

# OEDIPUS // TECH DRAFT

By Sophocles

Adapted by Jenny Koons

ASL Adaptation by Andrew Morrill and Alexandria Wailes

*A note from the original translation: This translation, which has been prepared by Ian Johnston of Malaspina University-College, Nanaimo, BC, is in the public domain and may be used, in whole or in part, without permission and without charge, provided the source is acknowledged— released August 2004. The translator would like to acknowledge the invaluable help provided by Sir Richard Jebb's translation and commentary.*

## **Dramatis Personae**

**OEDIPUS** - King of Thebes

**CREON** - Oedipus' brother-in-law, brother of Jocasta

**JOCASTA** - Wife of Oedipus, sister of Creon

**TIRESIAS** - An Oracle

## **THE CHORUS**

*All of the following characters are also members of the CHORUS.*

**OEDIPUS ADVISOR (ROLE TITLE TBD)** - Oedipus's private interpreter and confidant.

**CHORUS LEADER** - A leader of the Chorus and conduit between Oedipus and the people

**CORINTHIAN** - An old herdsman from the neighboring city of Corinth

**HERDSMAN** - A Theban, formerly of the house of Laius

**PALACE SERVANT** - A servant of Oedipus

**CHORUS 1** - Chorus + Understudy Track

**CHORUS 2** - Chorus + Understudy Track

## **A Note on Language + Coding**

Language notes are included before each scene, outlining the languages used and how we will approach multiple languages within the scene. All notes will be refined and specified alongside performers in rehearsal.

Oracle or prophecy text is in **underlined bold**.

Heightened text to inspire the visual language of the CHORUS is ***CAPITALIZED ITALICS***.

**CAPTIONED TEXT IN RED.**

**SIM COM TEXT IN BLUE.**

## PROLOGUE

### **SCENE TITLE: NO SCENE TITLE**

A Call to the Muse

*A single performer arrives onstage. She begins the Call to the Muse.*

*Performers walk down the audience stairs and through the stage with lights and incense, filling the amphitheater with ceremony and scent.*

*They lead us through a physical commencement ritual, conjuring the story we will inhabit, and its thousands of interpretations across time. They morph and merge to introduce our characters and their name signs: OEDIPUS, JOCASTA, and TIRESIAS. They introduce key signs and phrases we will see and/or learn to recognize: oracle, future, king, prophecy, blind.*

*They conjure up the spirit of this story, revived anew again this evening, one more retelling in the thousands of retellings across time.*

*They demarcate the playing space.*

#### **WE INTRODUCE THE PROPHECY AND TIRESIAS:**

AND TELL

OF THE PROPHECY,

TOLD IN WHISPERS AND SHADOWS FOR HIS ENTIRE LIFE,

INEVITABLE CONCLUSION TO A LIFE SPENT ON THE RUN.

#### **WE INTRODUCE LAIUS:**

TELL

OF THE BRUTAL MURDER ON THE CROSSROADS,

AN UNPLANNED MEETING ENDING IN TRAGEDY.

#### **WE INTRODUCE JOCASTA:**

TELL

OF THE LOVES HE SHELTERED,

HIS WIFE AND MOTHER AND CHILDREN,

THOSE YEARS OF TENDER AND UNKNOWING BLINDNESS.

**WE INTRODUCE OEDIPUS:**

TELL

OF THE MAN OF WITS,  
DRIVEN BY RESPONSIBILITY, AMBITION, AND POWER,  
YET BLIND TO THE TRUTH RIGHT BEFORE HIS EYES.

*Performers invite the audience to join a “heartbeat” rhythm, calling the energy of the space to awaken. They build the heartbeat with the audience, waves of sound and vibration and movement through the collective.*

*As it dies down, the CHORUS transforms to become the people of Thebes...*

## 1.1

*Outside of the royal palace. A crowd of citizens is gathered. They are people in the middle of a plague. They are desperate for answers and seeking a leader. They have come to wait at OEDIPUS's doorstep to beg for help. They carry branches, garlands, and offerings. They are led by the CHORUS LEADER. At long last, OEDIPUS enters through the palace doors.*

### **SCENE TITLE: A PLAGUE IN THEBES**

1 OEDIPUS: My children, my people of Thebes,  
2 why have you come here begging,  
3 bowing down to me, while the city  
4 fills with wails and cries of pain?  
5 It wouldn't be right for me  
6 to hear about this from anyone else,  
7 so I have come myself-- I, Oedipus,  
8 king of this land.

9 Tell me—  
10 you speak for those here.  
11 What brings you to me—fear or need?  
12 I will help you.  
13 I will do anything I can.  
14 I would be a cold man indeed,  
15 if I did not pity those before me.

16 CHORUS LEADER: Oedipus, ruler of our country,  
17 you see how people here of every age  
18 kneel before you.  
19 Our city, as you yourself can see,  
20 is plunged into disaster.

21 Disease infects our food and crops,  
22 Disease infects our cattle and herds.  
23 Deadly sickness swallows the city whole.  
24 We sit here waiting for you, not because we think  
25 You're equal to the Gods,  
26 But because you saved us before.

27 ~~Fifteen~~ years ago you saved us from the Sphinx,  
28 Without anyone's help, you saved us from death.

29 We could do nothing. We knew nothing.  
30 You saved our lives.

31 Now, King Oedipus, most powerful,  
32 We beg of you:  
33 Help us again!  
34 Do you know something?  
35 You always know what to do!  
36 We trust you!  
37 Save the city!

38 We've celebrated you as our savior.  
39 You earned that name.  
40 Don't let our memory of you  
41 show you saved us, only to have us fall.  
42 You did it before.  
43 Do it again!

44 OEDIPUS: My poor children,  
45 Of course I understand why you're here.  
46 You are sick, and yet,  
47 none of your sickness equals mine.  
48 Your pain is each of yours, alone.  
49 But my pain is for me,  
50 and for the city, and for you-- all together.  
51 You must know I've been shedding many tears  
52 and exploring many options.  
53 I've already put action in motion.  
54 I sent my brother-in-law, Creon, to see the Oracle,  
55 to learn what I might do or say to save our city.  
56 I'd be a fool  
57 not to act on what the Gods command.

58 CHORUS LEADER: Well said and just in time.  
59 These men say they have seen Creon.

60 OEDIPUS: Gods!  
61 Let good news shine bright in your eyes.

62 CHORUS LEADER: To good news, yes!

## 1.2

Enter CREON.

### **SCENE TITLE: A MESSAGE FROM THE ORACLE**

1 OEDIPUS: My royal brother,  
2 What's the message from the Oracle?

3 CREON: Good news. If fortune smiles,  
4 It will set these troubles straight. [beat]

5 OEDIPUS: Why do you pause?  
6 I can't tell if I should be hopeful or afraid.

7 CREON: If you want to hear the news in public,  
8 I'll speak. Or we could go inside.

9 OEDIPUS: Say it here, in front of everyone.  
10 The grief I feel for my people is more  
11 than any pain I feel for my own life.

12 CREON: Then I will report what I heard from the Oracle.

*This is the first use of the ORACLE language, which ignites the CHORUS as one unit. They are a flock, signing the following lines while CREON speaks them to OEDIPUS.*

13 **You must drive away**  
14 **the polluting stain this land is harboring.**  
15 **You will not heal if you keep nursing it.**

16 OEDIPUS: What sort of cleansing?

17 CREON: **By banishment.**  
18 **Or make amends for murder by shedding blood again.**  
19 **The blood of the past brings the sickness which plagues the city.**

20 OEDIPUS: A murder?  
21 Who is the man the Oracle describes?

22 CREON: Before you came,  
23 Before you were King, Laius ruled this land.

*We call back to the introduction of LAIUS in the Prologue. We see him embodied onstage, through silhouette and/or name sign.*

24 OEDIPUS: I've heard of Laius, but I never met the man.

25 CREON: Laius was murdered. And now the Oracle is clear:

26 **The murderers must be punished,**  
27 **whoever they are.**

28 OEDIPUS: Where are they?  
29 In what country? How do I find clues  
30 for this ancient crime? They will be impossible to find.

31 CREON: **The murderers are here in Thebes.**  
32 **What is sought is found,**  
33 **What is ignored escapes.**

34 OEDIPUS: But where was Laius murdered?  
35 In the palace, in his fields, or in another land?

36 CREON: He was abroad, on his way to Delphi.  
37 He started the trip, but never came home.

38 OEDIPUS: Wasn't anyone with him?  
39 No witnesses?  
40 Not one clue to solve this crime?

41 CREON: They were all murdered—except for one who was afraid  
42 and ran away. There was only one thing  
43 he could tell us about what he saw.

44 OEDIPUS: What was it?

45 CREON: He said it was robbers who attacked them—  
46 not one man, but a gang of them—  
47 they came on with force and killed everyone.

48 ~~—————~~ OEDIPUS: How could a thief have done this?  
49 ~~—————~~ Unless someone paid him to?

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50 ~~—————~~ CREON: That's what we thought.  
51 ~~—————~~ But then Laius was dead  
52 ~~—————~~ And the city was in trouble with the Sphinx,  
53 ~~—————~~ So no one could investigate.

