

ELECTRA

Tutor: Child of Agamemnon, our field-marshal at Troy, now you are here you can see what you've longed for all these years. Here we are at ancient Argos, the home you have missed so much, in the hallowed precinct of Inachos' daughter, gadfly-taunted Io. And here, Orestes, is the market-place of Lycian Apollo, the Wolf-Slayer. To the left, look, Hera's famed temple. We have arrived at golden Mykenai (you may believe your eyes), and here is the palace of doomed Pelops' kin, whence I took you and your sisters after your father's murder. I rescued you and brought you up to manhood that you might avenge that crime. So now, Orestes, Pylades, dearest friend, you must quickly outline your strategy; the sun's bright rays move the birds to song, black night's stars have fled. So before people start stirring from their houses, let's talk. No delays now, it's time to act.

Orestes: Dearest of servants, you have been a true friend to us, that's clear. Like a noble steed, even though advanced in age, you have never despaired through all our troubles, but are always ready, urging us on, a vigorous ally. I'll show you my mind. Listen carefully and if I go amiss, correct me. When I approach the Pythian oracle to ascertain how I might avenge my father's murderers, Apollo's answer you'll soon hear: I should, without army or weapons, impose the legitimate penalty of slaughter by guile. Now we've heard this pronouncement, you must enter the palace, when the right time presents itself, find out all that is happening there and report all the facts to us. They'll not recognize you after such a long time, they can hardly suspect it is you, silver-haired as you are now. Here is your story: you are a foreigner, a Phocian sent by Phanoteus – he's their greatest ally. Swear to them that that Orestes has met with a dreadful fate, tumbling from his chariot during the Pythian Games. Tell them that. We will adorn my father's tomb with libations and hair from our heads, as he commanded, then return with a bronze urn which, as you know, we hid in the thickets, and tell them the agreeable lie that my body is already cremated. Why would this upset me, when, dead by report, I am in fact alive and stand to regain renown? No word is ill which leads to gain. I have heard of wise men falsely reported dead who then, on their arrival home, received great honour. I am confident that this report will result in my resurrection which will baffle my foes. Native land, our country's gods, receive me, bless this enterprise, and you, family home – I come as an envoy of the gods to purify you, as is right. Don't dismiss me from this land, without dishonour, but as the bringer of wealth and order. There, I am done. Now, old man, it is up to you to do your duty. We too are leaving. Time is the most important element in all the affairs of men.

Elektra: Oh God!

Tutor: I think I hear one of the servants crying inside the palace, child.

Orestes: Is it poor Elektra? Shall we stay and hear those cries?

Tutor: No. We must carry out Apollo's orders first, we must begin from there. Pour libation to your father. That will bring us power and success.

Elektra: Holy light and air, equal partners in the earth, you have heard my frequent cries of grief, the bloody beating of my breast at the end of each dark night. My poor bed in this accursed house knows now my nightly vigils, how I mourn my wretched father – bloodthirsty Ares did not present him with the gift of death in a foreign land. No, instead my own mother and her lover, Aigisthos, cleft his head in two with a reeking axe, as woodsmen fell an oak. All cries for your vicious and pitiful death, father, are mine alone. I will not cease my grievous wailings as long as I can see the stars' twinkling lights; I will proclaim my grief to all, here at the door, as a nightingale bewails her young. Domain of Hades and Persephone, Hermes of the Nether World, queenly goddess of destruction, holy Furies, God's children, who see unjust slaughterings and defrauded marriage-vows, come, visit me, avenge my father's murder, send me my brother. I can no longer sustain this sorrow alone.

Chorus: Elektra, child of that abomination of a mother, what is this incessant grief of yours for Agamemnon, abandoned by all the gods and brought down by the wiles of a wicked mother, betrayed by her sinful hands? If I may be permitted to say it, may that woman be destroyed.

Elektra: Noble women, you are here to soothe me in my grief, I know for sure: I will never stop grieving for my poor father. You requite my every good wish for you, but leave me, I pray, to my despair.

Chorus: Neither your cries nor your imprecations shall raise your father from Hades, whither all must travel. Your constant cries, which stem from a pain without remedy, take you beyond the bounds to a place where there is no chance of release for you. Why long for more trouble?

Elektra: Blind is he who would forget a father pitilessly slain. That bird is my model who in her grief cries 'Itys! Itys!' endlessly, that anguished herald of Zeus. Long-suffering Niobe, you are a goddess to me, weeping there in your rocky tomb.

