Creon

A play

Part eight of

City of Wine

A cycle in three trilogies

by
Ned Dickens

The Grape Trilogy
HARMONIA
PENTHEUS
THEBE

The Vine Trilogy
CADMEA
ELIS
JOCASTA

The Wine Trilogy
OEDIPUS
CREON
SEVEN

Commissioned by Nightswimming
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"Thebes is famous everywhere, for wine and welcoming."
City of Wine is a nine-play cycle telling the story of the Greek city of Thebes—best known as the home of Oedipus. It begins with the founding of Thebes by Cadmus and Harmonia, and ends with the death of six of its last seven citizens on the battlefield of Troy.

The *City of Wine* cycle is a powerful portrayal of leadership and civic life. This contemporary epic breathes new life into these magnificent stories while portraying the citizens of Thebes as distinct yet familiar individuals, unique to playwright Ned Dickens' vision of this legendary city. Brian Quirt.

Playwright's Notes

The UnNamed
City of Wine features great names: Zeus, Athena, Harmonia, Laius, Jocasta, Oedipus, Dionysus, and Tiresias, to mention only a few. Such names are so powerful that I felt I could not introduce fictional ones into the mix. At the same time, I very much wanted to find a new approach to the idea of the Chorus. I wanted to show a diversity of interacting personalities which, taken together, would represent the ordinary people—the citizens—of the *City of Wine*.

The result is a group of seven personalities (often related from play to play but not always the same individuals) who, although distinct and real, are never named. Throughout *City of Wine* they are always present, reacting to and affecting the actions of the Named.

The UnNamed are "the aching, dancing body of my town." In order to keep them straight in the text I gave them "tags". The truth of my premise that names are powerful things is borne out by the fact that many people persist in thinking of these tags as names. You, of course, will not make that mistake.

Synopsis

The Grape Trilogy

Harmonia
This is the story of how Harmonia, daughter of the gods Ares and Aphrodite, and her mortal husband Cadmus, become the founders of the city that will become Thebes. In the kitchen of Ares' palace on Mount Olympus, surrounded by the desires and games of both gods and mortals, Cadmus wins the love of Harmonia but incites the fury of the gods. Harmonia gives up her immortality to pursue her love as she and her new husband are driven from Olympus. They vow to found a great city dedicated to equality and truth—and thus the city is born."Nothing begins in history." As I scratched around for a point of entry into the story of Thebes I tripped over the idea that two gods would give Harmonia, their goddess daughter, to marry an enslaved mortal who had not only offended them but had failed at everything he had tried to do so far. Equally intriguing was that she might fall in love with him. "There has to be a story behind that!" I told myself, and here it is.

Pentheus
The second play introduces us to Harmonia and Cadmus' grandson Pentheus, who finds himself chosen king just as the city is undergoing an unexpected transformation. Also brought to life are the magical characters of Tiresias, the seer whose prophecies play a pivotal role in city's story, and Dionysus, the god whose gift of wine brings both joy and chaos to Thebes. In this alternative

version of the events of The Bacchae, the tragedy of King Pentheus (and a hidden love story!) brings our city into a new era .

While HARMONIA can be said to deal with the conception of the city, this play looks at its adolescence. It swirls with sexual infatuation, questions of emerging identity, and a tragic loss of innocence. Robert Graves (poet and scholar) suggests that the real root of all the problems which beset Thebes (called Cadmea at this point in the story) is the institution of patrilineal monarchy, the idea that the crown must pass from father to son. He argues that this idea offends the powerful female energy in the ancient world and sets off "the war of the sexes" with a bang. I have tried to show how, in context, that idea, called here Pentheus' Law, might make sense to a young man who unexpectedly finds himself on a throne for which he feels completely unprepared.

Thebe

The character and story of Thebe have grown organically over the years. Exploring and unpacking both was a huge part of the impetus behind the last expansion of *City of Wine* from seven to nine plays. In HARMONIA, Poseidon, spurned by her, spits into Thebe's mouth (a particularly nasty assault that echoes the story of Apollo and Cassandra) and he decrees that her kiss will always give instant forgetfulness. The dynamic between memory and forgetfulness is central to our story, and storytelling. It also allows me to introduce narrative elements that have no basis in traditional versions, as long as I arrange to have them forgotten, such as Thebe's being the mother of Tiresias and, eventually, Laius.

The Vine Trilogy

Cadmea

The city has grown, but so has distrust and fear between the sexes. Lycus and Dirce rule in luxury while Laius waits impatiently to take the crown. Amphion and Zethus, the twin unacknowledged sons of Lycus, arrive. They use Laius to punish Lycus for his treatment of their mother, Antiope, unleashing assassination, riot, and massacre. Laius escapes into exile and the brothers arrange to be elected twin kings. Thebe fulfills the prophesy that she will be queen.

Fairly late in the 30+ year *City of Wine* writing process it occurred to me that the Theban plays of Sophocles et al. weren't Theban at all: they were created and celebrated in a city trying to be a democracy (Athens). They are stories about the horrifically dysfunctional monarchy, and military rival, next door. They are deeply political. The city of Cadmea/Thebes is the protagonist of *City of Wine*, and her challenges, growth, triumphs, disasters, and her journey from an intentional settlement to a city state, take centre stage in the Vine Trilogy. Here she becomes a place familiar to a modern audience, shaped by familiar characters: grifters, schemers, dreamers, and traditionalists.

Elis
Elis is a nearby city in the mountains, where Laius has sought refuge in exile. Wine has also arrived in town and a dis-used slaughterhouse is becoming a tavern, with help from Bowl. Laius festers in bitterness and self-pity, abusing the hospitality and the vulnerable son of his hosts until he, Laius, commits a crime that will haunt Thebes and its people for generations.
ELIS is the middle play of the cycle and, like the first and last, it doesn't take place in Cadmea/ Thebes. Elis is a mountain city based heavily on cattle farming. Their main festival celebrates the semi-annual slaughter. Dionysus is the god of wine, of course, but he is also god of the theatre. One theory suggests that public theatre emerged as a way to contain and control the rites of the riotous god. The need for that containment shows when bacchanalia meets slaughter festival.

Jocasta
This play illuminates the story of Jocasta, one of the great figures of ancient mythology, familiar to us largely for her death scene in the play Oedipus. The exiled Laius returns to Thebes, marries Jocasta and she bears him a son. The first act of Jocasta traces the descent of the city, under King Laius' rule, into dictatorship and despair. Act two brings with it a much-discussed moment in Greek mythology/legend: the magnetic first meeting between Jocasta and Oedipus. With no idea what their relationship portends (for themselves or Thebes) their happy marriage restores peace to the city.

Tragedy is often an architecture of unfortunate choices, many of which make sense in context, but which add up to disaster. The impulse to write this play (fourth in the cycle but the second written, after Oedipus) came from the realization that many of the critical choices which inform that story were made before it begins, by Jocasta and Laius, rather than by Oedipus. I wanted to find out why, and what those situations may have looked like. The more I explored and imagined my way backwards into hypothetical time, the more enthralled I became with this extraordinary woman. Wanting to understand her is the seed crystal around which the entire *City of Wine* has grown.

The Wine Trilogy

Oedipus
Oedipus attempts to relieve Thebes of a plague, and the curse that brought it to the city, and in doing so brings the famous story of Jocasta, Laius, and Oedipus to its disastrous and horrifying conclusion.

OEDIPUS was the first play written, and still marks the grand climax of the cycle. Much of the motivation for writing the larger project was rooted in a desire to fully contextualize what happens here. In the modern world we have tended to think of ourselves as moral singularities, responsible only for our own choices and actions. Seen through that frame, Oedipus becomes a victim of cruel and irrational fate, doomed to suffer despite his best efforts. I offer him rather as a point in a larger narrative curve, paying the cost of his father's crimes and his family's unfolding pattern of well-intentioned error.

Creon

On a pleasant evening, years after the events of Oedipus, a visiting stranger enters a peaceful tavern and acquaints himself with the Thebans savouring the local wine. His questions about their city and its history result in an impromptu and often comic reconstruction of the story of Antigone. Its controversial story about leadership is re-evaluated and the fate of Thebes is explored, disputed and reinvented. Once again, wine points the way, bringing both chaos and, finally, good cheer in its wake.

Throughout *City of Wine* the Unnamed are always present, responding to and influencing the actions of the Named, but in CREON they take over, and the cycle enters a new stage. Increasingly it is less about history and more about story. BOWL says "I have just listened to the stories that wounds tell." I wanted to look at how communities define, heal, and even re-create themselves through the sharing of narratives. I also wanted to introduce an element of suspense to an ancient tale. Since I have chosen to wander from the path of received mythology from time to time, in this play I decided to offer my characters the same opportunity, and then see where they would take the story.

Seven

During the siege of Troy, seven scruffy Theban citizens, all that remain of Thebes, sit drinking around a campfire in their makeshift outdoor tavern. After receiving orders to go on a futile and certainly fatal mission the next morning, the seven spend their last night trying to make sense of their lives, their place in history and in memory. Will wine offer insight or blindness? How will they meet the challenge that dawn brings? What will remain of Thebes after they are gone?
The Iliad is such a detailed account of the Trojan War that some scholars surmise that the author was actually present for the great events and not just passing on an oral tradition, thus marking a transition from myth to history. How stories, and through them societies, evolve and survive, or not, up to and then through such a massive transition fascinates me. Theatre itself, in a way, sits on the threshold between written and remembered narratives. Indeed, it pushes backwards from written into oral narrative. Beyond all that however, I could not resist the temptation to spend one last night with the UnNamed.