54 OEDIPUS: Then I will start the investigation again!  
55 The Gods are right  
56 To remind us of our responsibilities to the dead.  
57 I will work with you to seek vengeance for the city!  
58 I will remove this stain, not just for some distant man,  
59 But for myself.  
60 Whoever killed the King  
61 may turn against me, too, and kill me.  
62 In avenging Laius, I serve myself.

63 But now, my children, ~~stand up from these altar steps.~~  
64 Go and call the people to assemble here.  
65 I'll do everything I can.

*OEDIPUS and CREON go into the palace.*

66 CHORUS LEADER: ~~Get up, children.~~  
67 Oedipus has given his word  
68 That he will do what we asked,  
69 And we all heard the Oracle.

*(To the Gods)*

70 Help us! Save us from this sickness!

*The CHORUS LEADER and the CITIZENS leave.*

### 1.3

*Enter the CHORUS.*

**SCENE TITLE: [CHORUS SCENES WILL NOT HAVE TITLES.]**

1           GODS!  
2           WHY DO YOU COME TO US NOW?  
3           OUR TENDER HEARTS SHAKE WITH FEAR.  
4           OUR TENDER HEARTS SHAKE WITH FEAR.  
5           OUR SWEET HEALERS TO WHOM WE CRY,  
6           WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM US?

7           SPEAK TO US!  
8           TELL US!

9           WE CALL ON YOU FIRST, THE IMMORTAL ATHENA,  
10          AND ON YOUR SISTER, THE BRAVE ARTEMIS,  
11          AND ON YOU, BRIGHT APOLLO,  
12          YOU THREE GUARDIANS AGAINST DEATH,  
13          APPEAR TO US NOW!  
14          IF EVER YOU HAVE SAVED US,  
15          IF EVER YOU HAVE SENT THE FLAMES OF MISERY AWAY,  
16          COME, SAVE US NOW!

17          ALAS, THE PAINS WE BEAR HAVE NO END,  
18          OUR PEOPLE, ALL OUR PEOPLE, SICK WITH PLAGUE.  
19          OUR LIVES LIKE BIRDS TAKE WING,  
20          LIKE SPARKS THAT FLY OFF WHEN A FIRE ROARS,  
21          TO THE DARK SHORE OF THE DEAD.  
22          COME, SAVE US NOW!

23          OUR CITY DIES—WE'VE LOST COUNT OF ALL THE DEAD.  
24          HER SONS LIE IN THE DIRT UNPITIED, UNLAMENTED.  
25          CORPSES SPREAD THE PESTILENCE, WHILE YOUTHFUL WIVES  
26          AND GRAY-HAIRED MOTHERS ON THE ALTAR STEPS  
27          WAIL AND CRY IN SUPPLICATION,  
28          SEEKING TO RELIEVE THEIR AGONIZING PAIN.  
29          COME, SAVE US NOW!

30        *LORD OF LIGHT, APOLLO, WE ASK YOU TO LIFT YOUR BOW.*  
31        *LOOSE FROM ITS STRING*  
32        *A SHOWER OF ARROWS, IRRESISTIBLE.*

33        *OUR FEARFUL HEARTS BEG WITH FEAR.*  
34        *OUR FEARFUL HEARTS BEG WITH FEAR.*  
35        *OUR FEARFUL HEARTS BEG WITH FEAR.*

36        *OH SWEET HEALER TO WHOM WE CRY,*  
37        *SPEAK TO US!*  
38        *TELL US!*

39        *COME SAVE US, NOW!*

## 1.4

*Enter OEDIPUS from the palace. The people gather around Oedipus. It is a formal, publicized event. He is in politician mode, a different energy from the first scene.*

### **SCENE TITLE: A STATE OF EMERGENCY**

1 OEDIPUS: You pray to the Gods, but if you listen to me,  
2 You'll get your wish.

3 I speak as someone who doesn't know this story,  
4 a true stranger to the crime.  
5 But I can't find who did it  
6 Without any clues.

7 And so, I proclaim  
8 the following to all of you:  
9 Whoever knows who murdered Laius,  
10 I order you to reveal it to me.  
11 If the murderer's afraid,  
12 Do not fear you will condemn yourself.  
13 I offer amnesty and will drop all charges--  
14 Only exile, and you will leave this land unharmed.  
15 If someone knows the killer is a foreigner,  
16 let them not stay silent.  
17 As well as a rich reward, they'll earn my thanks.

18 But if you remain quiet, if anyone,  
19 through fear, hides yourself or a friend of yours  
20 against my orders, here's what I shall do—  
21 so listen carefully.  
22 I decree  
23 that no one in this land, in which I rule  
24 as the king, shall give that killer shelter,  
25 or talk to him,  
26 or sit next to him during prayers,  
27 or even look him in the eye.  
28 Ban him from your homes, every one of you,  
29 for he is our pollution, as the Oracle revealed.  
30 I stand here as an ally of the gods  
31 and of murdered Laius. And I pray

32            whoever the man is who did this crime,  
33            one person acting on his own  
34            or with companions, the worst of agonies  
35            will wear out his wretched life.

36            I pray, too,  
37            that, if he should become a honored guest  
38            in my own home,  
39            I may suffer all the things I've just called down  
40            upon the killers. And I urge you now  
41            to make sure all these orders take effect,  
42            for my sake, for the sake of the Gods,  
43            and for our barren, sickened, ruined land.

44            Even if the Gods were not threatening us,  
45            It is not right to leave the murder of a king unsolved.  
46            You should have looked into it.  
47            But now I have the power which Laius had.  
48            I have his bed and his wife—  
49            So now I fight for him,  
50            As if he were my own father,  
51            and I strive  
52            to do everything I can to find the murderer,  
53            and avenge Laius.

54            To those who do not follow my command,  
55            I pray the Gods send you no fertile land,  
56            nor children in your women's wombs,  
57            May you die in our present fate  
58            or one even more hateful.

59            To those of you who support my efforts,  
60            may Justice, our ally, and all the Gods  
61            Look on us with kindness always.

62 CHORUS LEADER: Our King,  
63 since you put your trust in me,  
64 I'll say this, I am not the murderer,  
65 nor do I know who he is.  
66 But as for what you proclaim,  
67 It's for the Gods to tell us who did it.

68 OEDIPUS: That is true. But no man has the power  
69 to force the Gods to speak against their will.

70 CHORUS LEADER: Can I suggest what seems to me  
71 the next best course of action?

72 OEDIPUS: Of course.

73 CHORUS LEADER: The blind prophet Tiresias  
74 can see things, as clear as the Gods.  
75 From her, a man investigating a murder  
76 might find out the details of the crime.

77 OEDIPUS: I've already taken care of that.  
78 At Creon's urging,  
79 I've sent messengers to Tiresias.

80 CHORUS LEADER: Our King,  
81 there are rumors from a long time ago.

82 OEDIPUS: What kind of rumors?

83 CHORUS LEADER: It was said  
84 that Laius was killed by travelers on the road.

85 OEDIPUS: Yes, I heard that. But no one saw  
86 the one who did it.

87 CHORUS LEADER: Well, if the killer is hiding,  
88 once he hears your curses on him,  
89 he will not hold back, for they are serious.

90 OEDIPUS: When a man has no fear of doing the act,  
91 He is not afraid of words.

92 CHORUS LEADER: At last, Tiresias is coming here.  
93 Our blind prophet, the only human who was born to know the truth.

## 1.5

*Enter TIRESIAS accompanied by an interpreter.*

### **SCENE TITLE: THE ORACLE TIRESIAS**

1 OEDIPUS: Tiresias, visionary,  
2 Medium to other worlds, above and below,  
3 although you are blind, you sense the sickness in our city.  
4 You alone, great seer,  
5 Can be our shield and savior.  
6 The Oracle sent us a command:  
7 the only cure  
8 for our sickness is to find  
9 the man who murdered Laius and kill him  
10 or expel him from this land.

11 Help us! Interpret the signs!  
12 Save this city and yourself. Rescue me.  
13 We are in your hands.

14 TIRESIAS: Oh, oh! It is a hateful thing to know  
15 when nothing can be gained from knowledge.

16 OEDIPUS: What's wrong?

17 TIRESIAS: Please let me go home.  
18 You carry your load and I will carry mine.

19 OEDIPUS: What you are saying  
20 is unlawful. Denying us your prophecy  
21 shows no love towards the city  
22 which nurtured you,

23 TIRESIAS: I see your words, dangerous words,  
24 In such times it's best I share nothing.

25 OEDIPUS: If you know something,  
26 do not turn your back on us. We beg you.

27 TIRESIAS: You know so little. I will not reveal  
28 the things I've seen,  
29 You will not learn these horrors from me.

