25 Scenes for two actors from

CITY OF WINE

The nine plays of City of Wine span approximately 150 years. These scenes are out of order. Most characters age: some differently from others. Tiresias (blind prophet) who lives, and ages, through most of the cycle is, as different times, male and female. I have provided minimal contextual information. If you want more, I encourage you to read the plays.

1: from JOCASTA. The first meeting of Oedipus and Jocasta.

I occurs to me now that much of the impetus behind writing CoW began with wanting to see and appreciate this moment.

JOCASTA

Well bring him in.

No. More.

I go to meet him.

(Before. She goes out. OEDIPUS, hearing that he is welcome makes to enter.

They collide; her clothes catch on his armour.)

JOCASTA

Oh, sir.

OEDIPUS

Your pardon, lady. I…

I am a clumsy fool

who nervously awaits a meeting with the queen.

And then, I stumbled.

JOCASTA

And so did I.

Well you have met her now.

OEDIPUS

Jocasta, queen.

I bow before—

JOCASTA
Stand still.

OEDIPUS
As you command.

JOCASTA
I ask.

Please, do not bow.

Your armour catches at my clothes, here by my heart.

Stand still.

Please honoured guest.

Unless you seek to rip my dress.

OEDIPUS
Oh, no. Good queen.

I would much rather die

Than tear the cloth that wraps your royal beauty.

JOCASTA
You would?

OEDIPUS
Now I am caught indeed.

JOCASTA
We may yet be released.

Just bend to me, more, there.

But gently, sir, the fabric is so weak.

OEDIPUS
It seems the tangle is too tight.

JOCASTA
It is only a dress, and under, only nakedness,

So use your sword,

And set all free.

(He reaches around her and draws his sword.)

OEDIPUS
Jocasta, I—

JOCASTA
Do what you must.

I hold my breathing, cut before I faint.

(He cuts her free. As she steps back, laughing, she holds her dress together.)

JOCASTA (Cont'd)
I am undone.

2. (From HARMONIA) Tangled up in love again, five plays earlier.

Young Cadmus and Harmonia, seeking a little privacy, find themselves in Are's bedchamber, where Hephaestus has laid an extraordinary trap for his spouse, Aphrodite, and the war god.

CADMUS

Harmonia... are you... Anywhere?

Oh look at this.

What happens here? Does this?

(He explores the room in a lascivious pantomime.)

Or when the walls of beauty fall to passion's furious siege,

Does this? Or this?

(Enter HARMONIA.)

HARMONIA

Or this?

(CADMUS abruptly changes his actions.)

I was created here.

CADMUS

You were. Of course you were.

My temple then, and I must offer you my prostrate adoration.

Devoutly I must hurl my flesh into your fire.

HARMONIA

Well, if you must.

(They approach each other slowly but with passionate anticipation. With every move they are increasingly aware of ubiquitous minor irritations, like tiny flies or cobwebs. HARMONIA speaks at the absolutely last moment before they fully embrace.)

HARMONIA

Stop.

CADMUS

What?

HARMONIA
No motion and no touch.

CADMUS
At all?

HARMONIA
It is a trap.

CADMUS
Can you see it?

HARMONIA
Believe me, it is there.

CADMUS
Some sort of snare?

HARMONIA
More like a web,

But very strong and if we touch at all it closes tight.

(Pause.)

CADMUS
Could you try not to breathe so deeply then?

HARMONIA
Breathe in when I breathe out. (*They do)*

How does that feel?

CADMUS
Good. Fine.

And now?

HARMONIA
Something must be undone.

There is, I think some room to move below.

CADMUS
Under –

HARMONIA
Between.

(Staying as close as possible to maximum contact, but without any, CADMUS slips between HARMONIA'S legs.)

HARMONIA
Good, good, yes, closer, yes, And yet –

CADMUS
Never to touch.

(CADMUS is now behind her, very close and facing her. He twitches at something.)

HARMONIA
What now?

CADMUS
This is not fair.

Something is touching me.

HARMONIA
It is the web. (*He does as told)*

So, neither push nor pull away,

But slide around me, closer still, under my arm,

Until you are again in front of me.

Well done.

CADMUS
Thank you.

HARMONIA
Thank you. (*Pause. Breathing.)*

CADMUS
What now?

HARMONIA
The knot may just now slip both ways.

Go back exactly as you came to me. *(He tries)*

No. Stop again. You cannot vary in the least detail.

CADMUS
Patience, my love. I am a man.

HARMONIA

I know.

Remember this “My flesh into your fire”?

(He remembers the motions.)

Reach more. Yes. “Adoration”

Good “My temple”

Yes, almost. Good.

Yes. Very good.

Here I came in.

What did you do before?

CADMUS

Not much.

HARMONIA

There was something... complex, I see it in the lines.

However small, you need to do it backwards now.

CADMUS

In front of you?

HARMONIA

What did you do? Something about a siege?

CADMUS

Just this.

(CADMUS re-enacts his lascivious movements from when he entered the chamber, in reverse.)

HARMONIA

All that?

CADMUS

Just that.

HARMONIA

So quickly though.

CADMUS

Harmonia, I am so sorry, I –

HARMONIA
For what? And why?

You are now free.

CADMUS
Of what? Of you?

HARMONIA
Yes. No. Unless you wish to be.

You are no longer tangled in a net of golden threads

So fine they might escape the notice of a god,

If he, or she, were… unaware.

CADMUS
Distracted?

HARMONIA
Yes, oh Cadmus yes.

(Pause.)

CADMUS
Is there no way that we…?

HARMONIA
All ways go there from here, I hope.

But just not yet, not now.

The knot would slip and bind us tight as one.

CADMUS
I ask no more.

HARMONIA
Never to move, eternally.

For me at least.

Death and decay and gravity

Would spill you out eventually.

3 *A homecoming (from THEBE) Thebe has forgotten that she is Tiresias' mother.*

THEBE

No, stop. That smell.

We have returned to where we started from.

Where were we going?