Characters

BLOOD

Characters

BOWL
BREAD
CLOTH
FIREWOOD
GLASS
STRANGER
WATER

Creon

Act One

Thebes. A tavern with a fire pit or place, near the palace.

(BOWL plays a game of chance with CLOTH. BOWL wins a throw.)

BOWL

Aha!

I win, and thank you.

CLOTH

But–

BOWL

Shhh boy, just throw the Stones again.

CLOTH

So you can win again?

Whose Stones are these?

BOWL *(hand on a knife)*

Why? They are mine.

What do you mean to say?

GLASS

Speak carefully.

BOWL

Well?

CLOTH

But. But.

BOWL

Stop babbling buts.

Speak, draw, or throw.

CLOTH

But.

GLASS

Only his "but" can speak.

BOWL

Then let him cork it tight and listen well.

I will not kill you, son, not here today,

but many would and not be punished for it.

Let us agree you meant to compliment my luck

and in the spirit of that compliment you buy me drink.

Agreed?

Good. Throw the Stones.

(CLOTH throws and looses again. He pays and begins to leave.)

FIREWOOD

Don't leave.

The odds are in your favour now.

BOWL

No. Tell the boy no lies.

The odds remain the same with every throw.

Only the thrower's hopes can change.

I cannot cheat at Stones, the stones will not allow it,

But we would cheat your innocence, your manhood

And your youth to tell you otherwise.

CLOTH

But—

Why do you win so many throws?

BOWL

Because today I do. It is what is.

BLOOD

And what must be must be.

GLASS

And wine is wine, and fire is fire,

and foolishness is foolishness.

BLOOD
Who is a fool? Me?

BOWL
Wisdom at last.

BLOOD
You mock me, friend?

BOWL
Never.

GLASS
Well, rarely.

BOWL
We both would like to offer comfort to our young and eager friend,
Who has today lost much.

CLOTH
As much, I think, as two day's labour earns.

BOWL
What comfort can he find in thinking that it must be so?

GLASS
It is a game of chance. No more, no less.

BOWL
And, for myself, I have more faith in chance
Than fate or justice, prophesy or hope.

CLOTH
Of course, you win.

GLASS
Today.

BOWL
And I have lost, and won again, and lost again,
much more than you may ever have.

WATER
And spent it, twice, on wine while wagering.

BOWL

And what have I?

Nothing. Nothing except these laughing lines,

these ragged clothes, this life I call my own.

GLASS

And this investment tucked behind your vest.

BOWL

Ah yes. For fat is love and wine is memory.

Quickly, boy, before both fade.

CLOTH

Wine for my much loved friend.

GLASS

For all his friends.

BOWL

A good youth and more wise with every cup.

I hope the wound is clean and shallow.

CLOTH

What wound?

BOWL

Why, yours.

For you will cut yourself before we meet again.

CLOTH

Are you a prophet after all?

BOWL

Well now, come back tomorrow, if you can, and we shall see.

CLOTH

But, but, you said you had no faith in prophesy.

How does he know? How can he say?

GLASS

He can say anything.

WATER
He plays with you again.

CLOTH
But, how?

BOWL
You worked today at cutting grapes, I think.

CLOTH
I did, how do you know?

BOWL
Well, by my nose.

CLOTH
I smell of grapes?

BOWL
No, of yourself.
But not of sheep as others do.
And this is harvest time.

FIREWOOD
And during shearing time his prophesy would be
as sure for them as it is now for you.

BREAD
Tomorrow you will wake up before dawn and go to work.
You will be weary and your head will ache,
your hand will shake and you will try too hard
to earn back all that you have lost.

BOWL
And you will mutter buts and grumble at the gods
And think of everything but what you do–

CLOTH
–and cut myself.
I think that I should go.

WATER

Sleep well, work carefully, and come again tomorrow.

And if you have no wounds then you shall have a drink from me.

BOWL

And one from me.

Good night my friend.

I am not prophet any more than cheat,

And would be pleased to have you prove me wrong

in what I have predicted.

CLOTH

Good night to all. *(Exit.)*

BOWL

So, school is out.

All drink.

BREAD

I did not realize that you had worked the vines.

BOWL

Who? Me? Work? Heavens no,

I have just listened to the stories that wounds tell.

GLASS

I thought the poor boy's bowels would speak

When you went for your knife.

BOWL

No real harm done and something learned.

This is my work in life *(counting coins)* and I am paid for it.

BLOOD

No faith in prophesy, you said?

And yet, in your own way, you practice it.

BOWL

Not practice, no.

Sometimes I play and, sometimes, when I do, I lose.

BREAD
But not today.

GLASS
Not yet.

BOWL
And so I roll my eyes and shake my hair

And I predict that we will drink ’til dawn.

GLASS
It is our fate.

BOWL
It is my will.

WATER
Do you foresee that you will pay for all?

BOWL
My mind is yet too clear for such fine visions,

But, here, for now, we have these honest winnings.

Give thanks to Dionysus, friend, and pour.

BLOOD
You play with Dionysus' name.

What of the gods?

Have you no faith in them?

BOWL
Most certainly, to be completely unpredictable,

my faith is absolute.

(Enter STRANGER and CLOTH.)

CLOTH
This is the place and these–

STRANGER
–your friends.

Good. Good.

Some wine then, as I promised,

For your help, and for your friends.

Who is the host?

WATER

I am and welcome to our city and my fire.

Who is the guest?

STRANGER

I am.

FIREWOOD

No name?

STRANGER

None yet but Stranger.

What is a name until it has some deeds to hang on to?

For now, let me be Stranger,

And, perhaps, after a cup or two,

I will be Friend.

BOWL

Well said, my hand and welcome.

BREAD

Most welcome, yes.

What brings you here?

CLOTH

He buys our wine.

He buys our wine.

BREAD

Yes, yes, we know.

STRANGER

No, he is right.

I trade in wine wherever boat or beast can bring it.

WATER

Sometimes the wine can bring the beast.

STRANGER

That's true. So true.

But both today have brought me here to Thebes,

To you and to this most fine wine.

So, who will drink and talk with me?

BOWL

Let's see. I might…

No, no, I think I will find time.

STRANGER

Good host.

Some wines, choose them yourself for reasons, please,

As varied as the wines themselves.

Some food as well, that is no trouble to prepare,

For wine alone can lead our tongues astray.

Here, take this gold and give me, when I go, what still is mine.

(Sung by those at the bar.)

You'll not find a bottle

that matches with these.

So, raise up your cup,

and another one, please.

Keep raising your cups

'til you're down on your knees,

For Thebes makes a hell of a wine.

Yes, Thebes makes a hell of a wine.

Cadmus left Athens and followed a cow.

It gave up the ghost

where our city stands now.

We've lived and we've loved

and we've died here, and how!

For Thebes makes a hell of a wine.

Yes, Thebes makes a hell of a wine.

(BLOOD is agape.)

BLOOD (*aside to WATER et al.*)
What do you think?

WATER
Of what?

BLOOD
Of him. Is he..?

Well, could he be...?

WATER
Who?

BLOOD
Dionysus: the god himself.

His name was spoken twice and then—

GLASS
You and your gods.

BLOOD
He could.

Of course he could.

It is the very centre of our ways.

FIREWOOD
And he has brought the presence of the god by being as he is.

For now, let that be all.

STRANGER
Sit friend, and as your mouth is open anyway, put cup to it.

What? Have I now given some offence?

Why does he/she stare?

BOWL
Here, let me read the signs.

I have had luck with prophesy

and claim the role of priest for this high sacrifice.

(Looks in BLOOD's mouth.)

This open wound across his/her face

will let me read the entrails well enough.

I see. I see.

He/she dares believe, or hope at least,

that you are Dionysus, god.

STRANGER

A god? How strange.

GLASS

How strange indeed.

He/she sees a god in everything.

BLOOD

And that is where they are.

BOWL

If we watch always for the gods they may escape us.

GLASS

Trust me, they have.

FIREWOOD

So much has changed in Thebes.

Kings, curses, wars, and wedding feasts have come and gone.

We are now part of a much wider world

And yet some things remain to tell us who we are.

STRANGER

Well, I have seen much of that world

And Thebes is known everywhere for wine and welcoming.

BREAD

These both are gifts of Dionysus,

patron, god and son of Thebes.

FIREWOOD
He was born here, you know.

BLOOD
His mother was.
He was not born at all
But torn half formed from out the flaming ruins
Of his mother's flesh and plunged—

GLASS
Oh please!
The story is well known and we are eating here.

STRANGER
Peace friends.
I heard this legend on my mother's knee
and so cannot be Dionysus.
For who can fail to know his mother?

(The others exchange glances.)

What is this?
What have I started now?

BOWL
Welcome to Thebes.
What did you want to know?
For we have history enough to tell forever.

STRANGER
Well, as I said, my mother told me of the early days,
Of Dionysus, Cadmus and Harmonia,
And when my beard began to blush
my father stumbled through the history of Oedipus and–
Oh, I see. I'm sorry, I–

WATER
No, all is well.

FIREWOOD

When we were young it was an awkward thing.

We dropped our voices and our eyes.

But time turns pain to laughter,

or at least to something shared.

WATER

We are a place of wines and stories.

Some make you thoughtful, others sad,

BOWL

And some will loose the laughter in your bones.

STRANGER

Good. True.

Here, warm your words with this and tell the story in it.

BOWL *(tastes)*

This grew before Ismene ruled, I think.

WATER

The year before, in Creon's time.

BOWL

No doubt, it tastes of blood and dust.