30 OEDIPUS: What?  
31 So you know something and will share nothing?  
32 You betray me and destroy the city?

33 TIRESIAS: Stop your investigation.  
34 You will not learn a thing from me.

35 OEDIPUS: You most disgraceful human!  
36 Why won't you speak? Why are you so stubborn?

37 TIRESIAS: You blame my temper,  
38 but do not see the anger that lives in you.  
39 ~~Instead, you blame me.~~

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40 ~~OEDIPUS: What man who listened to you~~  
41 ~~would not be enraged? You insult the city!~~  
42 ~~If you know what's coming, you must tell me.~~

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43 ~~TIRESIAS: I will say nothing more. Rage on about it,~~  
44 ~~if you wish, as fiercely as you can.~~

45 OEDIPUS: If it's anger you want, then I'll spare you none  
46 And speak what's on my mind.

47 I get the feeling you conspired in the act,  
48 and played your part, as much as you could do,  
49 short of killing Laius with your own hands.  
50 If you could use your eyes, I would have said  
51 that you murdered the man yourself.

52 TIRESIAS: Is that so? Then I ask you to stand by  
53 the words which you yourself proclaimed:  
54 No one here shall ever speak with you again.

55 **For the polluter of this land is you.**

*A collective inhale. The second use of the ORACLE language ignites the CHORUS again as a flock. They now are in an in-between world of language, again activated as a unit.*

56 OEDIPUS: How dare you make up this story?  
57 Do you think you can get away with it?

58 TIRESIAS: I do. The truth makes me strong.

59 OEDIPUS: Who put you up to this?

60 TIRESIAS: You did.  
61 I did not want to speak, but you made me.

62 OEDIPUS: Say it again,  
63 so I can understand you clearly.

64 TIRESIAS: Did you not understand my words  
65 or are you trying to test me?

66 OEDIPUS: I did not understand your words.  
67 Tell me again.

68 TIRESIAS: **The murderer you seek is you.**

*A collective inhale.*

69 OEDIPUS: That's twice you've lied--  
70 something you'll regret.

71 TIRESIAS: Should I say more  
72 so you can grow more enraged?

73 OEDIPUS: Say what you will; your lies mean nothing.

74 TIRESIAS: With your dearest family,  
75 unknown to you, you are living in disgrace.  
76 You have no idea how bad things are.

77 OEDIPUS: Do you think you can  
78 say things like this and remain unpunished?

79 TIRESIAS: Yes, if the truth has any strength.

80 OEDIPUS: It does, but not for you. Truth is not in you—  
81 for your mind and your eyes are blind!

82 TIRESIAS: You are a fool to use harsh words.  
83 Soon enough they'll be hurled back at you.

84 OEDIPUS: Is this plot from Creon  
85 or is it your invention?

86 TIRESIAS: Creon is nothing.  
87 You made this trouble on your own.

88 OEDIPUS: Riches, power, skill--  
89 How you all envy me.  
90 Is it because of my kingly office, which the city  
91 gave me, I did not seek out.  
92 Creon, my trusted family friend,  
93 has conspired to overthrow me  
94 and paid off a fraud like this,  
95 who in his prophecies  
96 is absolutely blind.

97 Tell us,  
98 have you shown proof  
99 of your wise prophecies? When the Sphinx  
100 was here, you said nothing  
101 To save the people. Why not?  
102 Her riddle required a prophet's mind. Right?  
103 And yet the people saw you were no use.  
104 But then I came, Oedipus, who knew nothing.  
105 Yet I silenced her, using my wits,  
106 not signs from the sky.

107 Did you think you could cast me out  
108 And align yourself with Creon?  
109 You will pay dearly for trying

110 To put the blame on me.  
111 TIRESIAS: You insult my blindness,  
112 yet you have sight, and do not see  
113 how miserable you are, or where you live,  
114 or who it is who shares your household.

*A collective inhale. We return to phrases introduced in the PROLOGUE regarding the prophecy. Key phrases in BOLD below.*

115 **Do you even know your parents?**  
116 **Without your knowledge you've become**  
117 **the enemy of your own kindred,**  
118 **Both living and dead.**  
119 **The two-edged curse**  
120 **Of your father and mother will drive you**  
121 **from this land in exile.**  
122 **And then those eyes of yours,**  
123 **which now can see so clearly, will see only darkness.**  
124 **What place will not echo with your cries**  
125 **When you come to understand the marriage you made?**

126 Go on—  
127 insult Creon and my prophecies,  
128 for among all living mortals no one  
129 will be destroyed more horribly than you.

130 OEDIPUS: Get out, and may the plague get rid of you!  
131 Turn your back and go!  
132 And don't come back to my home again.

133 TIRESIAS: I would not have come, but you summoned me.

134 OEDIPUS: I would not have called for you  
135 If I had known you were a blind fool.

136 TIRESIAS: **To your parents, the ones who bore you,**  
137 **I was wise enough.**

*A collective inhale.*

138 OEDIPUS: Wait! My parents? Who gave birth to me?

139 TIRESIAS: This day will reveal that and destroy you.

140 OEDIPUS: Everything you say is in riddles.

141 TIRESIAS: And aren't you the best at solving them?

142 OEDIPUS: Mock my excellence,  
143 but you will find out I am truly great.

144 TIRESIAS: And that greatness now ruins you.

145 OEDIPUS: I don't care what you say. I saved this city.

146 TIRESIAS: I'll leave you to it. ~~Lead me away.~~

147 OEDIPUS: Yes, take her away.  
148 Once you're gone,  
149 you won't annoy me further.

150 TIRESIAS: I'm going.

151 But first I'll tell you why I came.  
152 I am not afraid of you—  
153 There is no way you can hurt me.

154 The man you have been seeking all this time,  
155 while making threats and giving orders—  
156 that man is here.  
157 He will be blind, although now he can see.  
158 He will be poor, although now he is rich.  
159 He will set off for lands unknown,  
160 groping the ground before him with a stick.

161 He will turn out to be the brother  
162 of the children in his house—their father, too,  
163 both at once, and the husband and the son

164 of the woman who gave birth to them.

~~165 He sowed the same womb as his father~~

~~166 and he murdered him.~~

167 Go in and think about this.

168 If you prove me wrong,

169 Then you can say the prophet has no sight.

*Exit TIRESIAS. OEDIPUS turns and goes back into the palace.*

## 2.1

### **SCENE TITLE: [CHORUS SCENES WILL NOT HAVE TITLES.]**

1     *WHO IS THE MAN?*  
2     *WHO IS THE KILLER?*  
3     *WHO IS THE MAN?*

4     *THE ORACLE TELLS OF*  
5     *UNSPEAKABLE CRIMES.*

6     *WHO STAINED HIS HANDS IN BLOOD?*  
7     *WHO MURDERED LAIUS?*

8     *THE TIME HAS NOW COME FOR HIM TO FLEE--*  
9     *MORE SWIFTLY THAN HORSES*  
10    *RIDING THE WIND OF A STORM.*  
11    *BUT THE GODS CHASE AFTER HIM,*  
12    *THUNDERBOLTS BLAZING.*  
13    *EVEN THE FURIES CANNOT BE SHAKEN OFF HIS TRAIL.*

14    *THEY ARE LOOKING FOR HIM.*  
15    *THEY ARE LOOKING FOR HIM.*

16    *THE ALL-SEEING GODS*  
17    *FLASH A MESSAGE:*  
18    *"FOLLOW HIS TRACKS, FIND HIM,*  
19    *WHOEVER HE MAY BE."*  
20    *LIKE A WILD BULL THE MURDERER WANDERS NOW,*  
21    *HIDDEN IN THE SHADOWS,*  
22    *THROUGH ROCKS AND CAVES, ALONE.*  
23    *BUT THE ORACLE SEES ALL,*  
24    *HOVERING ABOVE THE KILLER'S HEAD AS HE HIDES.*

25    *THE BLIND PROPHET*  
26    *BRINGS UNSETTLING DREAD.*  
27    *WE CANNOT BELIEVE HER.*  
28    *WE CANNOT DENY HER.*

29 *BLIND TO HERE AND NOW,*  
30 *BLIND TO THE PAST, BLIND TO THE FUTURE.*

31 *HOW CAN WE JOIN THE CAUSE OF LAIUS*  
32 *AGAINST OEDIPUS, WITH HIS POPULARITY?*  
33 *THE MURDER IS YET UNSOLVED.*

34 *THE GODS ARE WISE--*  
35 *THEY UNDERSTAND WHAT HUMANS DO.*  
36 *BUT DO HUMAN PROPHETS GRASP THINGS ANY MORE*  
37 *THEN WE DO?*

38 *UNTIL WE SEE THE CHARGE MADE GOOD,*  
39 *WE WILL NOT ADD OUR VOICES TO THE ACCUSER'S.*  
40 *OEDIPUS SAVED US.*  
41 *HE WAS A WISE MAN THEN. WE WITNESSED IT.*  
42 *THE WHOLE CITY LOVED HIM.*

43 *WE CANNOT CONVICT HIM YET,*  
44 *NOT YET, NOT OF ANY CRIME.*

45 *WE CANNOT.*  
45 *WE CANNOT.*  
46 *WE CANNOT.*

## 2.2

*Enter CREON from offstage.*

### **SCENE TITLE: THE ALLEGATIONS**

1 CREON: My fellow citizens, I have just heard  
2 that Oedipus has leveled charges  
3 against me, disturbing allegations.  
4 This I will not tolerate, so I have come here myself.  
5 If Oedipus believes  
6 he has suffered any injury from me,  
7 in word or deed, then I have no desire  
8 to continue living still bearing his reproach.  
9 The injury produced by his accusation  
10 is no single matter—  
11 It has the greatest impact of all  
12 if I end up being called a traitor  
13 To my city, a bad citizen,  
14 A traitor to you and my family.