TIRESIAS

Home.

(Throughout this scene THEBE plays with the water in the puddle.)

THEBE

My home. Such as it is.

I sleep in the palace.

TIRESIAS

Oh?

THEBE

What is it, dear?

TIRESIAS

I glimpsed something, no, never mind.

You say, Queen Thebe, that the palace is your home?

THEBE

What did you call me? Queen?

TIRESIAS

I was confused.

THEBE

We are, in that, so much alike.

TIRESIAS

The palace?

THEBE

Yes. It has been empty since Pentheus died.

Oh look. I know all that.

TIRESIAS

Who knows how much you know?

THEBE

Or you, apparently.

What is your name again?

TIRESIAS

Tiresias. I was a young man whom you knew.

No, not like that.

And then Athena blinded me.

Zeus burned that darkness with the gift of prophesy.

THEBE

A gift you say?

But wait, you were a man?

TIRESIAS

And then, well, snakes.

THEBE

Ah, snakes...

And now you are a girl?

TIRESIAS

Like you, I am no girl.

Our bodies both have given birth.

THEBE

I have? I thought I felt something.

Imagine that.

Somewhere out there I have a child.

TIRESIAS

Perhaps a woman grown.

THEBE

Perhaps. Who knows.

Oh, gods protect me from that tragedy.

TIRESIAS

To have a child?

THEBE

To lose one in forgetfulness.

Tell me about this child of yours.

Oh dear. Such sorrow.

Is your child lost to you as well?

TIRESIAS

My childhood is.

THEBE

I feel so cold.

My past is gone.

What can my future hold?

What is this gift of prophesy?

TIRESIAS

My eyes are blind, but in my heart and mind

I see all time at once,

But like a shattered mirror sinking through ripples

On a burning stream.

THEBE

Oh dear. Are you mad?

TIRESIAS

Some say, but no, not yet, not now.

THEBE

This now? With me?

I would be mad.

I know I would.

And so you know my life, both past and yet to be?

TIRESIAS

I see it like…

(Enter GLASS, who hesitates then starts to leave.)

THEBE

Stay child. Please.

4. Divine intervention (from HARMONIA) One by one the goddesses counsel Harmonia about loving a mortal.

HARMONIA
I have to go.

(The world shifts yet again and she finds herself with APHRODITE.)

APHRODITE
To where, Harmonia?

HARMONIA
You also wish to speak to me at last?

APHRODITE
Harmonia, I am –

HARMONIA
I know exactly what you are.

APHRODITE
You know, and now have seen,

The least and worst of me.

HARMONIA
The shadow shows the substance well enough.

APHRODITE
This love of yours,

It sounds so beautiful.

HARMONIA
It is.

APHRODITE
I am the goddess of that too.

HARMONIA
All love is love of you?

APHRODITE
Something like that.

HARMONIA
It all goes in and none comes out?

APHRODITE
You are my child.

HARMONIA
And what is that to you?

An awkward memory?

An irritating ornament?

APHRODITE
I love you, daughter.

HARMONIA
Ha.

I do not think you know the meaning of the word.

APHRODITE
That is absurd.

HARMONIA
Is it?

APHRODITE
You are confused by love, by me, in fact.

HARMONIA
Proud of my love, ashamed of you, but not confused.

APHRODITE
I see it now.

You pride yourself on this,

This flirting with mortality.

HARMONIA
I do not flirt.

APHRODITE
Everyone flirts.

HARMONIA
Life is no game to them.

They are alive.

APHRODITE
And then they die.

HARMONIA
And that is why it means so much

To share the one brief life they have with someone else.

Because you have no limits you cannot give all that you are.

Because you will not die you cannot really love.

APHRODITE
Can you?

5. What you ask for (from HARMONIA). Harmonia, a goddess, has given up immortality to be with Cadmus, a mortal.

CADMUS (To HARMONIA)
We are alone?

HARMONIA
We are. *(They embrace.)*

CADMUS
Did you see that?

She did exactly what she said she would.

A few sharp turns, a way not seen,

HARMONIA
She is Athena, after all.

CADMUS
Oh yes she is.

I was so rude to her.

HARMONIA
I think she understands.

CADMUS *(Taking her hands)*
So, here we are.

Two mortals in the mud.

HARMONIA
Not yet, but very soon.

CADMUS
Forever, love.

HARMONIA
Whatever that now means.

And I am just as pleased as you to hear our punishment.

CADMUS
Just pleased?

HARMONIA

I want for nothing more,

But still, with each new breath,

I taste the promise of impatient death.

It comes. Embrace me, Cadmus.

(He does. She shudders.)

CADMUS

What?

So soon?

HARMONIA

Yes, love.

The thing is done.

Before we celebrate,

Forgive me one small tear.

I have gained everything,

But I have lost eternity.

CADMUS

You are immortal in my heart.

HARMONIA

To say so is so beautiful, yet still,

I can see insects nesting in these hearts we talk about.

This Death is real, Cadmus.

CADMUS

And so is life.

I had, you may recall, a little land that I was given by a cow.

Shall we go there?

HARMONIA

Why not?

CADMUS

Well, when I left there were some fellows, large,

All sprung from serpent's teeth,

And somewhat fiery of temperament.

HARMONIA
We have a well fed cook

And other gentle friends with us,

No army in the world can conquer us.

CADMUS
Wise love.

HARMONIA
Tell me again how we will live forever through our love.

CADMUS
We will have children, will we not?

HARMONIA
We will, eventually.

CADMUS
And they?

And theirs?

HARMONIA
Perhaps.

I have an orphaned trust in family.

Show me another way.

(CADMUS picks up her bowl from the earlier scene. He looks at it carefully and then gives it to her.)

CADMUS
The first brief glimpse I had

Of what eternity could mean

Was when you scratched my fear into your dish.

HARMONIA
Your courage too.

And then right here, the moment of first love.

Oh, Cadmus, I –

(They embrace and the bowl falls, smashing on the ground. Enter the UnNamed.)