STRANGER

An angry wine?

FIREWOOD

An angry time, and sad.

STRANGER

Creon, was he a cruel king?

BLOOD

No.

BREAD

Yes he was.

FIREWOOD

He did a cruel thing.

BLOOD
He served the law.

BREAD
He made the law!

BLOOD
There was no law!

WATER
But there is now.

Enough, or I will call the Civil Guard.

BOWL
Just as I said, more history than time.

As many versions of each year as bottles of each wine.

STRANGER
So, who can tell the tale?

FIREWOOD
No one of us without much argument.

STRANGER
It is your History. Is it not written down?

WATER
Perhaps, somewhere.

I think, when I was young,

I learned to read… a little bit.

A little bit was all there was to read.

Why read when no-one writes?

FIREWOOD
Why write when no-one reads?

WATER
Exactly so,

And so I have forgotten how.

It must have had no worth to me.

STRANGER
But…

Wasn't writing also born in Thebes?

I learned it was invented by Harmonia.

WATER
It was?

FIREWOOD
Well then, she gave it to the world,

And none of it stayed here.

All for the best, perhaps.

Forgetting is a gift as well.

WATER
I trust my memory.

BLOOD
We all have memories.

STRANGER
So, if you cannot tell the tale without much argument,

Show me what happened then.

CLOTH
What? All of us together?

STRANGER
A story shared around a fire, nothing more.

(The others hesitate.)

Come friends, why not?

WATER
Because we are friends, now.

FIREWOOD
These pictures have been painted once

With Theban blood by Theban hands.

BLOOD
These hands.

BREAD
And these.

STRANGER
But you just said yourself that pain is eased

By being in the past, or some such thing.

FIREWOOD
It may be best to leave it there.

STRANGER
No. I remember now.

You called it "something shared".

FIREWOOD
I may have.

CLOTH
No. You did.

STRANGER
I know this to be true.

Wine is a heavy thing.

Share with me, then, both wine and history

And we will lighten all our loads.

BOWL
I will.

I have been bribed for silence, more than once,

But now you pay for words, and better, deeds.

GLASS
Stand back or drown.

STRANGER
Or wade in deep and meet his deeds with yours.

Good host, tell us which bottle holds our start and open it.

WATER

Nothing begins in history.

That is the trick of memory.

Each story grows out of the one before.

CLOTH

Let us do "Laius coming home"

See? Here's my sword for waving at the wind (*a stick or spoon*).

I am the king! I am the king!

So give me all of everything!

BLOOD

No. "Cadmus and the cow".

GLASS

And which are you?

BLOOD

You mind your mouth

or I will scatter teeth as Cadmus did.

STRANGER

Wait. Wait. Too much at once.

Who rules you now?

FIREWOOD

We rule ourselves.

Ismene is our queen

and has been now for fifteen vintages.

STRANGER

And in her time? So far?

WATER

Peace, mostly, and good wines.

BREAD

Peace and gentle government.

BOWL

A better age to live in than to tell about.

STRANGER
And before her?

BLOOD
Creon. Briefly.

STRANGER
Ah, Creon.

And this wine, no this, is from his time I think.

The dusty bloody one?

WATER
It is. Or just before.

STRANGER
So. How you came from blood and dust to peace and plenty.

There is a tale worth living over,

Yes?

FIREWOOD
Indeed.

STRANGER
Exactly, yes, in deeds more than descriptions.

WATER
It is a change from gambling,

And might at least help pass some time.

STRANGER
Quite right, are we agreed?

BLOOD
The Tale of Creon!

BREAD
Wait, should it not be The Tale of Brave Antigone?

BOWL
No, just this once, I must agree with him/her.

It was her tragedy.

But he made choices, while she saw none to make,

And so the tale belongs to him.

WATER
Enough.

Forget the title, please.

Let us begin.

FIREWOOD
Begin?

WATER
Oh, you know what I mean,

Stand up and jump right in.

(Assent.)

BOWL
And so, the war?

(They begin to take up places.)

BLOOD
The last great battle, on the plain.

STRANGER
And who fought who?

BREAD
The sons of Oedipus.

FIREWOOD
Eteocles, a hero.

CLOTH
Me!

FIREWOOD
And Polynices.

BLOOD
Spit to say his name!

FIREWOOD
No Theban spits upon another any more.

BLOOD
He was a traitor.

FIREWOOD
And he died for it.

BLOOD
You do him then.

FIREWOOD
I will.

STRANGER
Who killed him? Creon?

BLOOD
No. Eteocles, the king.

BREAD
They both were king.

STRANGER
But, Creon..?

FIREWOOD
After. Watch.

(CLOTH and FIREWOOD mime a battle during the following, more comic than terrible.)

BOWL
After their father's tragedy the sons agreed to share the crown.

BREAD
Or rather, to take turns.

WATER
One year to each,

but Polynices brought in seven kings—

FIREWOOD
No, six. Plus him.

BLOOD
Not kings but criminals.

BREAD
Well, interfering foreigners at least, oh…

STRANGER
No offence.

WATER
To take control.

BREAD
To take his turn.

CLOTH
There was a civil war.

BLOOD
Not true, we were invaded.

CLOTH
But Thebans fought on either side.

BLOOD
Traitors and patriots.

BREAD
Brothers and sons.

FIREWOOD
Peace, now.

STRANGER
Show. Show.

FIREWOOD
What? All of it?

WATER
The Seven anyway.

BLOOD
And how they died.

CLOTH
Are they all dead?

BLOOD
Capaneus is dead for sure.

For I was there.

Or near enough to hear from one who saw.

Zeus struck him with a thunderbolt.

BREAD
There was a flash.

STRANGER
By Zeus you say?

GLASS
Or lightning anyway.

STRANGER
But why?

WATER
For boastfulness.

STRANGER
I see.

What of the other six?

FIREWOOD
Three died by Theban hands.

BLOOD
Our heroes; may their names–

GLASS
Yes, yes, no doubt they will.

STRANGER
What else?

BLOOD
Tydeus killed Melanippus.

BREAD
I served Melanippus.

Must we do this?

BLOOD
And he—

STRANGER
Tydeus?

WATER
Yes.

BLOOD
Was wounded, and believed –

FIREWOOD
He was misled,

BLOOD
That if he ate –

BREAD *(To STRANGER)*
More wine?

BLOOD
That if he ate the brains

of brave Melannipus

He would be healed.

BREAD
And so he did.

(Pause.)

STRANGER
And was he healed?

WATER
No.

Luckily, he died.

STRANGER
Why luckily?

FIREWOOD
The ways of medicine are cold enough.

STRANGER *(Counting)*
And that leaves two.

WATER
Yes, Polynices and Adrastus.

CLOTH
Yes!

He was the one who got away.

BLOOD
Under the cloak of Zeus.

GLASS
The cloak of Zeus?

BOWL
For days the dust of battle rose so thick

no man could see his hand.

GLASS
Or what it did.

BOWL
Until so much hot blood was spilled it calmed the dust.

WATER
And then—

FIREWOOD
And there—

(The "battle" ends. The mood chills.)

WATER
Fewer than one in twenty still could stand.

BLOOD
Only the fat flies moved.

FIREWOOD
The eyes that still could see were glazed with grief.

BREAD
Eteocles—

BLOOD
The hero—

BREAD
Although victorious—

FIREWOOD
Was dead.

Locked in his brother's arms.

BREAD
Who, just as dead, was locked in his.

(A silence.)

BOWL (*raising a glass*)
The dead.

(ALL raise glasses.)

BOWL
Not lost, not gone, but traveled on

To something better, higher.

Drink of the life, think of the face

And find it in the fire.

All drink.

ALL
The dead! (*They drink*)

(Another silence.)

STRANGER
And then?

WATER
Thebes' most reluctant king.

FIREWOOD
Who, all his life, had held the hand of tragedy.

STRANGER
Creon?

FIREWOOD
Yes.

WATER
Was called, as with one voice–

GLASS
Well, by majority.

WATER
–to take the crown.

FIREWOOD
And did.

STRANGER
I see, I see.

And yet all this most sad and cruel butchery was over,

Was it not, before he took it, no?

BREAD
It was.

But more still waited for him, for us all.

BLOOD
It was his fate.

GLASS
It was avoidable.

STRANGER
What happened?

Show me, please.

BREAD
Well...

STRANGER
And who will be the king?

I like this friends, I do.

Shall you be king? Shall you?

BOWL
No, you, I think, shall stand and drink for Creon, king.

STRANGER
Who? I? I cannot, no.

How could I? I do not know the story.

BOWL
Neither did Creon.

STRANGER
But–

CLOTH
No buts allowed.

It's true, no man knows in advance what he will do.

BLOOD
Only the gods know.

GLASS
Oh, whatever.

BOWL
Whatever happens happens.

He/She believes that it was meant to be

And I believe I'll have another cup.

STRANGER
But History?

BOWL
Is made by people making choices.

So. Will you do it?

STRANGER
Why not? What harm can come of it?

FIREWOOD
What will we do?

How much are we allowed to know or say?

Or say we know?

BOWL *(to STRANGER)*

Here friend, and notice, Friend, no longer Stranger,

fill up your cup, no, better, take this bottle.

Go outside for a drink or two or three and look at Thebes.

Remember all that you have ever heard or thought of her

And come back as her king, prepared to lead and more, to rule.

STRANGER

But when–?

BOWL

When you are ready, sir, and not before.

STRANGER

How do I know that you will not invent

Some jest or worse at my expense?

BOWL

This all is at your own expense already.

