ASCENDS. CLYTEMNESTRA APPROACHES CASSANDRA)**

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** Little sparrow. You're Cassandra, I've heard of you. They say you're the priestess of Apollo but all you prophecies are lies. What unholy acts has your altar seen? You don't speak? You don't wish to speak? Come inside, and we'll clean you up. There's hot water waiting. So many bruises. Your father is dead. My husband did that. All of your brothers. Your city is gone. Here is your home now. It is what it is. See a kind of kindness in this cruelty = I only speak the truth. Accept it. No. I know what it is to be a slave. Ten years I've lived a slave to memory. It's

nothing that I would wish upon you. There is much suffering in life. Come inside when you're ready. Gentlemen, attend to her. Comfort her.

**(CLYTEMNESTRA ASCENDS)**

**(CASSANDRA LAUGHS, BEGINNING WITH IRONY AND MOVING TO HYSTERIA)**

**LEADER:** Will you shut up? Good lord, I can't breathe!

**STROPHE:** Health, wealth, happiness. It's called the good life. A fortune in crimson lies there, more than I'll ever have. Now the mad slaves laughs. You give prophecy? Give us some. I'm sick of sticking my hands out In the dark groping for any answer.

**CASSANDRA:** Apollo! Apollo! Bright Apollo! You motherfucker!

**LEADER:** Are you mad, woman? You shouldn't address a god like that! She didn't mean it!

**CASSANDRA:** A stone will grow in your bladder, when you can piss you'll piss screaming. A surgeon you beg will slice you open. The wound will fester and spread corruption. Your balls will fall off and then you'll die.

**STROPHE:** She didn't mean it.

**LEADER:** Some disease ravages this girl's brain.

**CASSANDRA:** What kind of house is this?

**ANTISTROPHE:** This is the house of Atreus. Don't you know where you are? Look, there - the lion gate. It's famous. You must have heard about it.

**CASSANDRA:** Apollo! You have brought me to my doom. This house is a house hateful of god. This house eats its young. The cannibal-king's hall is bathed in blood.

**ANTISTROPHE:** We know the stories. Don't speak of them here.

**CASSANDRA:** Fishbone in the throat.

**ANTISTROPHE:** There are other tales. Stories told about you. About Apollo. Tell us, are they true?

**CASSANDRA:** That he lusted after me? That he pressed himself against me and breathed hot breathe in my ear as only a god can? Do you want me to tell you what the body of a god feels like beside you? How a holy prick feels when it's growing hard against your thighs?

**LEADER:** Modesty forbids asking.

**CASSANDRA:** Modesty? He wanted me. I promised him my body. I said he could be first to fuck me. I got a pretty present for my words.

**STROPHE:** You bore a child for bright Apollo?

**CASSANDRA:** I was made pregnant with prophecy. The unborn future is carried in me.

**STROPHE:** So it's true. But there no truth found in the fables you tell. Everyone knows that.

**CASSANDRA:** I denied the god. Apollo popped not my cherry. He had his revenge.

**STROPHE:** Revenge of what kind?

**CASSANDRA:** Just a small curse. I prophesy truth. But the curse is no-one believes me. Not that it would help a deflated goat-skin like you, but here's the best advice you'll ever have - never leave the bed of a god when he's got blue balls. You won't believe a word I say. Stroke.

**STROPHE:** These are the willful imaginings Of a diseased brain.

**LEADER:** Just as I told you.

**CASSNADRA:** I told my father what Troy's fate would be.

**ANTISTROPHE:** This girl frightens me.

**CASSANDRA:** Blood knows blood. Blood finds blood. Blood seeks its own. This blood in this house. It's a deaf chorus. How can you not hear the screaming of these silent stones? How can it not burn away at your ears? Are you all

also blind? Blood and sick smear these floors. And they are there too. Pretty, bloody boys. Limp, naked, bodies hang on butcher's hooks. Oh, god, god, can't you please close their eyes?

**LEADER:** What's that she's babbling? I, for one, can't follow any of this.

**ANTISTROPHE:** See sees Thyestes's sons.

**STROPHE:** That's an ancient crime. That curse must have gone from this house by now. Fine prophet to foretell what has passed.

**CASSANDRA:** This past is prophecy. Time unravels. The lion's cub played in her father's jaws. The serpent and the eagle are matched.

**LEADER:** Now she's on to snakes. Great.

**CASSANDRA:** There's a more-knowing chorus waiting beneath this house. The furies will sing for you soon. Unseeing eyes will open. The light will burn from the bottom of the black pool. You - You - You will see Agamemnon's murdered corpse.

**LEADER:** Those words are treason!

**CASSANDRA:** Convict me. My sentence is already set. Throw your precious things in the ocean - what was dear enough to deny a god, he plucked on a pile of his plunder. So now Apollo. On your altar he made me sacrifice. Your holy stones the bed that broke my back, split me, and offered all I had been, but now am no more. But then you know. You saw everything. On your altar, Apollo! You got what you wanted in the end. So piss on you, holy god Apollo. Piss on the girl that was your puppet. Piss on your priestess and her pomperly. Piss on it. Piss on you. Piss on it all. The god will insist on one more taste of me. Listen. Stand here and listen! You're the chorus. That's what you do!

He's naked now. She's rubbed his brutal body With holy oil, propitiating his paunch, sanctifying his wine-fat gut. Everything is in order as he rises. The bright bronze bath is full. The waters of his purification have been warmed with her fire.

And now for the net. Attendants, if you could see his face. His arms caught, his breath compressed in him. Everything is in perfect order as he slips again into the warm womb-dark waters and she wraps her thighs around him and the dagger slides in. And again. And again. And again. And again. So the water is broken with blood. So the curse is born to this house again.