HARMONIA (Cont'd.), Grasping at the pieces.)
You see? You see?

It all is dust.

No, blood and dust. I bleed.

Cadmus, I bleed.

What have we done?

CADMUS
You bleed like us, and like us you will heal.

And every wound will write its story in the scars.

HARMONIA
I thought to write my story on the stars.

Now I will die and be forgotten.

CADMUS
Our names will still move smiles and tears

When Time has lost the tally of the years.

This field I hope we own is by a good strong stream.

There are no sacred serpents any more.

Perhaps the crashing teeth are now worn down

And chew their bread like other men.

HARMONIA
They bowed to you.

CADMUS
Perhaps there is a town.

If there is not then let us build one there.

It was Athena's will so long ago.

6. In a nutshell. (From SEVEN) At the siege of Troy, the very last Thebans, knowing they will die at dawn, have tried to remember and share the stories of their town. On the edge of the firelight…)

BOWL (Aside to CLOTH)
Go, now.

This is the moment, go.

CLOTH
Just me?

BOWL
Whatever gods there are attend you now.

CLOTH
But, go with what?

Some drunken dances and a song or two,

Half heard through wine,

half seen through bloody bandages?

BOWL
You have the names.

CLOTH
What if I get the story wrong?

BOWL
No-one will ever know.

You are the only truth we have.

You are all Thebes.

Now, go.

CLOTH
All Thebes?

BOWL
That's right.

Why do you hesitate?

CLOTH
I cannot go.

BOWL

You must.

CLOTH

For the same reason that you gave just now.

One, three, or seven makes no difference.

The last defining truth would be the same.

To save the story would disgrace the name of Thebes.

BOWL

Listen to me.

Wisdom begins with this

You are no warrior.

You are my wounded child.

And I command you now to GO.

Tell all you think you know.

In you Thebes throws her final stones

Against the odds of memory.

Do this for all of us.

Do it for me.

CLOTH

Father, I—

BOWL

Go!

7. What is lost. (From PENTHEUS) Harmonia, once immortal goddess, now aging mortal queen, and Thebe, Naiad addicted to forgetfulness)

(Athena's pool. Enter HARMONIA, tentatively at first.)

HARMONIA

Athena?

Gone yet, or just observing me?

What does a queen do now?

Send me a cow at least.

No?

So, I am alone, again.

Just me and...

(*She glimpses her reflection in the pool and is cautiously drawn to it. She is surprised to like what she sees.*She undoes her hair, scoops up water to wash her face. As the ripples settle she smiles at herself. THEBE emerges face first out of the reflection. She reaches to kiss HARMONIA, but HARMONIA pulls back, startled.)

THEBE

So beautiful.

HARMONIA

Oh, gods. You frightened me. Thebe, hello.

THEBE

Hello. Do I know you?

HARMONIA

Harmonia, dear.

I have been queen for many years, And before that…

Olympus? No?

THEBE

May I kiss you?

HARMONIA

I dare not.

THEBE

Why?

HARMONIA
Forgetfulness?

Your kisses, so they say,

Can take all memories away.

THEBE
They do? How strange.

But that explains...

HARMONIA
What, dear?

THEBE
I feel I often kneel right here,

Where you kneel now,

And kiss my own face in the pool.

But I remember... nothing... actually.

HARMONIA
How nice for you.

THEBE
Nice? Why?

HARMONIA
Oh, just to let all losses go,

And so to stay forever young.

THEBE
But...

HARMONIA
What?

THEBE
How many children have you had?

HARMONIA
Four daughters and a son.

THEBE
Grandchildren?

HARMONIA
Yes. I am that old.

THEBE
What is it like?

HARMONIA
Ask your own heart,
For somewhere you must know
You had a son.

THEBE
I did?

HARMONIA
And I have watched him grow
In my own home, as close companion
To all my daughters, one by one,
You have a fine and handsome son, Tiresias.

THEBE
You have him more than I.
And you are Queen? Of what?

HARMONIA
Cadmea, there.

8. (From PENTHEUS) How was your day?

TIRESIAS

Oh, Semele, can you be really gone, my love? *(HARMONIA gasps.)*

What goddess mocks me now?

HARMONIA

No goddess, only me.

TIRESIAS

Harmonia, my queen.

HARMONIA

Do I know you?

You speak my daughter's name, you call her love.

Explain yourself.

TIRESIAS

Our Semele is dead.

HARMONIA

What? No.

My little girl.

I thought at least that I would die

Before my children did.

Mortality should have that much to give.

Can this be true?

How?

TIRESIAS

Zeus.

HARMONIA

Say no more. Spare me the rape.

TIRESIAS

She loved him willingly.

HARMONIA
Thank you for saying so at least.

TIRESIAS
Harmonia, you have seen much.

HARMONIA
I have.

TIRESIAS
See this.

I am Tiresias.

HARMONIA
Tiresias? But how?

TIRESIAS
Athena first... my eyes.

Then Zeus... the blinding light of prophesy.

HARMONIA
Cadmus glimpsed that.

TIRESIAS
Then snakes...

I do not really know.

Harmonia, I learned the truth of welcome in your home.

Can you accept me now?

For here I am.

HARMONIA
Somehow you are.

Blind prophet-ess (TIRESIAS nods)

And beautiful, like Semele.

My baby, gone.

You loved her?

TIRESIAS
Yes.

HARMONIA

And now?

TIRESIAS
I am... transformed.

HARMONIA
What is it like?

TIRESIAS
What?

HARMONIA
Prophesy.

TIRESIAS
A midnight sky,

Where every star shines on a different truth,

And yet, near me is darkness absolute.

HARMONIA
What do you know?

TIRESIAS
Oh, almost everything, but all at once,

And without order, context, or design.

HARMONIA
About yourself?

TIRESIAS
My name. Some memories.

HARMONIA
Go on.

TIRESIAS
I am a woman now in every part.

HARMONIA
Think now of Semele.

So young, so beautiful.