Besides, a monarch breathes conspiracy.

Now go, you have been chosen king.

GLASS

As by one voice.

(Exit STRANGER.)

BOWL

Do you object?

GLASS

Oh no, he rules already.

WATER

What is your plan?

BOWL

Who me? No plan. I rarely plan,

But am prepared for anything.

FIREWOOD

What of the stranger?

BOWL
The night is warm. The wine is good.

CLOTH
What shall we say to him?

BOWL
Whatever he will hear from his beloved niece, Ismene child.

CLOTH
What?

Oh, but I have been Eteocles already.

GLASS
And he is dead already.

Be the girl.

BOWL
And I will be Antigone.

FIREWOOD
What? Young and slim?

BOWL
And strong and brave.

WATER
And stubborn as, well as...

BOWL
Her mother.

Jocasta's daughters were and are considerable girls,

are we not, sister?

CLOTH
Why, that we are.

And I the prettier, I think.

GLASS
That much is accurate.

And I will be Tiresias.

I served him, briefly, in my youth,

And have some memories to guide my way.

And as his is a small part near the end—

FIREWOOD

How can you say that when you have no trust in fate?

GLASS

Oh, but I trust Tiresias.

I know he knew when not to speak.

So, as I said, as his is just a small part near the end,

I stand available for guard, or citizen, whatever action asks.

BREAD

And who are we to be?

GLASS

Yourselves, of course.

For no-one else will ever represent you.

And if you are too young or were not here,

No matter, friend, for others, much like us, are everywhere.

BOWL

But if you see a need step straight into the game because—

(Enter STRANGER.)

Because King Creon comes to view the field of victory and sacrifice.

CLOTH

What?

GLASS

Behold the many corpses, king.

CLOTH

Oh. *(Lies down)* But. *(Stands, etc.)*

STRANGER

Where are the sons of Oedipus,

where are my nephews now?

FIREWOOD *(lying down)*

Here sir.

Here, Polynices, dead, and–

STRANGER *(watching CLOTH hesitate between up and down)*

And who, or what, is this

that jumps like water in a frying pan?

BLOOD

The restless ghost of great Eteocles,

That craves as much for vengeance as for decent funeral.

STRANGER

Raise up his mangled body in your arms

And light a fragrant fire

to carry him beyond this world of suffering.

BREAD

That's good. That's very good.

(They pick up CLOTH, FIREWOOD gets up to help.)

CLOTH

But, wait.

BLOOD

Hear Creon, king, within your heart how bold Eteocles–

CLOTH

But wait.

BLOOD

How cruelly dead Eteocles cries out for more than fire.

CLOTH

More?

BLOOD

See here, beside him in the dust–

FIREWOOD

Oh, sorry.

I was Polynices, but now *(lays down a coat or something)*

I'm sorry.

GLASS
A sorry sight indeed.
Two brothers, born from horror,
kill each other in our name.

BLOOD
Is this a brother?
What bonds survive such base betrayal?
Against his home, his name, his word, his family,
He turned his back and then returned
attacking all most viciously.
He is all crimes.
The more we pile up honours on the one,
We must, the gods demand it,
lay our contempt on this most fallen foe.
We must–

WATER
Wait, give him a chance.
Good Creon, sir,
you have decreed high honours for Eteocles in death.
What shall we do now with his brother's corpse?

FIREWOOD
He is a royal son of Thebes.

BLOOD
He is the cause of all this loss.

BREAD
He is–

STRANGER
He is dead,
and he can wait while I decide.

GLASS
Not long, the sun is hot.

STRANGER
What is the law?

WATER
You are, sir.

STRANGER
Tradition? Precedent?

GLASS
Well, let me see.
Oppression, torture, incest, plague, and civil war
have been our ways.

FIREWOOD
Thebes has endured all these
through faith in law and hope for justice.

BLOOD
And all that hope rests now in you.
Our history is blood.
Injustice, weakness and confusion mark a line
of unsuccessful kings into our past.
Pentheus, torn in fragments by the furious Bacchae;
Laius, butchered by his son
and dragged to wreckage on a lonely road;
And Oedipus, that son,
destroyed completely by the fist of fate
In retribution for what went before.
And then these two…
Be clear, be strong,
Fear nothing but the gods
And show us that we have a king deserving of the name.
Remember, Creon, action is strength.

BOWL

Yes, action now! All drink!

(They do.)

STRANGER *(finishing a bottle)*

Farewell to blood and dust.

BOWL

Only the bitter dregs remain.

FIREWOOD *(Takes the bottle)*

No bitterness, for now.

BREAD *(still carrying CLOTH)*

What is your wisdom, mighty king?

Please, sir, my arms.

STRANGER

Carry Eteocles within the walls and to the square.

BREAD

Where your own father's fire blazed?

STRANGER

What? Yes, right there.

Lay down all tools and weapons.

Let all the people come to honour him.

BREAD

And Polynices?

STRANGER

Leave him exactly where he fell

without the honour due to dust,

uncovered and unburned.

FIREWOOD

But sir–

STRANGER

It is my will.

I must, it seems, build up an edifice of law,

And for its walls to stand against all challenges

It must be built upon the strongest, deepest stones.

The truth of right and wrong is first of these,

And for a civil state, the treason of a king is deepest wrong.

Let none of him, not flesh nor smoke, not word nor even memory

Come into Thebes.

It is my will.

FIREWOOD

His spirit, sir?

STRANGER

He chose his spirit's path before he died.

His spirit, most of all must be denied a chance to rest with us.

Let it do as his father did in life and wander far away.

WATER

You heard the king.

No civil ceremony, public fire or rites for Polynices.

STRANGER

No funeral at all.

Just as he is, let birds and dogs attend him.

It is my will.

My will is law and anyone who dares defy the king shall suffer for it.

WATER

What punishment?

STRANGER

Why, death, of course, without exception.

Can we go on?

GLASS

We must. It is your will.

Let us do now "the funeral of the king",

A dance I think, and drink, in honour of Eteocles.

(Leads CLOTH toward the fire.)

CLOTH
But, but, the fire?

GLASS
No fear, the spears and broken chariots of his enemies

Will make a mighty blaze, more than enough.

CLOTH
I'm sure, and yet–

(BOWL substitutes something for CLOTH and it is burned.)

BOWL
Fear not, Ismene, our brother shall be totally consumed.

CLOTH
Oh good, I mean, I see.

STRANGER
What wine shall we drink now?

BOWL
The clear and strong that flourished in Jocasta's youth.

It will, I think, help you to understand Antigone.

BREAD
Give me some then, she is a mystery to me.

BOWL
Let us all pause here for a breath or two,

Fill up our cups and warm our hands

before this tale continues.

(To STRANGER.)

Sir, a word with you?

(BOWL and STRANGER step aside.)

STRANGER
As king or stranger?

BOWL
Both.

STRANGER
It goes quite well, I think.

BOWL
Perhaps.

STRANGER
You disagree?

Am I too... something?

BOWL
Who knows?

But I can tell you this.

Prince Creon was a gently aging man,

a patient man, almost at times a timid man.

STRANGER
Have I, so early in the game,

strayed from the path of history?

BOWL
Well no, in fact you follow like a hound.

But Creon was, well,

more like you when first you came.

STRANGER
And then, reluctantly, you said, he was made king.

I tell you friend, whether of gold or wood or words or wine

A crown is such a heavy thing

it changes any head that touches it.

Here, put it on and–

BOWL
No! Thank you, no.

Our sport is difficult enough without my monarchy.

Shall we go on, your majesty?

STRANGER

We shall.

What now?

GLASS

Only the rest of everything.

(FIREWOOD lies down as POLYNICES, the others act out. WATER as the Sergeant, GLASS as the young soldier.)

BREAD

See, Sir? how, as you ordered.

WATER

Or, at least, to guarantee compliance with your will.

BREAD

A guard is set,

WATER

Both night and day, nearby

GLASS

Up wind in fact

BREAD

Of this once royal body rotting on the plain

BLOOD

But not an honour guard

BREAD

Oh no

WATER

No, disaffected veterans and boys

BREAD

Weary from war

GLASS

Who would much rather be with all the others

in the taverns of our town

BREAD
Displaying wounds, recounting battles

WATER
Winning them again.

GLASS
At first they make a weak attempt to keep the birds away

WATER
But evening comes

GLASS
A mist

WATER
A campfire

GLASS
And a bottle of good wine.

WATER
For how much guarding does a corpse require?

BREAD
And then

WATER
Just as the shadows stretch away from it

BOWL
One, darker than the rest but no less thin,

creeps slowly in.

BREAD
A dog growls jealously,

WATER
The Sergeant of the Guard sends one young, new, recruit to chase it off.

GLASS
Who, being young, is quicker,

BREAD
Sharper in the eye.

BOWL
Too late, the slender shadow leaps to flee,

GLASS
The boy first fumbles with his sword
Then clutches at the dark.

GLASS & BOWL
Two gasps and

GLASS
In his frightened grip, a girl.

BOWL
Antigone

BREAD
Daughter of Oedipus

BREAD
And Jocasta

BLOOD
Sister of Polynices and Eteocles

FIREWOOD
And Ismene

BREAD
Promised in word and heart to marry Haemon,
Creon's only living son.

GLASS
Sergeant!

WATER
What!?

GLASS
Come here.

WATER
"Please come here, Sergeant",
oh, Antigone.

Release the princess, fool.

GLASS
But she–

WATER
No, wait.

Hang onto her, until I think.

BOWL
I will not run away.

GLASS
Of course.

BOWL
I give my word.