15 CHORUS LEADER: He was driven by anger,  
16 Not by judgment.

17 CREON: Did he say, in front of everyone,  
18 that I convinced Tiresias to tell lies?

19 CHORUS LEADER: That's what was said. I have no idea  
20 What was meant.

*Enter OEDIPUS from the palace. OEDIPUS and CREON use interpreters to interact.*

21 OEDIPUS: Creon! How did you get here?  
22 So bold to come to my own home!  
23 You, the murderer of the King who once lived here,  
24 a thief who now wants to steal my throne?  
25 ————— Tell me—

~~26~~ ————— Did you do it because you thought  
~~27~~ ————— I was a coward or a fool?

28 CREON: Look at me! It's your turn  
29 to hear me make a suitable response.  
30 Hear me out, then judge me for yourself.

31 OEDIPUS: To say you betrayed me?

32 CREON: If you take pride in being stubborn  
33 and forgetting common sense,  
34 then you're not thinking as you should.

35 OEDIPUS: And if you think you can harm  
36 Your own family without penalty,  
37 Then you're not thinking as you should

38 CREON: I agree. What you've just said makes sense.  
39 So tell me the damage you're suffering because of me.

40 OEDIPUS: Did you persuade me  
41 to send for Tiresias, the prophet, yes or no?

42 CREON: Yes. And I'd still give you the same advice.

43 OEDIPUS: How long is it since Laius was murdered?

44 CREON: That was long ago—  
45 many years have passed since then.

46 OEDIPUS: At that time,  
47 was Tiresias as skilled in prophecy?

48 CREON: Then, as now, she was honored for his wisdom.

49 OEDIPUS: And back then did she ever mention me?

50 CREON: No, never—not while I was with her.

51 OEDIPUS: Did you not investigate Laius's murder?

52 CREON: We tried. But we found nothing.

53 OEDIPUS: And why did this oracle, this wise oracle, not speak up then?

54 CREON: I don't know. When I don't know something,  
55 I keep my mouth shut.

56 OEDIPUS: If it weren't for you,  
57 Tiresias wouldn't dare name me  
58 as the one who murdered Laius.

59 CREON: Is that what she said?  
60 Well, you're the one who knows.

61 I think the time has come for me to question you  
62 the way you've been questioning me.

63 OEDIPUS: Ask all you want. You won't prove  
64 I'm the murderer.

65 CREON: Then tell me this—  
66 Are you not married to my sister?

67 OEDIPUS: There's no denying that.

68 CREON: And you two rule this land as equals?

69 OEDIPUS: Whatever she desires, she gets from me.

70 CREON: And am I not third, equal to you both?

71 OEDIPUS: That's what makes your friendship so deceitful.

72 CREON: Look at it from my point of view.

73 First, consider this. Would anyone  
74 prefer to rule and deal with fear  
75 rather than live in peace, carefree and safe,  
76 if his powers were the same?  
77 I have no desire to be king.  
78 I get everything I want from you,  
79 but without the fear. If I were king,  
80 I'd have to do many things against my will.

81           So how can being a king be sweeter to me  
82           than power without anxiety?  
83           I am not so foolish  
84           that I want things which bring no benefits.  
85           Now I'm friends with everyone, and they all love me.  
86           Those who wish to get something from you  
87           flatter me, since I can help them get  
88           what they want. So why would I  
89           give up benefits for something else?

90           If you want proof, test me.  
91           Go and ask the Oracle if I brought back to you  
92           exactly what was said. At that point,  
93           if you discover I have planned something,  
94           that I've conspired with Tiresias,  
95           then arrest me and have me put to death,  
96           not only on your own authority,  
97           but on mine as well, a double judgment.

98           But don't you dare condemn me on an unproved charge.  
99           It's not fair to judge these things by guesswork,  
100          to assume bad men are good or good men bad.

101          Give it some time.  
102          Only time can validate a man who's true.  
103          But a bad man is exposed in just one day.

104          OEDIPUS: If a conspirator moves against me,  
105          in secret and with speed, I must be quick.  
106          If I rest and wait for him to act, then I'll be finished.

107          CREON: What do you want—to exile me?

108          OEDIPUS: No, not exile. I want you to die.

109          CREON: What have I done to deserve that?

110          OEDIPUS: You'll not convince me.  
111          Trusting you is impossible.

112          CREON: I can see that you've become unbalanced.

113 OEDIPUS: I'm sane enough to defend my interests.

114 CREON: You should be protecting mine as well.

115 OEDIPUS: But you're a treacherous man. It's your nature.

116 CREON: What if you are wrong?

117 OEDIPUS: I still have to govern.

118 CREON: I belong to this city as well—  
119 it is not yours alone!

*The palace doors burst open.*

## 2.3

*Enter JOCASTA from the palace.*

### **SCENE TITLE: THE QUEEN JOCASTA**

1           JOCASTA: What are you thinking?  
2           Why are you arguing like this,  
3           With our city sick and dying?  
4           You should both be ashamed. Out here, in front of everyone?  
5           You, Oedipus, go in the house, and you,  
6           Creon, return to yours.  
7           There's no reason for this!

8           CREON: Sister, your husband, Oedipus, intends  
9           to banish me from my father's country  
10          or have me killed.

11          OEDIPUS: That's right.  
12          Jocasta, I caught him committing treason,  
13          conspiring against my authority.

14          CREON: I swear, in front of everyone,  
15          If I have done what you accuse me of,  
16          Then may the Gods let me die in misery!  
            [beat]

17          JOCASTA: Oedipus, trust him in this.  
18          He has sworn before the Gods.  
19          Do it for my sake and for those around you.

20          CREON: You should not accuse a friend,  
21          and dishonor him with a story  
22          which may not be true.  
23          I've sworn an oath.

24 OEDIPUS: Let him go.  
25 I have been moved  
26 to act compassionately by what you said, Jocasta,  
27 not by Creon's words. But if he stays here,  
28 he will be hateful to me.

29 CREON: You are hateful—  
30 when you lose your temper, you go too far.  
31 Men like that find it most difficult  
32 to tolerate themselves. In that there's justice.

33 OEDIPUS: Why not go—just leave me alone?

34 CREON: I'll leave—  
35 since I see you do not understand me.  
36 But these people here know I'm a reasonable man.

*Exit CREON away from the palace.*

## 2.4

*JOCASTA ushers the CHORUS offstage. This is the first scene without the CHORUS watching and observing. This is OEDIPUS and JOCASTA in “private.” There is a different energy between them. We see the private side of OEDIPUS here.*

### **SCENE TITLE: STORIES FROM THE PAST**

1           JOCASTA: My king, my love,  
2           Why are you so angry?

3           OEDIPUS: It's Creon's fault.  
4           Your brother conspired against me.

5           JOCASTA: What was said? Tell me.

6           OEDIPUS: Creon claims that I'm the murderer—  
7           that I killed Laius.

8           JOCASTA: Did he witness this,  
9           or did he hear it from someone else?

10          OEDIPUS: He set up that lying prophet Tiresias.  
11          What he says himself sounds innocent.

12          JOCASTA: Listen to me, and ease your mind with this—  
13          No human can see the future.  
14          Here's how I know--

*A collective inhale. The CHORUS appears again in the space. They embody the story that JOCASTA tells. This is the first time we see collective physical storytelling.*

15          King Laius once received a prophecy.  
16          It said he would be murdered  
17          by a child conceived by him and me.  
18          But, according to the story,  
19          Laius was killed by strangers  
20          at a place where three roads meet.

21            **And our son?**

22            **Before our son was three days old,**  
23            **Laius nailed his ankles together**  
24            **and ordered men to tie him up and leave him**  
25            **on a mountain where no one ever travels.**

26            This prophecy that our child would murder  
27            his own father never happened.

28            **Laius never suffered what he feared.**  
29            So don't worry about prophecies.

*There is a shift in the space. Perhaps the first hint of a shadow world. OEDIPUS is putting the pieces of the stories together.*

30            OEDIPUS: As I listen to your story,  
31            My mind is confused.

32            JOCASTA: Why do you say that?

33            OEDIPUS: Did you say that Laius  
34            was murdered at a place where three roads meet?

35            JOCASTA: That's what was said and people still believe it.

~~36            OEDIPUS: Where is this place?~~

~~37            JOCASTA: In a land called Phocis.~~

38            OEDIPUS: When was this?

39            JOCASTA: It happened just before you  
40            became King here in Thebes.

41            OEDIPUS: (to himself) Gods, what have you done?

42            JOCASTA: What is it, Oedipus?

43            OEDIPUS: Not yet,  
44            no questions yet. Tell me this—Laius,  
45            how tall was he? How old?