Think how she touched you, teased you.

TIRESIAS
Yes.

HARMONIA
Are you ... stirred to touch her so?

TIRESIAS
Oh Semele forgive me, no.

HARMONIA
And now, think of Pentheus. Wrestle with him and—

TIRESIAS
Oh. How strange. I am. I do.

HARMONIA
This too is part of who you are.

I wonder, no, I think,

This, all of this that has been done to you,

Is neither curse nor punishment,

But rather, vital to Athena's plans.

TIRESIAS
How so?

HARMONIA
What if she saw Pentheus,

King alone, without that balance

That the people name for me?

What if, knowing his love, and yours,

She wants you to be queen,

Your goodness wed to prophesy would be—

TIRESIAS
The blindness?

HARMONIA
Yes, well,

A balance can require, at times,

Taking away from one side of the scale.

TIRESIAS
But nowhere do I see—

HARMONIA
But might you feel the possibility?

(HARMONIA playfully mimes taking a crown from her head and placing it on TIRESIAS'.)

HARMONIA
So, go, to your love.

TIRESIAS
I will.

And you?

HARMONIA
Not yet, but soon.

9. Welcome, stranger. (From THEBE)

BREAD
You seem hungry, Sir.

LOCRUS
I do?

BREAD
You do to me.

LOCRUS
Then I must be.

My name is Locrus.

BREAD
“A name is clothing, but a face is nakedness”.

LOCRUS
Excuse me, Miss?

BREAD
Just something that the old man says,

To hide forgetfulness.

(LOCRUS buys something. BREAD looks at his coin.)

Athenian. And you?

LOCRUS
I studied with a master builder there.

BREAD
Oh yes? A runaway apprentice then?

LOCRUS
My studies were complete.

BREAD
What brings you here?

LOCRUS
I—

You are curious.

BREAD
I am.

LOCRUS
I have, I think, some family in town.

BREAD

Come, we will find them at the Barn.

LOCRUS

The Barn?

BREAD
It was a Barn, then Dionysus came and...

All of that.

LOCRUS
Oh yes. I heard.

BREAD
Now it is many things: a school, a meeting place, a place to eat, drink wine, and celebrate.

LOCRUS
I had wine once.

Where is this Barn?

And will they have a bed for me?

BREAD
Somebody will.

It seems you are my only customer today.

Help me pack up and I will take you there.

(He does.)

You mentioned family?

LOCRUS

My sister, yes.

Thebe, by name, and her son, of course.

BREAD

What son? Ah, yes.

It is so easy to forget she is the oldest living...

Person in our town.

And has led other lives.

LOCRUS

Yes, we are old.

BREAD

Ah, so, you too are a Naiad of some kind?

LOCRUS

Not really, no.

The Naiad part is a mother daughter stream,

Sons sink, or snag, or swim ashore as I have done because

I am... well...

BREAD

Yes?

LOCRUS

A son of Zeus, in fact.

BREAD

With eyes like that you just might be. *(Exeunt)*

10. Detective Oedipus at work. (From OEDIPUS) The king, disguised joins the UnNamed around a weak fire.

OEDIPUS

I heard that one of you had spent some time in royal service,

Are you the man?

BOTTLE

Scarcely a man, but yes,

More than a few of these,

A love, a loss, too many deaths ago

I guarded the old king,

At least, that was my task..

OEDIPUS

Were you beside him when he died?

BOTTLE

It matters less than nothing now.

We all will join him soon.

Death would be warm and welcoming

without him there.

OEDIPUS

You did not love him, then?

BOTTLE

Not then and no more now.

That much is truth.

OEDIPUS

More wine, more truth,

and then perhaps less pain.

BOTTLE

Oh well,

The truth holds neither pain nor promise any more.

It is all lies.

We did our best and yet he died

And we all shared the lie.

OEDIPUS

"We all"?

His guard?

BOTTLE

Some fifty men…

The best that ever bore a blade or wound.

OEDIPUS

No doubt.

Fifty, you say?

Thank Zeus.

BOTTLE

… but fallen far behind.

His driver, chariot, horses were with him.

OEDIPUS

What?

BOTTLE

The king came down from Delphi full of rage.

He hurled his chariot through the guard

As if we were his enemies,

And with but one companion, charged ahead.

King Laius was an angry man.

We followed quickly as our feet

against his dust allowed.

Within an hour's double march

we found the king.

His driver's corpse played prologue to the scene.

The chariot, wrecked, in pieces in the ditch.

OEDIPUS
The driver then?

How did he die?

BOTTLE
Who knows?

But he was slain.

Laius, wounded, fell, and, tangled in his reins,

Was dashed against the broken road

And dragged some thousand paces to his death.

His face was gone.

OEDIPUS
Still more exact.

And when?

BOTTLE
At harvest time,

Though harvest we had none,

Was ten years since.

OEDIPUS
The seed of fear now drives its root into the ground,

This fits in me like dagger in a wound.

11.That's a brilliant idea. (From THEBE)

(LYCUS pretends to be a king at home.)

LYCUS
Where are the women of the royal bath?

It must be time for my massage.

(Enter ANTIOPE carrying a shawl.)

ANTIOPE
I am here.

LYCUS
Ah, yes. Antiope.

What do you want?

ANTIOPE
My life.

LYCUS
I saved your life.

ANTIOPE
And gave it to your wife.

LYCUS
Would you prefer that I had left you for

Your father's foolish sacrifice?

ANTIOPE
Instead, I was one of your toys.

LYCUS
And now you have your little boys.

ANTIOPE
Your sons.

LYCUS
The world is full of women who, like you,

Would claim a father for their spawn.

Why stop with me?

Why not blame Zeus?

It works for Locrus well enough.

ANTIOPE

This much I know of parentage:

My father never learned to read or write,

Except to scratch his name.

LYCUS

Go on.

ANTIOPE

And all of this, your so called Regency,

Is built upon a pile of paper lies.

I could just—

LYCUS

What?