GLASS
But only now–

BOWL
I tried to avoid capture, as any soldier would,

But now I am your prisoner

and give my word I will not run away.

WATER
So.

Take your filthy hands off of the girl.

GLASS
Her hands are filthier.

BOWL
My hands have never been so pure,

I have been burying my—

WATER
Silence.

Please, good princess, as we love you,

Say nothing more and come with me.

You, follow, quietly.

GLASS

Where?

WATER

Silence I say.

Information is for officers.

(An instantaneous shift of scene.)

WATER *(cont'd*)

–King Creon, sir.

STRANGER

What is it, man?

My bath awaits.

WATER

Forgive me sir.

I know that it is late.

I have, myself, been out on duty now for many hours

And know how welcoming a hot bath is when one is tired.

STRANGER

And mine is getting colder while you speak.

What brings you here?

BOWL

I do, or rather, he brings me.

STRANGER

What can I do for you, my dear?

BOWL

Bury my brother.

STRANGER

I have done that.

It was a mighty ceremony.

BOWL

The other.

STRANGER
No.

BOWL
You must. Nature demands it.

STRANGER
I will not. Law demands it.

Sergeant, I take it she was lost out in the mist and dark

And you have brought her home.

I thank you. Go.

BOWL
No. Stay.

And tell him, Sergeant, why I was arrested.

WATER
Arrested? No, well...

BOWL
No good can come from lying to the king.

WATER
The king has asked no questions.

STRANGER
An honest soldier. You can go.

WATER
I thank you sir.

It is my honour, lady, to have seen you safely home.

("Exits".)

BREAD *(aside)*
You think it could be so?

GLASS
Who can know?

STRANGER
Show me your hands.

What have you done?

BOWL
What needed doing.

STRANGER
Who saw you?

BOWL
Hera, Apollo, Zeus–

STRANGER
What Thebans, other than the guard?

BOWL
None.
They caught me before my task was done
And brought me here in darkness.

STRANGER
Good.
I will reward their loyalty with long patrols
along the north frontier.

BOWL
You are so cold.
Have you forgotten
how we played all summer at hide and seek
In your sweet fragrant gardens in the hills?

STRANGER
Forgotten? No.
Did I not let you think you had escaped
each time I found your hiding place?
Or lift you tenderly out of the thorns
where you had caught yourself?

BOWL
You did,
And just as tenderly you mourned the blossoms we had crushed together.
Your heart was love and music then.

What moves it now?

STRANGER

Love still, for Thebes.

I hope to give her peace, and time for games in gardens.

BOWL

What peace is there in cruelty? *(holds out his hand)*

Smell that?

I touched him, Creon,

Swollen soft like sponge or mushrooms,

Eyes flown away.

He has been punished, sir, as much as law allows.

It is not in the power of the king to punish souls.

BREAD

That's true. I had not thought of that.

The war is over. Let the dead have rest.

BLOOD

Stillness please neighbour, you are not in this part.

BREAD

Why not?

BLOOD

You were not there.

BREAD

But I am now.

BLOOD

But there are rules, there must be.

BREAD

To what?

BLOOD

To this, the game we play.

BOWL

I like unruly games.

GLASS

Only the rules can keep out what is real.

STRANGER

Shhhhh!

I am, as are we all, a crowd of many voices.

To rule the state I must first rule myself.

BOWL

Another pause, I think.

More wine for some but less for most,

And payment will be sorted out tomorrow.

WATER

Another day in Thebes.

BOWL

Walk with me, Stranger.

(BOWL and STRANGER step aside.)

STRANGER

Not king nor Friend?

BOWL

Not at the moment, no.

STRANGER

What have I done?

BOWL

You are not king of anything.

It just amuses us to say you are,

and not because you pay for wine.

We all pay in the end.

STRANGER

I know. Of course I know.

BOWL

But you do not remember.

STRANGER

And so, what am I to do?

What I would like to do,

Or what I think a king should do?

BOWL

What you would do if king.

STRANGER

I am.

BOWL

Remember, though, that kings have fallen before now.

STRANGER

I do.

And in the end, as king or traveller,

I still will pay, on all accounts.

My gold is real, as are my good intentions.

BOWL

Both offered, both accepted.

STRANGER

So, we go on?

BOWL

Antigone awaits.

What will you do with me?

STRANGER

Nothing, if you do nothing more to cause my action.

Listen to me, Antigone.

Your brothers both are gone.

The war is over.

Thebes must start again.

I have been asked to rule her now.

BOWL

All this I know.

STRANGER

To rule her well I need the law.

No, more, the law itself must rule.

And so it must be clear, and strong,

and firm against exception.

As I am uncle,

my whole self weeps for both the boys.

As I am king:

Eteocles is good, admired and honoured,

We should be like him if we can.

And Polynices represents the bad, the wrong way to behave,

And his disgrace is warning to us all.

I tell you child, in truth,

so black with blood and dust and flies,

So mangled in their wounds,

So tangled in their gear were both of them that,

for myself,

I could not say which corpse was who.

BOWL

And this should comfort me?

STRANGER

Of course not, no.

I tell you this to show there is no hatred in my will.

In my own heart the one great funeral was for them both.

BOWL

And yet my brother, one of them,

Lies foul, uncovered and defiled by dogs and weather.

Bury him, Creon.

STRANGER

No.

BOWL
Then I will.

STRANGER
No.

BOWL
I am a prisoner, then?

STRANGER
No, no.

BOWL
So, am I free to go?

STRANGER
Go to your bath and bed,

go to your sister's company.

BOWL
I see. *(turns to leave)*

STRANGER
Antigone?

BOWL
What does my king require?

STRANGER
I–

Nothing. Go.

FIREWOOD *(to CLOTH)*
Now you, you are her sister.

CLOTH
Oh, but, what do I know?

FIREWOOD
Nothing, you are in love.

CLOTH
With who?

FIREWOOD
With Haemon,

BREAD

me. *(Kisses him.)*

BLOOD
No, no, you fool.

Young Haemon was promised to Antigone,

that's why when she–

BOWL
Enough.

He's right.

CLOTH
Am I in love or not?

GLASS
Oh, probably. Go on.

BOWL
Ismene? Is that you?

CLOTH
But.

It am, I, but, oh dear...

BOWL
You seem concerned, even confused, what worries you?

CLOTH
I?

Nothing, you.

Oh no, I do not know.

I am in love.

BOWL
All Thebes knows that.

How is your handsome boy?

CLOTH
Well. I think.

BOWL
More well than when he waited for you earlier, I guess.

FIREWOOD
I'll swear to that.

BLOOD
You are not Haemon though?

FIREWOOD
Not at the moment, no.

Some other boy, or boys.

BLOOD
Be careful friend, you talk about our queen.

GLASS
And even she was once a girl.

Look at the grass stains on her back.

CLOTH
Where?

I do not want to be a girl.

BOWL
Well, just in time.

It seems you are a woman now.

CLOTH
I am, enough to keep my love life to myself.

Antigone, I fear for you.

I do not know what you have done but I know you.

I see the soil on your hands

and doubt you have been gardening.

BOWL
Well done, son.

No, and yet I have been planting.

CLOTH
But this is not the time for seeds.

BOWL
What time of year is right for funerals?

CLOTH
Don't say it.

BOWL
Why? When it is true.
I tried, but I was caught, to scratch some dirt
over our brother's bones.

CLOTH
But, Uncle Creon said
that anyone who did that very thing—

BOWL
Must suffer death.
We all must suffer death, my little sister.
And that is why all dead must have a funeral.
It does not matter if the life was short or mean or wasted,
It was a life and it must be returned from where it came,
Out of the body of the world.

CLOTH
So. You were caught. What happens now?
Has Creon just forgiven you?

BOWL
No. I was stopped and so he can pretend I never tried.
But he is wrong. I did.

CLOTH
But, but, the law?

BOWL
This is a greater law I tell you of,
More than our Uncle's will or wish

Or fear of being contradicted by a girl.

A law as old as life itself.

If Creon ordered death to end

would we all live forever?

CLOTH

No, of course.

BOWL

No. Life must take its course

and part of life is burying the dead.

That is our brother lying there, a part of us.

He cannot rest without a funeral,

And so, neither can I until he has one.

CLOTH

But Creon has prevented it.

BOWL

No, the king has made a law forbidding it.

His soldiers stopped my first attempt.

But nothing can prevent it.

CLOTH

So you will try again?

BOWL

Until the thing is done.

CLOTH

Or you are dead.

BOWL

Perhaps.

But if I die I hope my body falls to cover his.

CLOTH

And who will cover yours?

You cannot ask me to.

BOWL

I have asked nothing and I am not dead.

Besides, Creon would not deny me burial.

That is not in his law.

CLOTH

Oh well then, all is fine.

Antigone, I beg of you—

BOWL

No. Please.

Ask nothing that cannot be done and never beg.

Would mother beg?

CLOTH

To save your life she might.

BOWL

Who knows what might have been?

Or what will be?

BLOOD

That's you, not her.

BOWL

What?

BLOOD

Those are your words and not what she would say.

FIREWOOD

But anyone can say it.

Even those, like you, who think–

Or, shall we say, believe that fate is fixed

Can still not say what yet will be.

BLOOD

The prophets can.

GLASS

And will.

I will be Tiresias as I predicted, eventually.

But, to play him properly, I need another drink.

He was, as I recall, fond of his wine.

STRANGER

We are not making history, my friends, we play at it.

We cannot add new rules to the game as it goes on

Or we will fall into confusion.

Let us just see where all this goes.