46           JOCASTA: He was big—his hair was turning white.  
47           He was about your height.

48           OEDIPUS: No...

49           JOCASTA: What's going on?

50           OEDIPUS: (to himself) What if the blind prophet can see?  
51           Tell me one more thing.

52           JOCASTA: If you ask me, I will answer you.

53           OEDIPUS: Did Laius have a small group with him  
54           or a troop of soldiers, like a royal king?

55           JOCASTA: Five people were with him.  
56           He was in a carriage.

57           OEDIPUS: (to himself) Now I start to see...  
58           Jocasta, who told you this?

59           JOCASTA: A servant—the only one who got away.

60           OEDIPUS: Is there any chance  
61           She's here now?

62           JOCASTA: No, SHE.  
63           When she returned and found that you were  
64           Now our king,  
65           She begged me to send her  
66           To the countryside  
67           so she could be as far away as possible.  
68           And so I did.  
69           She was just a servant but she'd earned my thanks.

70           OEDIPUS: Can you bring her back here quickly?

71           JOCASTA: Of course, but why?

72           OEDIPUS: Jocasta, I may have said too much.  
73           I want to see her for myself.

74 JOCASTA: Then she will be here. But now,  
75 Husband, talk to me.  
76 What are you afraid of?

77 OEDIPUS: I will not keep anything from you.  
78 There are no secrets between us.

*There is a shift in the telling of this story. Perhaps it is similar to the collective storytelling of JOCASTA or perhaps it is something different.*

79 I grew up in Corinth with my parents,  
80 Polybus and Merope.  
81 Everyone liked me around town,  
82 until one day, when everything changed.

83 At dinner one night, a drunken guest  
84 began shouting at me,  
85 claiming I wasn't my father's real son.  
86 It was all I could do not to beat him right there.  
87 But the next day I asked my parents.  
88 They were angry at the man who insulted them this way,  
89 So I was reassured.  
90 But nonetheless, the suspicion stayed with me.  
91 Always.  
92 And before I knew it, everyone knew the rumors.

*The CHORUS signs the phrases from the Prologue: **He will be blind, although now he can see. He will be poor, although now he is rich.***

93 So I went off secretly to Delphi.  
94 I needed to know the truth.  
95 At first, the Oracle refused to talk to me.  
96 Then finally, it did speak.

97 It told a disgusting story.  
98 It was my fate to bed my own mother,  
99 And have children with her.  
100 Our own families would look away in horror.  
101 It said I would kill my father.

*The CHORUS signs the phrases from the Prologue: **The two-edged curse of your father and mother will drive you from this land in exile.***

102           When I heard that, I ran.  
103           I ran away from the life I knew.  
104           I ran so I would never see that evil prophecy fulfilled.  
105           And in my traveling I came across that place  
106           where you say your king was murdered.  
107           And now, wife, I will tell you the truth.

108           I traveled to a spot where three roads meet,  
109           and in that place I met a herald and a carriage.  
110           Inside there was a man like you described.  
111           The driver tried to force me off the road—  
112           and the old man, too, got involved.  
113           In my rage, I lashed out at the driver,  
114           who kept shoving me aside. The old man,  
115           watching me from inside the carriage,  
116           reached out his gold staff and  
117           struck me on my head, right here on top.  
118           So I struck him with the staff I held  
119           and knocked him from his carriage to the ground.  
120           He lay there on his back while I struck him dead.  
121           And I killed every last one of them, there and then.

*A storytelling shift here, from embodying the story to becoming the “polis.” Suspicious. People threatened by OEDIPUS. The polis that turns on him.*

122           If that stranger was somehow connected to Laius,  
123           Who is worse off than me?  
124           Who could be more hateful to the gods?  
125           No stranger and no citizen can welcome him  
126           into their lives or even speak to him. Instead,  
127           they must keep him from their doors, a curse  
128           I laid upon myself.

129           With these hands of mine,  
130           these killer’s hands, I now contaminate  
131           the dead man’s bed.

132 Now I must go into exile and  
133 never see my people,  
134 never set foot in my homeland again—  
135 or else I must get married to my mother, Merope,  
136 and kill my father, Polybus, who raised me

~~137 O Gods,  
138 may I never see that day!  
139 I would rather vanish from everything I know  
140 than see a fate like that swallow me.~~

~~141 CHORUS LEADER: Keep hope alive until you've heard from  
142 the servant who was there.~~

~~143 JOCASTA: When he arrives, what then?~~

144 OEDIPUS: Bring the servant here. If what she says  
145 matches what you say, then I'll escape disaster.

146 JOCASTA: What was so remarkable in what I said?

147 OEDIPUS: You said that in his story she claimed  
148 Laius was murdered by a group of thieves.  
149 If she still says that there were several men,  
150 then I was not the killer, since one man  
151 could never be mistaken for a crowd.  
152 But if she says it was a single man,  
153 then I'm the one responsible for this.

154 JOCASTA: Well, that's what she said then.  
155 She can't change what she once said.  
156 The whole city heard her, not just me.  
157 But even if she changes her story,  
158 she can't prove that Laius' murder fits the prophecy.  
159 The prophecy said Laius would die  
160 at the hands of a child born from me.  
161 How did that son kill Laius,  
162 when he'd died long before?

163 OEDIPUS: Yes, yes, it makes sense.  
164 But still send for the servant.

165            JOCASTA: I'll call her here as quickly as I can.

166            Let's go inside and wait.

*OEDIPUS and JOCASTA go into the palace together.*

## 2.5

### **SCENE TITLE: [CHORUS SCENES WILL NOT HAVE TITLES.]**

1           *I PRAY FATE STILL FINDS ME WORTHY,  
2           DEMONSTRATING PIETY AND REVERENCE  
3           IN ALL I SAY AND DO—IN EVERYTHING  
4           OUR LOFTIEST TRADITIONS CONSECRATE,  
5           THOSE LAWS ENGENDERED IN THE HEAVENLY SKIES,  
6           WHOSE ONLY FATHER IS OLYMPUS.  
7           THEY WERE NOT BORN FROM MORTAL MEN,  
8           NOR WILL THEY SLEEP AND BE FORGOTTEN.  
9           IN THEM LIVES AN AGELESS MIGHTY GOD.*

10           *INSOLENCE GIVES BIRTH TO TYRANNY—  
11           THAT INSOLENCE WHICH VAINLY CRAMS ITSELF  
12           AND OVERFLOWS WITH SO MUCH STUFF  
13           BEYOND WHAT'S RIGHT OR BENEFICIAL,  
14           THAT ONCE IT'S CLIMBED THE HIGHEST ROOFTOP,  
15           IT'S HURLED DOWN BY FORCE—SUCH A QUICK FALL  
16           THERE'S NO SAFE LANDING ON ONE'S FEET.  
17           BUT I PRAY THE GOD NEVER WILL ABOLISH  
18           THE RIVALRY SO BENEFICIAL TO OUR STATE.  
19           THAT GOD I WILL HOLD ON TO ALWAYS,  
20           THE ONE WHO STANDS AS OUR PROTECTOR.*

20           *BUT IF A MAN CONDUCTS HIMSELF  
21           DISDAINFULLY IN WHAT HE SAYS AND DOES,  
22           AND MANIFESTS NO FEAR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,  
23           NO REVERENCE FOR THE STATUES OF THE GODS,  
24           MAY MISERABLE FATE SEIZE SUCH A MAN  
25           FOR HIS DISASTROUS ARROGANCE,  
26           IF HE DOES NOT BEHAVE WITH JUSTICE  
27           WHEN HE STRIVES TO BENEFIT HIMSELF,  
28           APPROPRIATES ALL THINGS IMPIOUSLY,  
29           AND, LIKE A FOOL, PROFANES THE SACRED.  
30           WHAT MAN IS THERE WHO DOES SUCH THINGS  
31           WHO CAN STILL CLAIM HE WILL WARD OFF  
32           THE ARROW OF THE GODS AIMED AT HIS HEART?  
33           IF SUCH ACTIONS ARE CONSIDERED WORTHY,*

34            *WHY SHOULD WE DANCE TO HONOR GOD?*

35            *NO LONGER WILL I GO IN REVERENCE*  
36            *TO THE SACRED STONE, EARTH'S VERY CENTER,*  
37            *OR TO THE TEMPLE AT ABAE OR OLYMPIA,*  
38            *IF THESE PROPHECIES FAIL TO BE FULFILLED*  
39            *AND MANIFEST THEMSELVES TO MORTAL MEN.*  
40            *BUT YOU, ALL-CONQUERING, ALL-RULING ZEUS,*  
41            *IF BY RIGHT THOSE NAMES BELONG TO YOU,*  
42            *LET THIS NOT EVADE YOU AND YOUR AGELESS MIGHT.*

43            *FOR ANCIENT ORACLES WHICH DEALT WITH LAIUS*  
44            *ARE WITHERING—MEN NOW SET THEM ASIDE.*  
45            *NOWHERE IS APOLLO HONORED PUBLICLY,*  
46            *AND OUR RELIGIOUS FAITH IS DYING AWAY.*

### 3.1

*JOCASTA enters from the palace alone. [Perhaps JOCASTA comes out at the end of the CHORUS moment previously. Perhaps their prayer joins with her prayer here.]*

#### **SCENE TITLE: THE CORINTHIAN**

1           JOCASTA: Gods, I come to you.  
2           Oedipus has let terror  
3           seize his heart and the new prophecies  
4           Frighten him as much as the old ones.  
5           He listens to whoever speaks to him of terrible things.  
6           I can't do anything else for him.