Nycteus thinks that you are dead,

An honoured sacrifice to Zeus

That fills his followers with... wolfishness.

ANTIOPE

So if I go to tell him about you—

LYCUS

His pride demands your secret death.

ANTIOPE

But if I write it down,

And leave a letter with a friend in town,

Who, if I am not safe and free and far from you,

Will send it to my mother.

She can read, and has his ear.

LYCUS

Ah. I see.

How did you learn...?

ANTIOPE

The Lady Dirce had me learn to write

So I can keep her orders straight.

I let her think I had a useless memory.

For that, if nothing else, she has my gratitude.

But I should thank you too.

My sons, Zethus and Amphion,

Deserve to know about the glorious day

When their young mother lay

With the Father of the Gods,

And why they feel his anger move in them

To urge them on to mighty deeds.

You ask me what I want, but give me what I need.

(Throws down the shawl.)

Give this to Dirce, she is cold

In ways that you could never warm.

12. Kiss me (from THEBE). Thebe is a Naiad whose kisses confer forgetfulness. Tiresias is a young adult, female, blind prophet. Thebe has forgotten that she is Tiresias' mother.

THEBE
Hello Tiresias.

(Enter TIRESIAS.)

TIRESIAS
My Queen.

THEBE
I have not earned that title.

When you look at me in your way,

What do you see, beyond what you have already said to me?

How do I come to be the queen?

TIRESIAS
I cannot say.

Because I do not know, but also, if I did,

And told you, you would make your choices differently

And future truth would boil away.

I told Pentheus what I saw and..

THEBE
Yes, of course.

What is the point of prophesy?

TIRESIAS
I truly do not know,

Unless...

THEBE
Yes?

TIRESIAS
There is no point.

Perhaps this gift that steals my life

Was, to great Zeus, like spitting on the ground,

No more.

THEBE
Would you be free of it?

TIRESIAS
With all I am.

I have more clarity right here and now than…

THEBE
Kiss me beautifully.

TIRESIAS
What?

THEBE
Do you not see?

We both have curses dressed as gifts

Wrapped in the pressure of a god's wet lips.

TIRESIAS
We have, but—

THEBE
What?

I only ask a kiss.

And offer you some peace from all that suffering.

And me,

If can taste a glimpse of what will be,

Would I not be a better queen?

TIRESIAS
But, but. You are—

(THEBE give TIRESIAS a quick kiss. TIRESIAS is shaken and confused.)

THEBE
Forget all that.

Remember this.

TIRESIAS
You are so beautiful.

(They kiss again.)

The stars of possibility fall now like snow,

And melt and wash away,

And all I know is nothingness.

I go in search of snakes, pursued by butterflies.

(Dazed and lost, she crawls off. THEBE lies on her back, staring up.)

THEBE

Oh sweet, tormented, cursed Tiresias,

So much you bore?

13. We meet again again (Beginning of CADMEA)

(Distant thunder. Discover TIRESIAS sitting in the gutter outside the Barn. At this point they are a middle aged male, dirty and disheveled. He throws small bones on the ground. Flash reveals THEBE.)

THEBE

Hello Tiresias.

TIRESIAS

Thebe, hello.

THEBE

You know me, then?

Oh good.

TIRESIAS

I know your voice, your name,

The rest is moonlight on a waterfall.

No. I recall...

We gave...

THEBE

We kissed.

TIRESIAS

And kissing gave, exchanged, what Zeus *(Lightning)*

THEBE

And Poseidon *(Thunder)* did to each of us.

TIRESIAS

Prophetic vision.

THEBE

And forgetfulness.

The kiss.

TIRESIAS

And then a sudden emptiness.

THEBE

All truth at once.

TIRESIAS
I was so lost and lonely

THEBE
And afraid.

And yet, with time, years?

TIRESIAS
Yes.

THEBE
It all began to fade.

TIRESIAS
To fill again, for me.

THEBE
I see.

I also see that much has changed with you.

TIRESIAS
Oh, that.

Yes. Yes. I was a woman then.

THEBE
You were: young, wise, and beautiful.

TIRESIAS
More change.

She drowned, in wine I think.

THEBE
She is still here. A mother knows.

TIRESIAS
My mother? Yes, of course.

Well, look at that.

That truth released, a stream of others flows.

It seems I see too much again:

A butterfly, a cave.

I know that cave, but not like this.

A gentle fire, and food, some furniture, and you,

A lamp, and many books.

THEBE

My home, my books.

Whatever life or lightning offered me,

Unsure if it was memory or prophesy,

I wrote it down.

Vision by word by page, I built who I am now.

TIRESIAS

I also see that you were happy there.

Why did you come to this sad town?

THEBE

I had no more to write.

What is to be is now an empty page to me.

TIRESIAS

And so it ought to be.

THEBE

And you?

TIRESIAS

Like shapes that sculpt the shadows as our eyes adjust,

The curse of Zeus returns relentlessly,

And once again I see far more than I can say or understand.

THEBE

You told me once I would be queen.

TIRESIAS

I did. You will.

THEBE

Can you say how?

TIRESIAS

I have no special sense of cause or consequence.

But I suspect you would be wise

To take on some disguise until the time is right.

When you left town...

THEBE

I was confused.

TIRESIAS

To them you were, and are, completely mad,

And yet the inconvenient mother of the king to be,

A complicated place to be.

THEBE

And you?

TIRESIAS

Who? Me?

Mad also, I suppose, but they are used to me.

THEBE

I see.

TIRESIAS

Ha!

THEBE

What?

TIRESIAS

Well, mother, look at me.

Could I not be your father now?

THEBE

A fine pretence, that could make sense

Of any odd things I might say and do.

Why not?

It might help, and can do no harm.

TIRESIAS

Perhaps.

THEBE

What now?

TIRESIAS

I will live long, so long, but on the way

I die a little every day I tell a lie.

I will do this for you.

It helps that, in my heart, it is a little true.

THEBE

Such love.

I will not waste your life, or mine.