It all is new to me.

BLOOD

Alright.

Good Creon sir, I beg a word with you.

STRANGER

As who?

I mean, who's there?

BLOOD

I am, sir,

High Priest of the Temple.

GLASS *(drinks)*

Dionysus save us all.

STRANGER

What can I do for you, your...?

GLASS

"Narrowness"

CLOTH

"Your Lord High Emptiness"

BLOOD

No titles needed here, I think,

except, of course, that you are king.

Good king, unpleasant rumours circle in the street

That someone has defied your law

Concerning burial of the traitor,

and is not punished for it.

Are they true?

STRANGER
Is Polynices buried?

BLOOD
What? Well, no.

STRANGER
Well then, my law and my authority still stand.

BLOOD
But, but–

CLOTH
That's mine, not yours.

STRANGER
Ha!

Sorry.

Please go on.

BLOOD
We are concerned.

The city cries for justice.

SEVERAL *(as distant, mocking voices)*
Justice, justice.

STRANGER
You speak for Thebes?

GLASS
As if one voice.

BLOOD
Please, if I may,

I will just say what I came here to say,

then leave you, sir.

STRANGER
Sit.

Have a cup and speak.

Forgive the noises of the palace,

it is a busy place.

BLOOD
You are a busy king.

I will be brief.

You said, and wisely so, I think,

That Thebes must have and know and live by laws

That cannot be defied or contradicted.

STRANGER
I did, or something like that.

BLOOD
And that the law is equal or not law at all.

STRANGER
I did say that, or wish I had.

BLOOD
Well...

STRANGER
Well?

BLOOD
Laius was killed.

His son was banished,

few can even say his name.

The twins died in this brutal civil war,

And your first law,

the rock on which the rest are laid,

Spelled out the doom of Polynices.

So...

STRANGER
So?

BLOOD
King Creon, is Antigone above the law?

STRANGER
Only Olympus is above the law.

BLOOD
That's true sir, but is she?

STRANGER
No. No-one is.

BLOOD
And was she captured on the plain

By soldiers standing guard over her brother’s corpse?

STRANGER
I doubt that they were standing.

She was just lost, distraught with grief,

Confused by fear and darkness.

They brought her home.

BLOOD
Forgive the contradiction,

But I do not think that she has ever been confused.

Misled and willful, often wrong, but not confused.

STRANGER
She has lost much and suffered much

And now my wife, her sister, and the palace staff attend to her.

Thanks old, wise, friend for your concern.

She will, in time, be well.

BLOOD
I see.

It is a family matter then?

STRANGER

Until the law is broken it should leave us all alone,

do you not think so?

BLOOD

What I may think is not important.

I speak for Thebes.

STRANGER

Well, when you next speak with her tell her,

Please, for me, my family is sad but strong,

The law is stern but just, and all is well.

BLOOD

Goodnight.

STRANGER

Goodnight.

Can I pause now?

I need another cup.

FIREWOOD

Here,

let your loving wife bring you both cup and company.

STRANGER

Thank you–

(to the others) Her name?

BLOOD *(to FIREWOOD)*

Eurydice, my queen, the king is now alone.

FIREWOOD

No more or less than anyone,

In Dionysus name, goodnight.

BLOOD

Goodnight.

(FIREWOOD gives wine to STRANGER.)

STRANGER
Thanks good Eurydice,

I have not much to say.

FIREWOOD
You have said much, relax.

*

BREAD
I'll go.

Antigone?

I'm here my love.

WATER
Who are you now?

BOWL
Dear Haemon, is that you?

BREAD
Of course, my love, who else?

GLASS
Who else indeed?

BOWL
Come in, but quietly.

*

STRANGER
Are we a happy pair, Eurydice?

FIREWOOD
Much of what happiness we have we find together.

STRANGER
And do you love me, wife, despite my crown?

FIREWOOD
No.

I love you without spite,

Through all our loss and tragedy.

STRANGER
Our loss? Oh. Yes. Oh, terrible.

FIREWOOD
When our first Son, Menaceus, took his own life,

just as your father did, I almost died myself.

STRANGER
My love.

FIREWOOD
Your love sustained us both.

STRANGER
Oh, good.

FIREWOOD
But now you are the King

And I can see how heavily the crown has leaned on you.

Here, take it off and lean on me.

*

BOWL
One guard is in the garden, the other by my door.

BREAD
Guards? Why? Are you in danger?

BOWL
Only from myself.

Creon wants to know I am at home.

BREAD
Against your will?

BOWL
You know me, Haemon,

Nothing against my will can last for long.

*

STRANGER

Tell me, Eurydice, will young Antigone relent?

For love? For fear?

FIREWOOD

Both move us all,

But I know little that can stop or change her course once she is moved.

Her will is strong.

STRANGER

And so is mine.

*

BOWL

So kiss me now. It is my will.

BREAD

You mock the king, my father.

His guards surround you.

What is this, Antigone?

What have you done?

BOWL

Why must you think that I have done something?

BREAD

Because I love you with a love that comes from knowing you.

What have you done?

BOWL

Nothing.

I tried but failed, for now.

BREAD

So it is true.

BOWL

Most things are true eventually.

What have you heard?

BREAD
Oh, rumours, in the street.

BOWL
And in the taverns?

BREAD
Yes.

That you had been arrested and released because you are,

Well, who you are.

BOWL
And they find this unjust.

BREAD
Well, some do, yes.

But others wish you well and hope you yet succeed.

BOWL
And you?

BREAD
I always wish you well.

BOWL
Because of who I am,

I am not charged or tried, defended or convicted,

But I am confined.

I am a prisoner of your father's pride.

BREAD
And of your own.

BOWL
No, never pride,

Well, not in this.

Some things are simply right and must be done.

BREAD
And sometimes bold defiance is its own reward.

BOWL

Haemon, if you do not yet understand why I must bury him

Then you are just as dead, no, more, to me as Polynices.

*

STRANGER

So, if, somehow, she does the thing,

What would you have me do?

FIREWOOD

As always, what will let you sleep, my love.

STRANGER

How can I rest my head,

when it is bound so tightly by that thing? *(the crown)*

FIREWOOD

Your brow is free of it for now.

STRANGER

I wish it were. *(picking it up)*

This cold, hard ring can never bend

And any head that enters it must take its form.

I was a gentle child, you know.

Almost too kind.

What kind of man, of king, can I be now?

FIREWOOD

You are a good man.

And that is strength, my love.

STRANGER

Perhaps.

Who would have guessed that it could be so hard?

*

BREAD

Antigone, I love you.

BOWL
How?

BREAD
At last I do not understand.

BOWL
How do you love me? Haemon, how?
Within the law?
Within your father's will and his permission?
As far as it is safe and then no more?
Or do you love me from a place
Where Love and Truth and Right are absolutes?
Where love is more than life itself
And so much more than death
the dead themselves are saved by it?
Love me like that or leave me now.
I have no time for less.

BREAD
I love you so.
Enough to want to live my life with you,
to ask you questions,
Challenge, even disagree,
To hurl myself in front of any force that threatens you,
even yourself.

BOWL
But on the knife edge of the absolute?

BREAD
This is my heart,
it binds to yours and without both I die.

BOWL
So will you help me bury Polynices?

BREAD
How?

BOWL
That is another question.

Well?

BREAD
I cannot, no.

BOWL
Well then.

BREAD
Antigone, I–

BOWL
No.

Why say the words?

Goodnight.

(BREAD leaves.)

BOWL
And so I am alone.

Well, good, my deed will be my own.

STRANGER
But what about the guards?

BOWL
We did play hide and seek,

But that was long ago

and even then

you did not always catch me.

CLOTH
I am confused.

Where are we now?

WATER
The field?

BOWL

The field.

The guards much as before,

WATER

Though different men.

FIREWOOD

The night is darker

BREAD

But the smell is worse.

STRANGER

But would they not be far more vigilant?

FIREWOOD

Why so?

The household guards protect them from their duty,

so they think.

STRANGER

Can she escape them too?

BOWL

You put your faith in soldiers, not at war, in their home town?

Imagine her, a slim athletic youth–

STRANGER

I had forgotten that.

BOWL

Moved, not by pay or orders, but by passionate belief.

BREAD

I guess she has slipped in and out unseen a hundred times

for far less cause,

and that from under eyes more skillful at the watch.

FIREWOOD

Yes, soldiers watch for armies, not for girls.

GLASS
Never.

FIREWOOD
You know what I mean.

CLOTH
Should we not do it, more than talk about it?

FIREWOOD
Exactly so.

Who are the guards?

WATER
I am, again.

BREAD
And I will join him/her.

FIREWOOD
Good, wear these.

(FIREWOOD puts buckets or pots over WATER and BREAD's heads.)

BREAD
What's this?

It smells like... it smells bad.

WATER
What are these for?

FIREWOOD
Helmets in darkness.

Here, a spear *(broom)*,

a sword *(spoon)*.

CLOTH
Good.

What did she say?

One in the garden?

One outside her door?

FIREWOOD

So, here, and here.

Ready?

Quiet all!

CLOTH

No, not quiet.

Remember "It is a busy place"?

BLOOD

But that was just because–

CLOTH

It's in the story now.

GLASS

Certainly *(crosses to the wine)*

The night is full of sound and movement, talk and laughter.

CLOTH

Little laughter.

FIREWOOD

There have been many funerals,

But also peace at last and coronation.

CLOTH

True, true.

All sounds at once:

cooking and cleaning, spies and messengers.

WATER

Is it not past your bedtime?

I thought you had to work tomorrow.