7           Gods, I come to you  
8           with offerings and prayers.  
9           I beg you for help, light out of darkness.

*A CORINTHIAN enters, an older man.*

10          CORINTHIAN: Excuse me, can you tell me where I find  
11          the house of Oedipus?  
12          Or even better, can you tell me where he is?

13          CHORUS LEADER: His home is here, stranger, and he's inside.  
14          This woman is his wife and the mother of his children.

15          CORINTHIAN: May you and your happy home always be blessed.

16          JOCASTA: I wish the same for you, stranger.  
17          I thank you for your kind words.  
18          What brings you here?

19          CORINTHIAN: Good news for your whole house—  
20          and for your husband, too.

21          JOCASTA: What news?  
22          Where are you from?

23 CORINTHIAN: I'm from Corinth.  
24 My news will make you glad,  
25 and perhaps sad, as well.

26 JOCASTA: What is the news?  
27 How can it have two effects at once?

28 CORINTHIAN: The people of Corinth  
29 will make Oedipus their king.  
30 They have announced it.

31 JOCASTA: What are you saying?  
32 Is Polybus no longer king?

33 CORINTHIAN: No. He's dead and in his grave.

34 JOCASTA: What?  
35 Polybus is dead?

36 CORINTHIAN: Yes.  
37 If what I'm telling you is not the truth,  
38 then I deserve to die.

39 JOCASTA: *[to a servant]* You—  
40 Find Oedipus.

*The SERVANT goes into the palace.*

41 So much for prophecies!  
42 Oedipus has been terrified  
43 he would murder his father. He ran away.  
44 Now Polybus has died, killed by fate  
45 and not by Oedipus.

*Enter OEDIPUS from the palace.*

46 OEDIPUS: Jocasta, why did you call me out here?  
47 Who is this man?

48 JOCASTA: He comes from Corinth,  
49 bringing news that Polybus, your father, is dead.

50 OEDIPUS: What?  
51 Stranger, let me hear from you in person.

52 CORINTHIAN: Polybus has passed away.  
53 He's gone.

54 OEDIPUS: At someone else's hand  
55 or from an illness?

56 CORINTHIAN: An illness and from old age.

57 OEDIPUS: Why should any man  
58 pay respect to the Oracle or signs  
59 or prophecies of any kind?  
60 They said that I was going to murder my own father.  
61 But now he's dead and lies beneath the earth,  
62 and I am here.  
63 I never touched him

64 JOCASTA: Didn't I tell you it would be okay?

65 OEDIPUS: You did,  
66 but I was misguided by my fears.

67 JOCASTA: You cannot fill your heart  
68 with all these things.

69 OEDIPUS: (remembering) But my mother's bed—  
70 I am still afraid of that.

71 JOCASTA: Why live in fear?  
72 Chance controls our lives.  
73 We are playthings of fate.  
74 We can't know the future.  
75 So we live day to day, the best we can.  
76 Don't worry that you will wed your mother.  
77 In dreams, men fantasize about their mothers,  
78 it doesn't mean it will come true.

79 OEDIPUS: Everything you say would be right,  
80 if my mother weren't still alive.  
81 But since she is, I'm still afraid.

82 CORINTHIAN: What in her makes you so fearful?

83 OEDIPUS: A terrible prophecy.

84 CORINTHIAN: Is it well known?

85 OEDIPUS: It's public knowledge.  
86 The Oracle once said that I would marry  
87 my own mother and murder my father with my own hands.  
88 That's why, many years ago,  
89 I left my home in Corinth.

90 CORINTHIAN: Because you were afraid of her  
91 you stayed away from Corinth?

92 OEDIPUS: And I did not want to be my father's killer.

93 CORINTHIAN: Why don't I relieve you of this fear?

94 OEDIPUS: You would receive from me a worthy thanks.

95 CORINTHIAN: That's why I came—  
96 I'll receive my reward when you come home.

97 OEDIPUS: I will never go back to my parents.

98 CORINTHIAN: Then it is clear you have no idea  
99 what you are doing--

100 OEDIPUS: [*interrupting*] Explain yourself!

101 CORINTHIAN: --if that's the reason you won't go home.

102 OEDIPUS: Why? If I was born their child--

103 CORINTHIAN: Because you and Polybus are not related.

104 OEDIPUS: What do you mean?

105 CORINTHIAN: **Polybus**  
**was not your father, no more than I am.**

106 OEDIPUS: Then why did he call me his son?

107 CORINTHIAN: **You were a gift.**  
108 **Taken from my own hands.**

109 OEDIPUS: He loved me.  
110 How could he if I came from someone else?

111 CORINTHIAN: Well, before you came, he had no children—  
112 that made him love you.

113 OEDIPUS: When you gave me to him,  
114 had you bought me or found me by accident?

115 CORINTHIAN: I found you in a tangled ravine on the mountain.

116 OEDIPUS: What were you doing up there?

117 CORINTHIAN: Looking after flocks of sheep.

118 OEDIPUS: You were a shepherd?

119 CORINTHIAN: Yes, I was.  
120 And I was also the one who saved you.

121 OEDIPUS: When you found me,  
122 Was I hurt?

123 CORINTHIAN: The ankles on your feet could tell you that.

124 OEDIPUS: Why mention that?

125 CORINTHIAN: Your ankles had been pierced and tied together.  
126 I set them free.

127 OEDIPUS: (to himself) I've had those scars since I was little.  
128 Who did this to me?

129 CORINTHIAN: I don't know. The woman who gave you to me  
130 knows more than I do.

131 OEDIPUS: You took me from someone else?  
132 It wasn't you who found me?

133 CORINTHIAN: No, it wasn't me.  
134 Another shepherd gave you to me.

135 OEDIPUS: Who was she?  
136 Can you tell me about her?

137 CORINTHIAN: I think she was one of Laius' servants—  
138 that's what people said.

139 OEDIPUS: King Laius,  
140 the one who ruled this country before me?

141 CORINTHIAN: That's right. She was one of the king's shepherds.

142 OEDIPUS: Is she still alive? Can I see her?

143 CORINTHIAN: You people live here. You'd best answer that.

144 OEDIPUS: [*turning to the Chorus*]  
145 Do any of you know the woman  
146 he describes?  
147 Answer me. It's critical.  
148 It's time to figure out what this all means.

149 CHORUS LEADER: The woman he describes  
150 is, I think, the same shepherd  
151 you wanted to see earlier.  
152 But Jocasta would know better than anyone.

153 OEDIPUS: My wife,  
154 Is the woman he describes the one we sent for?  
155 Do you know?

156 JOCASTA: Why ask me what he means? Forget all that.  
157 There's no point in figuring out what he said.

158 OEDIPUS: I can't stop now.  
159 I must reveal the truth of my birth.

160 JOCASTA: No! In the name of the gods, no!  
161 If you have any concern for your own life, then stop!  
162 Do not keep investigating this.  
163 Have I not suffered enough?

164 OEDIPUS: Be brave. Even if my mother is shameful,  
165 you would still be noble.

166 JOCASTA: Listen to me, I beg you. Do not do this.

167 OEDIPUS: You will not convince me to give up the truth.

168 JOCASTA: But I care about you—  
169 What I say is for your benefit.

170 OEDIPUS: [*to Chorus*]  
171 Go, one of you, and bring that shepherd here.

172 JOCASTA: You miserable man!  
173 There's nothing more to say to you.  
174 And I'll never speak again.

*JOCASTA runs into the palace.*

175 CHORUS LEADER: Why did the Queen rush off,  
176 Oedipus, so full of grief?  
177 I am afraid.  
178 Something evil hangs over us.

179 OEDIPUS: I have made up my mind.  
180 No matter what I find,  
181 I will know where I came from.  
182 Perhaps my queen is ashamed of me  
183 Because of where I was born.  
184 But I will not be demeaned.  
185 I am a child of fortune,  
186 and she is generous, that mother of mine.

187 My fortunes rise and fall as the moons change.  
188 So if I am her child, why should I be afraid to find the truth?  
189 I am who I am.