For now, if you allow me, father dear,

I will, I think, be near but stay unseen

Within the waters of my stream,

Whatever it is now.

TIRESIAS

Will you see Locrus?

THEBE

Ah. My brother is still here?

TIRESIAS

In every stone.

THEBE

My stream is still a sewer, then?

TIRESIAS

Your stream now feeds a string of terraces and pools,

Grottos and gardens, laughing down from the palace through the centre of the town.

It is the heart song of our city now.

THEBE

Perhaps.

TIRESIAS

Can you make peace with him.

THEBE

Again, perhaps. *(She begins to go)*

Thank you, Tiresias.

TIRESIAS

It is a little thing.

(He throws small bones on the ground.)

14. Job interview (from ELIS)

HIPPODAMIA (Gives money)
Here.

Send the boy in.

And, thank you, friend.

(Exit CLOTH. Enter EKION.)

EKION
You sent for me, your Majesty?

HIPPODAMIA
I did.

Come closer.

Stop.

And let me look at you.

EKION
I—

HIPPODAMIA
Good. Now.

Think well before you answer me.

If I, your one true Queen,

Commanded you to come to bed with me

And love me passionately.

What would you do?

(Pause.)

EKION
Leave town.

HIPPODAMIA
Explain.

EKION
If I… resisted the temptation.

HIPPODAMIA
Ha. Good boy.

EKION
I would fail in my loyalty to you.

But if I gave myself the glorious delights—

HIPPODAMIA
Enough.

Go on.

EKION
I would betray my king.

And either way I would have forfeited my honour

And I could not stay.

HIPPODAMIA
You have been chosen to be king

Of this year's Slaughter Festival?

EKION
I have.

HIPPODAMIA
I can see why.

Yet you would leave?

EKION
So—

HIPPODAMIA
Breath in, young king.

Your honour is as safe with me

As mine with yours.

I was just testing you.

You are a good friend to Prince Chrysippus.

EKION
I try to be.

HIPPODAMIA

He needs you now, and so do I.

EKION
I—

HIPPODAMIA
Draw your blade.

(He does, she looks at it.)

How strange.

EKION
It was my grandfather's,

One of the warriors who sprang up from the dirt

At Cadmus' feet.

HIPPODAMIA
Cadmean, then?

EKION
He was, but, after tragedy,

He came to Elis,

Where he turned his blade

To simple butchery.

HIPPODAMIA
I see.

But can you use it, man to man?

EKION
He taught me to.

For exercise.

HIPPODAMIA
So, on this ancient blade,

I ask you now to swear to me

You will protect Prince Chrysippus with—

EKION
My life.

I swore that long ago.

HIPPODAMIA
Good lad.

Now, go, before I ruin everything.

EKION
Your Majesty. *(Exit)*

HIPPODAMIA
And yours.

15 I dare you. (From CADMEA*) Thebe is the Naiad of the stream which has been named after Dirce.)*

(THEBE come up behind DIRCE and holds a knife to her throat.)

THEBE
The river Dirce.

DIRCE
Yes?

THEBE
Springs from these wounds.

DIRCE
What wounds?

THEBE
Those I will now soon make in you.

DIRCE
Which is it?

THEBE
What?

DIRCE
When? Now or soon.

(THEBE hesitates.)

You will not kill because you haven't yet.

It is not who you are.

(DIRCE turns slowly and puts her hand over THEBE's on the knife.)

Who are you, child?

THEBE
No child.

I walked down Mount Olympus on The Day,

But never have been slave.

DIRCE
Nor goddess?

THEBE
No.

And before that I was, I am,

The life in the waters where Athena bathed,

Where you now entertain,

Where all Cadmea comes to see themselves,

I—

DIRCE
Thebe. Not Manto.

THEBE
Yes.

DIRCE
Your hatred honours me.

THEBE
I will be queen.

DIRCE
Oh yes?

THEBE
It has been prophesied.

DIRCE
Ah. When?

THEBE
What?

DIRCE
When will you be queen?

THEBE
What do you mean?

DIRCE
You are immortal?

THEBE
No.

DIRCE
But live, have lived, a long, long time?

THEBE
I have.

DIRCE

And will, while many mortals, citizens, and queens,

Will live and go.

And so, how do you know this is the time?

I do not think so.

THEBE

No?

DIRCE

If you do this now…

I am a martyr and my name revered,

And you are one last cruelty from the gods.

Find patience Thebe, or your long, long life

Will be more torture than delight.

I may be queen first for a while, or not,

But you know you will be eventually.

It is a future fact.

Wait for the moment, child, then act.

16. The diplomatist. (From ELIS)

(HIPPODAMIA retrieves MENAECEUS' hidden the hat. He is an envoy from Cadmea.)

HIPPODAMIA
Menaeceus.

Your hat.

(Enter MENAECEUS.)

MENAECEUS
Thank you.

How odd.

HIPPODAMIA
Menaeceus.

A word before you go.

MENAECEUS
Of course, good queen, but understand,

I am expected by my family.

HIPPODAMIA
You are a happy man.

MENAECEUS
Yes, in my way.

HIPPODAMIA
Your daughter,

You have sworn to make her queen?

MENAECEUS
Well, it was prophesied.

HIPPODAMIA
My Pelops is not young.

MENAECEUS
No, nor am I.

HIPPODAMIA
But he is old.

Make no mistake, I love the man,

But all men die.

MENAECEUS

Apparently.

What are you trying to say?

HIPPODAMIA

His son. Our son,

Prince Chrysippus, will soon be king,

And he will need a queen.

MENAECEUS

He is a boy.

HIPPODAMIA

He looks a little younger than he is,

The beautiful so often do.

But with our guidance,

And this balance you describe…

MENAECEUS

Harmonia's?

HIPPODAMIA

Yes.

He could become a proper king.

Jocasta could be queen.

MENAECEUS

Of Elis?

HIPPODAMIA

Yes.

Is that so bad?

MENAECEUS

I never thought of it.