CLOTH

But..?

BOWL

Oh, leave the boy alone.

He leads us now.

BREAD
Well, someone must.

I cannot see a thing.

CLOTH
Good.

All ready?

BOWL
Wait!

All drink!

(They do.)

STRANGER
Another vintage gone.

FIREWOOD
Here, give me the dregs. *(sets them aside)*

Now, ready?

Go.

(BOWL, BREAD and WATER play a wild kind of blind man's bluff in response to, and at times, prompting the narrative of the others.)

CLOTH
Under the inky cloak of night

and many hundred funeral fires still smouldering

GLASS
Oh nice, oh very nice

FIREWOOD
The grim determined girl

CLOTH
Wrapped in a cloak of grey

GLASS
Hangs from her balcony

(BOWL lifts his arms above his head)

BOWL
But not for long.

FIREWOOD
The weary guard

CLOTH
Still aching from his wounds

BLOOD
Leans on his spear

FIREWOOD
And smells the cooking fire

BREAD
Burning so late?

FIREWOOD
The palace kitchen never stops.

BREAD
Really?

FIREWOOD
Yes.

BLOOD
It's true, my sister told me so.

BOWL
Excuse me, I'm still dangling.

BREAD
Oh.

FIREWOOD
The grim girl's maid brings him

CLOTH
The guard

FIREWOOD
A plate of food

GLASS
And wine

FIREWOOD
As she

BLOOD
Antigone

FIREWOOD
Had asked her to

BOWL
He is distracted, she drops to the ground and slips away.

Go on.

CLOTH
Meanwhile, out on the plain

BREAD
The other guards are huddled by their fire.

CLOTH
All except one

WATER
Wait. *(stumbles into place)*

Alright.

CLOTH
One, whose turn it is to walk the guard

FIREWOOD
Up wind, of course

CLOTH
And not so close as to excite the dogs

That still feed on the scattered fragments of the rotting boy.

BREAD
Oh Zeus. *(vomits into his/her bucket)*

CLOTH
Exactly so.

As much distracted as repelled

he is a guard in name alone.

FIREWOOD
Seizing the opportunity

BOWL
Antigone moves quickly in and

CLOTH
Wasting no time on secrecy

BOWL
She piles stick and dust

FIREWOOD
Stones

BLOOD
Other bones

CLOTH
Anything at hand

BOWL
Upon her brother's corpse

FIREWOOD
Claws at her face

and wails the ancient song of sorrow for the dead.

BLOOD
The dogs explode in furious barking

FIREWOOD
The birds fly up, away

BREAD
The other guards rush to the sound

WATER
Tripping and stumbling on the bones and broken ground

FIREWOOD
Shouting out challenges and oaths

BLOOD
Orders and prayers

CLOTH
She makes no move to flee, but

WATER
Even as they grasp her up stretched arms

CLOTH
Completes the barest essence of the rite

BOWL
Be free my brother, go!

Escape this cruel world and find the peace we all deserve.

WATER
The soldiers scramble to undo the deed

BOWL
Too late.

He's gone.

Do what you will.

You only desecrate yourselves.

Antigone has won and Polynices' soul is free.

CLOTH
Some citizens

FIREWOOD
Excited by the shouts and dogs

CLOTH
Come out.

BLOOD
Arrest her

GLASS
Take her to the king

FIREWOOD
I saw!

GLASS
I heard!

CLOTH & FIREWOOD
Creon

BLOOD
The law!

STRANGER
What have you done?

BOWL
What I set out to do.

What you would not.

What Nature's law demands.

STRANGER
In plain defiance of my royal word?

BOWL
You are the king of Thebes, not of the world,

And certainly not of the dead.

He was no longer yours to punish so.

STRANGER
But you are, child.

BLOOD
She must be punished, sir.

STRANGER
Take her away.

BLOOD
But sir, the law?

STRANGER
The law acts not in darkness.

Keep her confined.

Tomorrow I will hear the evidence relating to the case

And then decide if she will live or die.

BOWL

No sir, your only choice is whether you will kill me.

We all will die and all our spirits hope for funerals.

BLOOD

And you will have one soon enough.

Sir, she must die, it is the law, it is–

STRANGER

Wait!

Stop the game.

This is not fair,

I have been tricked, or trapped, or both,

I have no choice in this.

BLOOD

Of course not.

Sir.

I told you so. *(to BOWL)*

BOWL

We can stop the game.

GLASS

But not the story.

BOWL

It isn't fair, it's life.

No-one has tricked you.

WATER

But you may have trapped yourself.

STRANGER

Yes, yes, I understand, but still I have no choice.

FIREWOOD

You have the power of choice,

but what choices you may have wait to be seen.

STRANGER

Well, I cannot see them now,

Except to kill this splendid girl,

this brave and honourable woman,

Loved by my son, my family, myself,

Whose whole life has been tragedy and loss,

To kill her and to call it Justice.

BLOOD

The law, the law.

STRANGER

What is the law?

My words, only my words.

Are my words stone because I am the king?

What is a king but just a man who takes,

or doubtfully accepts, the name?

Oh, yes, the name comes wrapped in privileges and palaces,

But in return he must be wise and strong and just

and never, never wrong.

BLOOD

Your law is just and right.

STRANGER

I don't think that I was wrong, I doubt that I was right.

FIREWOOD

The law is just our best attempt at being just.

Sometimes when both the wind and law are fair Justice results,

more often not.

But we go on.

We try again.

STRANGER

But kings are not allowed to stop,

go back and try again.

FIREWOOD

No, no-one is.

Not in the world.

We never can go back.

But in our game you could.

So, what would you do differently?

STRANGER

Nothing, I think,

I do not think that I was wrong.

FIREWOOD

Well then, shall we go on and find out where our story goes?

BREAD

No fear, good friend,

Antigone is dead already.

CLOTH

Quiet you fool.

The only rule was not to tell

what happened here before.

WATER

It has been fifteen years,

many who lived back then

have since passed on by many means.

BREAD

I only meant to comfort him.

WATER

Your words, like all of ours, are air not stone.

No life except your own hangs from them.

Remember that and drink this wine.

STRANGER

Yes please. What memory are we tasting now?

WATER

The oldest wine in Thebes, from Cadmus' time,

When he and great Harmonia first ruled this rich and fertile valley.

Make no mistake, they were both wise and good.

STRANGER

And did they then make no mistakes?

FIREWOOD

I'm sure they did, but few that history recalls.

BOWL

All drink! Cadmus, Harmonia, and Thebes.

ALL

Cadmus, Harmonia, and Thebes! *(They drink.)*

STRANGER

This is so good I have no words to say it.

GLASS

(to WATER) You're right.

This wine is wisdom aged.

STRANGER

How much of this remains?

WATER

This much and then no more.

FIREWOOD

Let us then use its wisdom wisely.

Shall we go on?

STRANGER

We shall.

The action that I choose is contemplation.

CLOTH

Fine then.

STRANGER

Eurydice, I need you now.

FIREWOOD
And I am here.

STRANGER
What can I do?

What choice have

I that is not full of heartbreak, loss,

Or chaos in the streets?

FIREWOOD
None.

STRANGER
No choice at all?

FIREWOOD
Many choices, love.

But none is safe or easy.

But if there were an easy choice

We would not need your strength and your compassion,

Your insight, or your clarity of thought.

STRANGER
You flatter me.

FIREWOOD
No, no again.

We need these things from you

And you must find them in yourself.

STRANGER
I doubt myself.

FIREWOOD
Doubting is part of thinking and so of wisdom, king.

What kind of king are you?

STRANGER
I hope that future memory–

FIREWOOD
Not later, now.

STRANGER
Uncertain and afraid.

If she were only half as weak as I feel now…

She is as hard and cold as, well, as—

FIREWOOD
City walls? The crown itself?

STRANGER
I could just let her go.

FIREWOOD
You could.

And then?

STRANGER
I would be king of mockery.

My words would have the weight of leaves,

the strength of sand.

I do not know. I do not know.

Let someone else now play at History.

CLOTH
Antigone, may I come in.

BOWL
My door is not my own,

But you are welcome always.

Come sit with me and hold my hand.

I fear we will not sit like this again.

CLOTH
You fear?

BOWL
Of course I fear.

I think that I will die tomorrow morning.

I do not want to die, my sister, but I will.

CLOTH

I did not think you knew the word.

Your courage is so great.

BOWL

I fear. Trust me I fear.

Most things are much more like their opposites

Than we might want to think.

Forgive me, sister.

I hate a lecture,

But I have still so much I want to share with you,

And night can be so brief.

CLOTH

It can, but you have taught me much already

since the sun went down.

I have come here to stand by you

And fall with you tomorrow, sister.

I will declare to Creon and the world that I,

as much as you,

Have done this thing and, proudly, hand in hand,

The daughters of Jocasta,

we will face eternity together.

BOWL

You can't. It isn't true.

CLOTH

It is true. In my heart.

BOWL

Then let the consequence be there.

I broke the law alone and I will die alone.

CLOTH

Do you not see how strong a signal it would be?

The two of us, so different, but united in our love.

BOWL

This is not politics, Ismene.

Let Creon shape the public will with images and signs.

I did not bury Polynices to prove a point

Or move the crowd or claim a place in history.

I buried him because the boy was dead.

And you did not.

CLOTH

You are so proud, Antigone.

BOWL

Am I? Perhaps I am.

Haemon says so too.

I do not know.

Whatever else, I know what I have done

and am not sorry that I did it.

The rest is...

Oh, I wish that it were rest.

I am so tired, Ismene.