### 3.2

*OEDIPUS remains onstage (and perhaps in the middle) of this CHORUS moment.*

#### **SCENE TITLE: [CHORUS SCENES WILL NOT HAVE TITLES.]**

1            *IF I HAVE ANY POWER OF PROPHECY*  
2            *OR SKILL IN KNOWING THINGS,*  
3            *THEN, BY THE OLYMPIAN DEITIES,*  
4            *YOU, CITHAERON, AT TOMORROW'S MOON*  
5            *WILL SURELY KNOW THAT OEDIPUS*  
6            *PAYS TRIBUTE TO YOU AS HIS NATIVE LAND*  
7            *BOTH AS HIS MOTHER AND HIS NURSE,*  
8            *AND THAT OUR CHORAL DANCE AND SONG*  
9            *ACKNOWLEDGE YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE*  
10           *SO PLEASING TO OUR KING.*  
11           *O PHOEBUS, WE CRY OUT TO YOU—*  
12           *MAY OUR SONG FILL YOU WITH DELIGHT!*  
13           *WHO GAVE BIRTH TO YOU, MY CHILD?*  
14           *WHICH ONE OF THE IMMORTAL GODS*  
15           *BORE YOU TO YOUR FATHER PAN,*  
16           *WHO ROAMS THE MOUNTAINSIDES?*  
17           *WAS IT SOME DAUGHTER OF APOLLO,*  
18           *THE GOD WHO LOVES ALL COUNTRY FIELDS?*  
19           *PERHAPS CYLLENE'S ROYAL KING?*  
20           *OR WAS IT THE BACCHANALIAN GOD*  
21           *DWELLING ON THE MOUNTAIN TOPS*  
22           *WHO TOOK YOU AS A NEW-BORN JOY*  
23           *FROM MAIDEN NYMPHS OF HELICON*  
24           *WITH WHOM HE OFTEN ROMPS AND PLAYS?*

### 3.3

#### **SCENE TITLE: THE SHEPHERD REMEMBERS**

1 OEDIPUS: [*looking out away from the palace*]

2 I think I see her.

3 She looks very old.

4 CHORUS LEADER: Yes, I recognize her.

5 She worked for Laius—a trusty shepherd.

*Enter the SHEPHERD.*

6 OEDIPUS: Stranger from Corinth, let me first ask you—

7 is this the woman you told me about?

8 **CORINTHIAN: Yes, it is—**

9 **she's the woman you see in front of you.**

10 OEDIPUS: You, old woman. Look at me.

11 Answer what I ask.

12 Did you work for Laius a long time ago?

13 SHEPHERD: Yes, as a servant.

14 But I was not bought. I grew up in his house.

15 OEDIPUS: What was the work you did?

16 SHEPHERD: Most of my life I've spent looking after sheep.

17 OEDIPUS: Where? In what areas?

18 SHEPHERD: In the mountains--that general area.

19 OEDIPUS: Do you know if you came across this man  
20 anywhere up there?

21 SHEPHERD: What man?

22 OEDIPUS: The man over here—  
23 this one. Have you ever run into him?

24 SHEPHERD: I don't remember him.

25 CORINTHIAN: My lord, that's not surprising.  
26 Let me refresh his memory.

(to the SHEPHERD)

27 You remember the time we spent on the mountaintop.  
28 You had two flocks of sheep and I had one.  
29 We were together for six months at a time,  
30 from spring until autumn.  
31 In winter I'd drive my sheep down to my field,  
32 and you'd take yours to pens that Laius owned.  
33 Isn't that what happened—what I've just said?

34 SHEPHERD: You spoke the truth. But it was long ago.

35 CORINTHIAN: All right, then. Now, tell me if you remember  
36 how you gave me a child, a baby boy,  
37 for me to raise as my son.

*A shift in the air.*

38 SHEPHERD: What? Why ask about that?

39 CORINTHIAN: This man here, my friend,  
40 This man was that infant boy.

41 SHEPHERD: Damn you!  
42 Can't you keep your mouth shut!

43 OEDIPUS: Hold on, old man.  
44 Don't yell at him. What you said  
45 is worse than his account.

46 SHEPHERD: My master, what have I done wrong?

47 OEDIPUS: Tell us of that infant boy,  
48 the one he asked about.

49 SHEPHERD: That's what he says,  
50 but he knows nothing—a useless busybody.

51 OEDIPUS: If you won't tell us of your own free will,  
52 once we start to hurt you, you will talk.

53 SHEPHERD: By all the Gods, don't torture an old woman!

54 OEDIPUS: You, bring her here!

*A member of the CHORUS takes the SHEPHERD and leads her to center stage.*

55 SHEPHERD: Why are you doing this?  
56 What is it you want to know?

57 OEDIPUS: The baby—  
58 Did you give it to him?

59 SHEPHERD: I did. How I wish  
60 I'd died that day!

61 OEDIPUS: You'll die now  
62 if you don't speak the truth.

63 SHEPHERD: And if I do,  
64 there's more chance I'll be killed.

65 OEDIPUS: It seems to me the woman is trying to stall.

66 SHEPHERD: No, no, I'm not. I've already told you—  
67 I did give him the child.

68 OEDIPUS: Where did you get it?  
69 Did it come from your home or somewhere else?

70 SHEPHERD: I got it from someone.

71 OEDIPUS: Which citizen was it? Whose home?

72 SHEPHERD: In the name of the Gods, don't ask!  
73 Please, no more questions!  
74 OEDIPUS: If I have to ask again,  
75 then you will die--

76 SHEPHERD: Laius. The child was born in Laius' house.

77 OEDIPUS: A servant child or one of his own?

78 SHEPHERD: What I'm about to say now ...  
79 it's horrible.

80 OEDIPUS: I have to know.

81 SHEPHERD: They said the child was his.  
82 But your wife inside, she's the one  
83 Who'd answer best.

84 OEDIPUS: Jocasta gave the child to you?

85 SHEPHERD: Yes, my lord.

86 OEDIPUS: Why did she do that?

87 SHEPHERD: So I would kill it.

88 OEDIPUS: That woman was the mother?

89 SHEPHERD: She feared the prophecy.

90 OEDIPUS: What prophecy?

91 SHEPHERD: The prophecy said  
92 the child would kill his father.

93 OEDIPUS: If that was true,  
94 why did you give the child to this old man?

95 SHEPHERD: I pitied the boy.  
96 I thought he'd take the baby to the foreign land  
97 where he was from. But he rescued him,

98            only to save him for the greatest grief of all.

99            If you're the one this man says you are  
100           you know your birth carried an awful fate.

101           **OEDIPUS: It all came true. It's clear now.**

102           **Sky, let me look at you one final time,**  
103           **a man cursed by birth,**  
104           **cursed by my own family, and cursed**  
105           **by murder where I should not kill.**

*OEDIPUS moves into the palace.*

### 3.4

#### **SCENE TITLE: [CHORUS SCENES WILL NOT HAVE TITLES.]**

1 O GENERATIONS OF MORTAL MEN,  
2 HOW I COUNT YOUR LIFE AS SCARCELY LIVING.  
3 WHAT MAN IS THERE, WHAT HUMAN BEING,  
4 WHO ATTAINS A GREATER HAPPINESS  
5 THAN MERE APPEARANCES, A JOY  
6 WHICH SEEMS TO FADE AWAY TO NOTHING?  
7 POOR WRETCHED OEDIPUS, YOUR FATE  
8 STANDS HERE TO DEMONSTRATE FOR ME  
9 HOW NO MORTAL MAN IS EVER BLESSED.

10 HERE WAS A MAN WHO FIRED HIS ARROWS WELL—  
11 HIS SKILL WAS MATCHLESS—AND HE WON  
12 THE HIGHEST HAPPINESS IN EVERYTHING.  
13 FOR, ZEUS, HE SLAUGHTERED THE HOOK-TALONED SPHINX  
14 AND STILLED HER CRYPTIC SONG. FOR OUR STATE,

15 HE STOOD THERE LIKE A TOWER AGAINST DEATH,  
16 AND FROM THAT MOMENT, OEDIPUS,  
17 WE HAVE CALLED YOU OUR KING  
18 AND HONORED YOU ABOVE ALL OTHER MEN,  
19 THE ONE WHO RULES IN MIGHTY THEBES.

20 BUT NOW WHO IS THERE WHOSE STORY  
22 IS MORE TERRIBLE TO HEAR? WHOSE LIFE  
23 HAS BEEN SO CHANGED BY TROUBLE,  
24 BY SUCH FEROCIOUS AGONIES?  
25 ALAS, FOR CELEBRATED OEDIPUS,  
26 THE SAME SPACIOUS PLACE OF REFUGE  
27 SERVED YOU BOTH AS CHILD AND FATHER,  
28 THE PLACE YOU ENTERED AS A NEW BRIDEGROOM.  
29 HOW COULD THE FURROW WHERE YOUR FATHER PLANTED,  
30 POOR WRETCHED MAN, HAVE TOLERATED YOU  
31 IN SUCH SILENCE FOR SO LONG?

32            *TIME, WHICH WATCHES EVERYTHING*  
33            *AND UNCOVERED YOU AGAINST YOUR WILL,*  
34            *NOW SITS IN JUDGMENT OF THAT FATAL MARRIAGE,*  
35            *WHERE CHILD AND PARENT HAVE BEEN JOINED SO LONG.*  
36            *O CHILD OF LAIUS, HOW I WISH*  
37            *I'D NEVER SEEN YOU—NOW I WAIL*  
38            *LIKE ONE WHOSE MOUTH POURS FORTH LAMENTS.*  
39            *TO TELL IT RIGHT, IT WAS THROUGH YOU*  
40            *I FOUND MY LIFE AND BREATHED AGAIN,*  
41            *AND THEN THROUGH YOU MY EYESIGHT FAILED.*

### 3.5

*The PALACE SERVANT enters from the palace. The CHORUS is seated in the audience bleachers. The PALACE SERVANT directs her story to us, all of us, as witnesses.*

#### **SCENE TITLE: THE PALACE SERVANT'S STORY**

1 PALACE SERVANT:  
2 You, all of you!  
3 The things you will hear and see!  
4 The sorrows you will carry!  
5 The grief.  
6 No river is great enough  
7 To wash this house clean.  
8 It conceals too much  
9 and soon will bring to light the vilest things.