HIPPODAMIA

No, but we did.

MENAECEUS
We?

Who?

HIPPODAMIA
Your wife and I.

MENAECEUS
Oh yes?

HIPPODAMIA
We have not met.

But when I heard my kitchen talk about the two

As if they were already in their wedding bed,

And learned a woman of your town

Had recently arrived and made herself

Most welcome by our fire

With wit and, I suspect, some wine,

And that she stirred this pot of talk,

With tales dressed in details that show

She had been welcome in your home as well.

I recognized a skillful mother's hand,

And felt I had an ally and a friend.

MENAECEUS
A most… impressive lady is my love.

And still some people think I am the government.

But surely Elis has a girl or two.

HIPPODAMIA
None raised to be a queen,

And none with parents like you two.

MENAECEUS
Well, I suppose it is a good idea.

I would so miss her, though.

HIPPODAMIA

You would be welcome here,

With all your pretty grandchildren.

MENAECEUS

My father's bones are there.

Thank you.

I should go home.

HIPPODAMIA

And I to bed.

MENAECEUS

Yes, Pelops waits.

HIPPODAMIA

Dreaming, I think, by now.

Dream of your daughter's happiness.

MENAECEUS

Thank you.

My faith in the wisdom of

An equal balance between king and queen

Is strengthened every time I visit here.

HIPPODAMIA

Yes. So you said.

Thank you.

Good bye, for now.

(Exit MENAECEUS.)

17. (From CREON) The UnNamed improvise a telling of recent history. Bowl, more Falstaff than princess, plays at being Antigone. Cloth, a lad, tries to be Ismene.

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.

Look at the grass stains on your 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?

18. What might have been. *(From ELIS)*

QUEEN HIPPODAMIA
How dare you act like that?

CHRYSIPPUS
I am a prince.

HIPPODAMIA
Yes, yes you are.

CHYSSIPUS
So treat me with respect.

HIPPODAMIA
You have been spending time with Laius.

CHRYSIPPUS
Yes.

He is my friend.

HIPPODAMIA
And does he treat you with respect?

CHRYSIPPUS
What do you mean?

HIPPODAMIA
Well, does he listen when you speak?

And when he disagrees with you,

Does he do so in privacy?

Does he trust you to understand his thoughts and fears?

And does he want your happiness

More dearly than he wants his own?

All this, I know, your father does.

CHRYSIPPUS
My father is—

HIPPODAMIA
Your father is a noble king, respected everywhere.

His people love him without fear.

His neighbours trust him without doubt.

His ways are modest, though his wealth is not.

And I love him as only he and I can know.

He is a king.

CHRYSIPPUS

But Laius is—

HIPPODAMIA

A badly aging boy,

And you are just his latest toy.

CHRYSIPPUS

Oh, I will tell him what you say.

HIPPODAMIA

Please do.

Take my advice.

No, better still, as you must someday be a king yourself,

Think for yourself.

Remember and observe both men,

And then decide

Which of the two you want to stand beside.

CHRYSIPPUS

Leave me alone.

HIPPODAMIA

I will eventually, but not today.

We may have news of interest to you.

CHRYSIPPUS

What now?

HIPPODAMIA

A queen.

CHRYSIPPUS

Chosen by you?

Thanks, no.

HIPPODAMIA
You will both chose and thank

When you have had a chance to meet with her.

CHRYSIPPUS
Who is this girl?

HIPPODAMIA
The daughter of Menaeceus.

CHRYSIPPUS
What? Does she look like him?

HIPPODAMIA
They say in Thebes—

CHRYSIPPUS
I heard that they had changed the name,

How very strange.

HIPPODAMIA
A king must listen.

So,

they say she has the beauty of the goddess queen

From whom her family takes its blood.

CHRYSIPPUS
Are we in school?

HIPPODAMA
Harmonia.

CHRYSIPPUS
The girl?

HIPPODAMIA
-is called Jocasta,

And Harmonia is her ancestor.

Athena, give me strength.

You are your father's son,

And that, for now, lends you some royalty.

No woman worthy of the name of queen
Will have the man you will become
Unless you find a higher path.
Do better, boy.
You must do more than laugh and drink,
Your chance to live in history
Is closer than you think. *(Exit)*

19. The nuclear family (From JOCASTA)

JOCASTA *(Newborn Oedipus in her arms)*
Please father, not too far.

LAIUS *(Entering)*
When next a wet faced fool is wanted,
I will call.

(Exit MENAECEUS.)

JOCASTA
He is your son, Laius.
Can you not love him?

LAIUS
I have escaped assassins every day
Since I was..*(Gestures at the baby.)* this.
And if the oracle, and Creon, have not lied
He is the last great danger of my life.

JOCASTA
Perhaps they did.

LAIUS
Perhaps?
I am a soldier not a gambler.

JOCASTA
He is a helpless child.

LAIUS
He is a threat to both of us.
I would be mad to have my enemy,
To hold him helpless in my hands
And not to press the moment on to victory.

JOCASTA
He is no warrior.
This is no battlefield.

He is your baby in your arms.

In this unending war that rages in your heart

Do you kill unarmed prisoners?

The wounded? and the old?

LAIUS

I kill my enemies.

JOCASTA

There can be more than battles.

There must be, and you can know it.

Look forward into history,

What will the world look back and see?

LAIUS

The world will have to see me as I am.

I am the king.

JOCASTA

And what is that?

Where is the victory if nothing good is won?

What god can watch a father kill his son?

(Silence.)

Are we not here because you killed a child?

How is this justice now?

LAIUS

I will not kill the child.

JOCASTA

Thank heaven.

LAIUS

But he will die.

Zeus wants my blood

And he will have yours too.

Where is my Captain?

20. So? What's the word from Delphi? (From OEDIPUS)

OEDIPUS

Prince Creon, brother.

Tell us all now what you have seen and heard,

That holds your dancing feet upon the dust.

There has been dancing here while you were gone.

CREON

King of this land.

I cannot.