CLOTH

Let me do this at least.

Lean on my shoulder, there.

I am proud myself, I will admit it.

I am proud of you and proud to be your sister,

And more, I know that mother would be proud as well.

BOWL

And father too?

CLOTH

I think he would.

BOWL

Well then,

I face Olympus with the pride of Oedipus.

Small wonder I must die.

BREAD
It is so easy to forget that she was just a girl.

FIREWOOD *(to WATER)*
Here,

be a guard again and introduce Eurydice.

WATER
Alright.

Antigone, the queen is here.

Can you receive her?

CLOTH
Antigone?

BOWL
I can, of course I can.

CLOTH
Please, bring her in.

FIREWOOD
No, don't get up.

You look so comfortable, and as I came,

in part at least, to offer comfort,

I would not for the world disturb you.

BOWL
Thank you.

Sit with us, good Eurydice.

I hope, and hopes are rare for me tonight,

You have not come to ask me to deny what I have done.

FIREWOOD
I came because...

Because I love you, child,

Because my heart cries out against this monstrous situation,

I came,

Of course I came as I have said to offer comfort.

I also came because I said I would.

BOWL
Please don't.

FIREWOOD
Antigone, he lies face down in sobs so deep they shake the bed.

He will not eat or speak,

he barely breathes except to sob some more.

BOWL
I'm sorry, but I have no sorrow for the king.

FIREWOOD
I speak of Haemon,

whom we both love well so differently.

BOWL
Haemon? Will he come to me?

FIREWOOD
Would you receive him if he did?

BOWL
I–

No, it is too late.

I am alone in this.

His tears are for himself.

Thanks for your comfort, queen.

I have a brief but busy day ahead of me.

FIREWOOD
I see, and I will go.

Antigone, our love is with you always,

Take it, embrace it, or lay it to one side,

It will not leave you, child.

CLOTH
Shall I go too?

BOWL
Oh no, Ismene,

Stay with me and help me hope for sleep.

CLOTH
I am with you, sister, always.

BLOOD
The sky bleeds daylight in the east.

STRANGER
I feel its cold.

This is a day we all could do without,

For from today Thebes either fears my cruelty

Or laughs behind my back.

BLOOD
You have not yet decided what to do?

STRANGER
I think I have, but doing it is something else.

Is there no middle way, where she can live?

BLOOD
Or where she dies but you are not responsible?

STRANGER
Is that not worse on both accounts?

If she must die it must be royal punishment.

BLOOD
Or from the gods.

She claims a higher law,

So, let harsh judgment fall on her from there.

Give her to Zeus and—

GLASS
Stop. That is enough.

No doubt king Creon had such counsel,

But you come close to tampering with the game.

BLOOD

I have a right–

STRANGER

And so have I.

The sun is up.

I have reviewed the evidence.

Bring out Antigone to face the judgment of her king.

As king I have the power to order death

And such a power is meaningless without the right of mercy.

If you repent your deed and throw your fate before the crown

It is my privilege to save your life.

The same is true for any citizen of Thebes.

Niece, daughter almost, what have you to say?

BOWL

My hands have spoken for me.

My words remain my own.

My life belongs to Zeus.

STRANGER

I thought as much.

Well, he shall have it then.

Antigone.

I will not kill you, but I think that you will die.

Instead of execution I give you what you value most,

a funeral.

Take her into the hills

And in a cave with food and water well supplied

Seal up her life and let the gods decide its end.

CLOTH

No. Sir. You cannot–

STRANGER
Silence, girl. I do.

BREAD *(aside)*
It is what Creon did.

BLOOD
It is her fate.

GLASS
It is your will.

STRANGER
Take her away and do it.

Now, who will drink with me?

BLOOD
I will, and proudly.

STRANGER
Thank you, will no-one else?

The wine is good.

No-one is hurt.

Come friends, remember, this is just a game.

FIREWOOD
This time.

STRANGER
I have just done what seemed to me

Most served the interest of the state

And set aside my weaknesses and doubts.

I tried to be a king, as I was asked to do.

Was she so willful, really?

Have I done just as Creon did?

Tell me my friends, the game is over now.

GLASS
Not quite.

STRANGER
What happened next?

WATER
The doubts and weaknesses you set aside

Are all the company that you have now.

FIREWOOD
May I suggest you go outside and contemplate again.

Think of your conscience

And the thousand sleepless nights that lie ahead.

BREAD
Think of the girl starving slowly in the dark.

Her last, cold, blistered breath a curse forever on your name.

STRANGER
I see.

I will. I will.

Will no-one keep me company?

BLOOD
I'll come with you.

GLASS
No, please, stay here.

BOWL
Please?

GLASS
Yes.

BLOOD
Alright.

STRANGER
Alright.

Apparently I am alone in this.

(Exeunt STRANGER.)

CLOTH
What happens now?

BOWL
Well I deserve a drink.

As do we all, before the final scene.

WATER
Are you still sure that he will follow history?

BOWL
Not follow, no.

But he will change his mind.

FIREWOOD
I know I would.

WATER
You would not have his choice to make.

BLOOD
He has no choice.

None of us does.

GLASS
You chose to stay.

BLOOD
You asked me to.

BREAD
Yes. Why?

GLASS
What was it that he said?

“I am myself a crowd of many voices”

Let us now stretch our game

And be the voices in his head outside.

CLOTH
Alright. I’ll go.

What haunts me now?

BREAD
Who am I now?

BLOOD
Be strong. You have no choice.

You are the king.

GLASS
Be weak. You have no choice. You are a man.

BREAD
Is strength what matters now?

That was him wondering, I think.

FIREWOOD
What of my conscience?

What is right?

BREAD
Or good?

CLOTH
Are they the same?

BOWL
Yes, yes, all good, and likely true,

But then he sees another truth.

His time for choosing has escaped

While he stands there and contemplates.

(He opens the door.)

WATER
Why do that?

BOWL
He is the king and this the cave,

And I predict he will be coming ... now.

STRANGER *(outside)*

I've changed my mind.

What's this?

It thought the cave was sealed.

BOWL

This scene is burned in every Theban heart.

Quick, take your places.

(BOWL and BREAD take their places. The door is forced open.)

STRANGER

I want to set the princess free, I–

(Sees BOWL/ANTIGONE as if hanged.)

What is this?

No. No. I said I changed my mind.

Go back to where I sentenced her.

This is not right,

This cannot be.

GLASS

This is.

BLOOD

This was.

WATER

Just so did Creon change his mind.

STRANGER

Too late.

FIREWOOD

Just so he broke into the cave.

CLOTH

Just so, Antigone,

Once more impatient with the will of time,

Had, with her maiden scarf, concluded all.

STRANGER *(Sees BREAD on floor.)*
And what is this?

FIREWOOD
Haemon.

STRANGER
My son.

FIREWOOD
Who only ever wore a sword in ceremonials,

(Pours dregs on BREAD.)

Fallen on his at her still swinging feet.

STRANGER
No. No. All this?

FIREWOOD
And more.

Eurydice, hearing the horrid news...

(Pours more dregs on him/herself and slips to the floor.)

STRANGER
I did not know, I did not know.

I want my law back, my words back,

My thoughts, my thoughts.

Did I give birth to this? All this?

Is all this part of me?

All this from my best honest will?

I do not want to be the king.

I do not want this.

I do not want to be. *(weeps)*

CLOTH
But friend, the game.

GLASS
Shh, let it end.

King Creon broke.

Heart, mind and soul cracked open and collapsed

Beneath the load he tried to bear.

He lives, we think, a sort of life up in the hills,

apologizing to the flowers, chasing away birds.

Good people bring him food, some day, we hope,

Old age will bring him peace.

STRANGER

All this is true?

All this is in you all?

I did not know. I did not know.

Oh Thebes, oh Thebes,

The world will weep for you forever now.

GLASS

The world weeps for itself, and so it should.

BLOOD

Is this Tiresias now?

GLASS

Perhaps, perhaps myself.

He did say once, as I recall,

“The world is a cold and windy hill

where Love, and Truth, and Right

Swirl up like sparks into the darkness,

and we follow them like stars.”

BOWL

Well, that was fun.

Enough, I think, for now.

Come friends, around the fire and eat and drink.

We are alive,

Thebes is alive, and life goes on.

Here, friend, some wine.

STRANGER

Thank you.

What year is this?

BREAD

The newest that we have,

here, feel last summer's sun still warm within

and hear the singing of the harvest song.

This wine will lift the frost of memory and there is plenty of it.

STRANGER

Thanks friend, thanks all.

I'll buy as much as I can bear.

What times have been?

What suffering this town has seen?

How could you bear to see it all again?

FIREWOOD

It is our bones.

We seldom think of it but it is part of all we are.

Without our past we are just any town, no town at all.

So we thank you for asking who we are,

and more, for urging us to see ourselves.

BLOOD

This is no god.

(Goes to STRANGER.)

Remember friend, that only wine is spilled.

BOWL

You said yourself, Dionysus is everywhere,

So he is always by your side and also always on his way.

CLOTH

But have we settled anything?

GLASS

"All we can do is stir the dust,

but only time can settle it.

And in the end the dust of time will settle on us all:

Kings, prophets, simple souls and even gods."

BOWL

Thank you, again, Tiresias.

He also said.

"We hope for reasons and, like reasonable folk,

We find some hope and, somehow, carry on."

CLOTH

But, but, will we do this again?

BOWL *(taking his hand)*

We may, perhaps, after the wound has healed.

CLOTH

All drink?

ALL

All drink.

(They do.)

End of Play