10 CHORUS LEADER: The things we knew were hard enough.  
11 What can be worse?

12 PALACE SERVANT: She is dead.  
13 Jocasta, our queen, is dead.

14 CHORUS LEADER: How did she die?

15 PALACE SERVANT: She killed herself.  
16 You weren't there.  
17 You didn't see it,  
18 so you'll be spared the worst of it.  
19 But I'll tell you what happened as best I can.

*The world changes around her through light as she tells the story.*

20 Jocasta left here frantic and rushed inside,  
21 fingers tearing at her hair.  
22 She ran through the hall straight to her bedroom  
23 And went in, slamming the doors shut behind her  
24 and crying out  
25 "Laius, Laius! Laius!  
26 Here we made the child that murdered you,  
27 Leaving me to birth cursed children."

28 She lay crying by the bed,  
29 the bed where she'd given birth twice over—  
30 a husband from a husband, children from a child.

31 With a scream Oedipus came bursting in,  
32 Charging about, back and forth.  
33 As he moved, he screamed  
34 "My sword! My sword!  
35 My wife-- no,  
36 My mother, the mother of myself  
37 And my children.  
38 ~~My sword! My sword!"~~

39 Some force led him on—  
40 no human could get close to him.  
41 ~~He charged at the doors,~~  
42 ~~bending the bolts from their sockets,~~  
43 ~~and burst into the bedroom.~~

44 That's when we saw her.  
45 She was hanging there,  
46 his wife, with twisted cords  
47 round her neck.

48 Then Oedipus saw her.  
49 With a dreadful cry he took her body  
50 out of the ropes where she hung, and then,  
51 from her clothes he ripped the golden pins  
52 she wore, raised them high,  
53 and drove them deep into his eyeballs, screaming:

~~Perhaps these phrases are echoed with CHORUS members, arms in the air?~~

54 "I will no longer see evil.  
55 Not the evil things I have done,  
56 Not the evil things I have suffered.  
57 For now and forever, I will live in darkness."

58 He raised his hand and struck,  
59 over and over, right in the sockets.  
60 With every blow blood spurted from his eyes

61 Down his face, and not in single drops,  
62 but rivers of blood like black rain.

63 And so this horror swallows them both,  
64 Man and wife together.

65 CHORUS LEADER: That poor man. Is there some relief  
66 to ease his pain?

67 PALACE SERVANT: He shouts for someone  
68 to open up gates and reveal  
69 to everyone that he is his father's killer,  
70 his mother's-- (*the word cannot be said aloud*)

71 He begs us to send him out of the city,  
72 so the curse will not come on this house.  
73 But he is weak  
74 and he needs someone to lead him.  
75 His pain is more than he can bear—  
76 Soon you will see  
77 a sight which any man would pity.

### 3.6

*OEDIPUS enters through the doors, struggling as he walks into a completely empty space.*

#### **SCENE TITLE: EXILE FROM THE CITY**

1 OEDIPUS: Where do I go?

2 Destiny, how far you have come!

3 Where will it end?

4 CHORUS LEADER: No one wants to see this,  
5 this horrible state.

6 OEDIPUS: Dark horror wrapped around me.

7 Black clouds swallow me,

8 Swept by dangerous winds.

9 Unspeakable darkness.

10 The agony pierces me!

11 The memory of shame!

12 CHORUS LEADER: He carries a double load of suffering,  
13 First in body, then in soul.

~~14 OEDIPUS: My constant friends, here,~~

~~15 you still care for me, as always,~~

~~16 and with patience help me now I'm blind.~~

~~17 I recognize you.~~

~~18 Though I am blind, I know those hands so well.~~

19 CHORUS LEADER: You have done such terrible things—  
20 How could you blind yourself this way?

21 OEDIPUS: The Gods.

22 They brought on these troubles—

23 the awful things I suffer. But the hand

24 that stabbed out my eyes was mine.

25 Why should I have eyes

26 when nothing I see would bring me joy?

27           What is there to see?  
28           What can I love?  
29           Whose touch can bring me joy?  
30           Lead me away—  
31           take me somewhere,  
32           The cursed man.

33           CHORUS LEADER: Unhappy in your fate and in your mind.  
34           We wish we had never known you.

35           OEDIPUS: I curse the man who freed my feet,  
36           The man who saved me.  
37           If I had died then,  
38           I would not have brought such pain  
39           to myself or to my family.

~~40           I wouldn't have murdered my father,  
41           Nor been husband  
42           to the woman who gave birth to me.  
43           The Gods abandon me now.~~

44           I gave the order: Cast out the curse!  
45           I put the mark of murderer on my own head.  
46           I condemned myself, telling everyone  
47           they had to banish the man  
48           the Gods have exposed.

49           I will shut my shameful body away,  
50           Seeing nothing, feeling nothing,  
51           In silence beyond the limits of grief.

52           Come closer to me.  
53           Do not be afraid--  
54           this disease infects no one but me.

55           CHORUS LEADER: Creon is here.  
56           He will plan and carry out what you propose.  
57           When you're gone he will be left  
58           as guardian of Thebes.

59 OEDIPUS: How will I face him?  
60 How can I ask him  
61 to put his trust in me when  
62 I treated him with such hate.

*Enter Creon.*

63 CREON: Show some respect!  
64 Don't put him on display in front of everyone!  
65 ~~Take him inside the house~~  
66 ~~as quick as you can.~~  
67 Only members of his family  
68 Should see ~~and hear~~ him like this.

69 Oedipus, I am not here to mock you  
70 or blame you for disasters in the past.

71 OEDIPUS: You come here  
72 and treat me kindly,  
73 the very worst of men.  
74 Please, will you do what I ask?

75 CREON: What do you want?

76 OEDIPUS: Send me away as quickly as you can,  
77 away from the city, to a place where no one will find me.  
78 Will you do this?

79 CREON: That is something I can do, of course,  
80 but first I want to know what the Gods say.

81 OEDIPUS: The message from the Oracle was clear—  
82 The man who killed his father  
83 must be destroyed.

84 **The murderer is me.**

85 CREON: Yes, that's what was said.  
86 But now, the wisest thing  
87 is to decide what to do.

88 OEDIPUS: I only ask this, I beg you--  
89 The woman in the house, your sister,  
90 Give her the proper funeral rites, a final place to rest.

91 Don't let my city be cursed  
92 with me living here while I am still alive.  
93 Let me live up in the mountains, alone.  
94 My father and mother chose it as my burying place—  
95 When I die, I'll follow  
96 the orders of the ones who wanted me dead.

97 I know this much—no disease  
98 nor any other suffering can kill me—  
99 for I would not have been saved from death  
100 unless I was to suffer a strange destiny.  
101 Wherever my fate leads, just let it go.

102 There's no need for you to care  
103 For my two sons.  
104 They are men—no matter where they go,  
105 they'll always have enough to live on.

106 But my daughters have never known  
107 Another home or been without their father.  
108 They shared  
109 everything I touched.  
110 Will you take care of them for me?

111 CREON: Yes.  
112 I know the joy they've always given you. I will take care of them.

113 OEDIPUS: May the Gods watch over you  
114 And treat you better than they treated me.

115 CREON: In time  
116 all things will work out for the best.  
117 You've grieved enough,  
118 Now go into the house.

119 OEDIPUS: Will you send me away to live outside the city?  
120 CREON: Only the Gods can decide.  
121 OEDIPUS: Do I have your word?  
122 CREON: You have my word.  
123 OEDIPUS: Lead me away.  
124 CREON: Don't try to be in charge of everything.  
125 You've lost the power you once had.

## EPILOGUE

### **SCENE TITLE: NO SCENE TITLE**

1            *PEOPLE OF THEBES:*  
2            *THIS IS OEDIPUS,*  
3            *THE MAN WHO SOLVED THE IMPOSSIBLE RIDDLE.*  
4            *THE MAN WHO WAS MOST POWERFUL.*  
5            *WE ALL ENVIED HIM.*  
6            *NOW A WAVE OF PAIN SWALLOWS HIM WHOLE.*  
7            *COUNT NO MAN HAPPY UNTIL HE REACHES THAT FINAL DAY,*  
8            *UNTIL HE'S PASSED BEYOND LIFE FREE FROM PAIN.*

*The performers repeat and echo the ritual of the Prologue. This time it is a physical closing of the space and the story that's been told.*

*The CHORUS repeats the heartbeat with the audience, waves of sound and vibration and movement through the collective.*

*As it dies down, the CHORUS transforms to become the people of Thebes...*