Gentlemen, nobles of the Mycenaean state, your king is murdered. And I shall follow.

**CHORUS:** Prophetess - Cassandra - we believe you.

**CASSANDRA:** This prophecy is past. Remember me. Remember me in the blood yet to come. Do my body justice so my spirit may find some slight peace. The missing child will come for the secret man. And blood will come for blood of its own. Remember me. Wealth is dry leaves. Power is the wind. Our bodies are dust. Suffering is all. Remember me.

**(CASSANDRA ASCENDS)**

**LEADER:** She speaks well, and makes a good point. All material wealth is nothing and may return to nothing in a moment.

This house, this kingdom, all may go in an instant. We thank the gods for what they see fit to grant the living. We thank Fate for overseeing the workings of our universe. We thank great Justice for attending to the needs of Fate.

**FURIES:** Murder!

**LEADER:** What was that?

**FURIES:** I am being murdered!

**STROPHE:** The king! The king cries out from within!

**LEADER:** Regicide! A coup! There's a coup going on right now!

**ANTISTROPHE:** Shouldn't we be doing something?

**LEADER:** We can't do anything, we're the chorus! We can only await and see?

**CHORUS:** What horrors shall our eyes behold when this foul deed is revealed to us?

**(CLYTEMNESTRA ENTERS, WEeping)**

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** Gentlemen, you see before you a happy woman. here, I confess. A decade's uneasy sleep is ended. Welcome, light. Break open my eyes, slice the surface off these clouded pools, and strike once again into my mind. I do confess. The fish is wrapped in his net to catch a fish so is not foul, Gentlemen, for I am your savior. If we were to live beneath his lies this Leviathan would swallow us all. I have killed my husband. I confess.

**LEADER:** Murderer!

**CHORUS:** Unnatural murderer!

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** The unnatural order is ended - that man had filled the wine-jars of this house with his own family's blood! Justice pours from me. The dregs are drained and splashed on the floor.

There's the body of your king, I, Clytemnestra, did this thing.

**LEADER:** What salt-water poison have you drunk to brag so brazenly about this abomination!

**CHORUS:** There will be punishment! There will be recrimination! The people of Argos sentence you to exile!

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** My child was murdered on the advice of birds! Where were you then? The winds didn't shift fast enough for him so he threw my daughter on the altar! Where were you then? My daughter, gentlemen. Where were you then? The life from my belly torn away from me. The child who slept with me, who slept in me, torn away from me for the sake of his brother's bruised feelings over his runaway whore! Where were you then? You stood by.

**LEADER:** There's mad blood in your eyes! You're mad! This is madness! Be warned, you - Justice never rests!

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** I am justice! You think the strength in a woman's hand drove home this dagger? Such strength is not mine! This hand is not mine! Justice herself has such strength! A fury possessed me! A fury sent by justice possessed me! The earth is crying for justice! His death was the demand of justice!

**LEADER:** And that pigeon that he plucked? Cassandra?

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** She lies beside him. That was the demand of peace. I could not stand by.

**CHORUS:** Mourn, great Agamemnon. Mourn our lost king. The king is dead. You are no longer our queen.

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** Who would you have rule you in my place? You are incapable to do it yourselves. There's one more charade that needs to end. Aegisthus shares my bed. You all know it, don't pretend you don't. The need is over. The last son of Thyestes. That man whose brothers were slaughtered and served in a pie that came from the kitchens of this house Has claimed his part in this justice. Call him now your king. It's what he's owed.

**(AEGISTHUS ENTERS)**

**AEGISTHUS:** Gentlemen and nobles of Argos -

**CHORUS:** Adulterer! Usurper! Son of a whore!

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** The army is loyal to us. Title him so again.

**AEGISTHUS:** I will accept their titles, dear queen. If they will accept to hold onto theirs. Gentlemen, you know the pageant of the state must proceed. Gentlemen, you know without her best men and finest families Argos is nothing. Atreus and my father were brothers. Consider Atreus' unnatural acts to have shifted the line of succession. Gentlemen, you know the man who was your king's father and in his own time was your king killed my brothers and baked them in a pie. I was an infant, and I alone escaped,

but if Atreus had wanted dessert I'm sure I wouldn't be speaking to you now. Retain you titles. Retain you roles. Accept your queen as you have already done For the year's of Agamemnon's desertion. The only change is that the shadow government now stands in the sun.

**CHORUS:** Much against our will, we do as you say.

**CLYTEMNESTRA:** Gentlemen, Give my husband's body a proper burial. Heap the earth as high as he deserves.

**(CLYTEMNESTRA AND AEGISTHUS EXIT)**

**STROPHE:** Hateful Atreus.

**LEADER:** Cursed Tantalus.

**ANTISTROPHE:** Pitiful Iphigenia.

**CHORUS:** When shall it end? Blood out of blood. Curse upon curse. Furies call beneath the floor. Vengeance. Vengeance. Holy Vengeance. Praise the hand that hits the tyrant. Praise the arm that restores the land. Agamemnon rests beneath the land. Justice. Justice. Holy Justice. Let him come the son of our fallen king. Let him bring the fury's reckoning. Let him bring an end -

**STROPHE:** An end -

**ANTISTROPHE:** An end -

**LEADER:** An end -

**STROPHE:** Hateful Atreus.

**ANTISTROPHE:** Cursed Clytemnestra.

**LEADER:** Sweet Orestes!

**CHORUS:** Avenging Orestes! Another cub claws at the lion's gate - Our dead king's son inherits now a fate to end what's again begun and so I pray - Orestes, come!