OEDIPUS

Remember as you did before,

Begin, if so you must, at the beginning,

Then…

CREON

No.

Forgive me.

It is not memory this time.

It is a flood of truth that bursts

the channels of my soul.

I struggle to contain it,

What soul remains demands that I do so.

OEDIPUS

You will not tell?

CREON

I dare not tell.

OEDIPUS

Your city, family, name,

All hang from this one moment.

Your words contain the medicine

We need to save the body of the state.

CREON

Most medicines are poisons held at bay.

OEDIPUS

I will know, and you will tell me.

Know that truth.

CREON

You are the king,

and I am not a strong man.

But kings too have regrets.

My brother, hear me.

You do not want to know.

OEDIPUS

Not want to?

We talk not here of wishes and desires.

I will know, I must know,

You are a vessel carrying this drink to me.

If I must smash the bottle to release the wine,

I will.

CREON

I know the tools of truth that serve you,

And, in truth, I fear them.

OEDIPUS

I warn you Creon,

I will not stop at death.

CREON

And nor did I.

I claim the right of silence under law.

OEDIPUS

Denied.

What you retain is not your own,

But like the water, air, and law, belongs to all.

Your king commands you,

Speak.

CREON

No freedom, law, or state survives

When silence is denied.

OEDIPUS

Frank treason in our direst hour.

CREON

Not that, my king.

Take my burden then,

I do not freely give it, and yet, in truth,

I think that it is yours.

OEDIPUS

It is for all of Thebes and I demand it.

The weight and consequence are mine.

I am the king.

CREON

I will begin and we approach the end.

21. Roll playing tragedy. (From CREON) STRANGER, as king Creon in the story of Antigone, is advised.)

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.

22. The naked truth (From OEDIPUS

CREON I went to death.

I saw the dead king.

Would I were dead if I have lied.

I have not even spoken.

The words, Laius himself,

Rode in me and they brought me here.

Evidence, logic, argument,

Are broken tools beneath our feet

When we stand naked in the presence of the truth.

And this is true.

OEDIPUS

A poet prince, luxurious dreamer, and a traitor.

CREON

The throne, the crown, the agony,

are more than I could bear.

My life is good, simple and sweet and safe.

I tend a gentle garden

full of love and art and music.

I know I never want the binding of the crown about my brow

As fully as I know that you,

Oedipus, king of Thebes,

Must leave this place to save it.

OEDIPUS

A graceful dance to bear a poisoned blade.

CREON

How many years have I made service to your crown?

OEDIPUS

Deeper the darkness.

Careful more the aim.

CREON

I have the life I want.

OEDIPUS

Greed is a thing of having more, not having.

CREON

In your eyes I see that I am tried,

Condemned, and punished, now and here.

OEDIPUS

In your words, so am I.

CREON

You shake with guilt and doubt.

OEDIPUS

The unaccustomed burden of those words

does make me bow.

But I am strong enough to lift them,

And rest them where the truth says they belong.

CREON

Guilt fills the eyes, like blood,

And lends its colour to the world.

OEDIPUS

Enough.

Your time is done.

Your life offends the state.

23. Alone. (From OEDIPUS)

OEDIPUS *(above)*

My mind, stern parent to my heart,

Is clear that I have done no wrong.

JOCASTA

I am still here.

You need not be alone in this.

OEDIPUS

I know my father lives in peace,

A three day's march beyond the shallow hills.

News of his rule has often guided mine.

My mother too,

Sleeps nightly in his arms.

JOCASTA

As I am queen, again as I am wife,

I stand to share your burden.

What makes you twist and mutter so?

Is there something that I should Know?

OEDIPUS

As you have more than once advised me, queen,

I turn from fear, mistrust it, almost fear it,

Yet, now, my very self is fear.

My doubting heart rejects the guidance of my mind.

No.

Fact.

Facts beget truth,

And truth is the gold of judgment’s scales,

And memory is womb to fact.

And, in my memory,

A seed of fear.

JOCASTA
Tell me, good Oedipus.

OEDIPUS
I killed a man.

Two men.

JOCASTA
A murder, king?

OEDIPUS
No, no, my conscience there is clear.

They rode at me upon the way

that led me to the oracle.

They would not turn nor yield,

and nor would I.

How old was Laius when he died?

JOCASTA
Why do you ask when you already know?

All Thebes can tell.

The early autumn of his years.

Still strong, but in decline.

OEDIPUS
Tell me again.

JOCASTA
As many robbers died in killing him

As soldiers fell in his defence.

It was a bloody day.

Those few men of the Guard who lived

Were deeply maimed.

OEDIPUS
But some still live?

24 Last laugh (From OEDIPUS)

OEDIPUS

Who are you, man?

SHEPHERD

My lord, I am your shepherd.

OEDIPUS

What say your friends?

How call they in the field?

SHEPHERD

Why, loudly, lord.

My hearing is not good.

OEDIPUS

Their minds, like sheep, wander and graze at will.

This man of Corinth.

Is he known to you?

SHEPHERD

There is a chance.

In truth, my lord,

I better know the characters of beasts.

All men to me begin to seem the same.

OEDIPUS

Did you, in Laius' time,

Give him an infant boy, out of your hand?

SHEPHERD

A child. A boy.

There is a wisp of something.

Yes.

I think I may have.

No. I did.

I did my lord.

I could not bear to watch it die.

The tiny hero raged against the world.

Infection raged more loudly against him.

His legs were pierced and bound with iron bands.

It could not hope to live.

How died the child?

OEDIPUS

Who laid this baby in the world?

We all will hear and know.

And you will say.

SHEPHERD

I swore against my life to never tell.

OEDIPUS

You stand between two deaths,

One promised long ago and one here, now.

Answer me now

Or I will tear you open with my hands

and find the truth myself.

Who was the parent of that child?

SHEPHERD

My word.

OEDIPUS

Your life.

SHEPHERD

The truth, my king?

It was your wife.

25 Art imitates life (From CREON)

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.