Chorus: You are not alone, child, among mortals in your suffering, though you excel in this all others within your house, your kin – the still-living Chrysothemis and Iphianassa and he who lives with grief somewhere hidden from us, who will win happiness when the land of noble Mykaineans receives him, brought here by Zeus' kindly guidance, Orestes himself.

Elektra: Yes, and here I wait for him, childless and unwed as I am, my face wet with tears – my plight is endless. He has forgotten all that has happened to him, all he has learnt. What news have we heard that has not ended in our disappointment? He is ever keen to come, but ever irresolute.

Chorus: Courage, child! Heavenly Zeus is mighty – he determines everything, rules us all. Commit your great wrath into his hands and curb your rage and your hatred. But don't abandon it either. Time is a kindly deity. Agamemnon's son tills the soil in Krisa – he is not uninvolved, nor is the Lord of the Underworld along the river Acheron.

Elektra: So much time has already gone by and left me in despair. I can hold on no longer. Childless, I waste away, no man at my side. Like a stranger of no account I manage my father's house, in mean attire, with meager sustenance.

Chorus: A piteous cry greeted his return from Troy. Piteous too was the cry when on his couch he was brought down by a golden axe. Guile contrived the deed, lust performed it, parents of a vile act. Was there a god or a mortal behind it?

Elektra: Yes, the most hideous day of my life. That night, that unspeakable banquet, its hideous pain. See, my father's foul death at her hands – they took my life, they destroyed me. May the great god of Olympus pay them in kind, they those homicides enjoy pomp no more.

Chorus: No more words! Do you not see whence your fortunes derive? You are the wretched cause of your own grief. You have brought upon yourself much anguish, your despairing soul is the cause of this strife. Yet don't try to put yourself against those in power.

Elektra: Dread torture! I know, I am not unaware of my emotional state. I cannot escape my fate until my life ends. Kind friends, who can advise, who can counsel me well? No, leave your comforting. These things can't be helped. I can never be free of these countless griefs.

Chorus: I speak to you with the kindness of a trusted mother – don't add woe on woe.

Elektra: How have I deserved such a pitiful life? How can it be right to neglect to honour the dead? What mortal approves it? I'll never associate with him – I couldn't rest easy in his company, living the good life, holding back the floods of tears that would shame my kin. If a man is returned to ashes, a victim of murder, and his family neglects to avenge his death, gone is all self-worth, all reverence.

Chorus: Child, I came here to fight your cause, and mine too. If I am wrong, then do what *you* want. I'll be on your side regardless.

Elektra: If I have upset you with my excessive laments, I am sorry. I am compelled to follow this course – forgive me. How could a noble lady such as I, with a father unavenged and seeing the dire consequences burgeon day and night, not act? Firstly, everything about the mother who bore me is detestable to me; secondly, I live in the same house as my father's murderers, they lord it over me, it is at their whim that I either get what I want or go without. And then, imagine how I spend my days, seeing Aigisthos sitting in my father's chair, wearing his clothes, making sacrifices to the gods of the hearth, there where he killed him. And finally, the greatest indignity of all – the homicide sleeps with my wretched mother in my father's bed (if you can use the name of mother for such a whore). This wretch lives with that fiend, unafraid of the Avenger. Indeed, as though laughing at her deed she celebrates the day on which she killed my father by trickery with festivities and the sacrifice of a lamb to the Saviour-Gods – every month! When I see this in our very house I weep, I pine, I lament that abominable feast she named after Agamemnon. But I cannot weep enough for my heart's content. This noble

woman (noble in name only!) mocks me thus: "Godforsaken abomination, are you the only woman who has lost a father? No-one else is ever in mourning? To hell with you! I hope the gods of the Underworld never terminate these cries of yours!" That's how she treats me. Except when she hears of the possibility of Orestes' coming. Then she comes to me and yells, "This is your doing, is it not? You snatched him from my clutches and spirited him away! You'll pay the price for that." That's the sort of thing she howls, urged on by that brave paramour at her side, her weakling beau, bent on destruction, urging war, with a woman as his comrade-in-arms. Meanwhile I await relief in the form of Orestes while wasting away. His constant reassurances of action have destroyed all the hopes I ever had. Friends, such circumstances cannot be served by wisdom or piety. No, vile conditions call for vile measures.

Chorus: Dare you say this while Aigisthos is nearby, or is he safely away from the palace?

Elektra: I wouldn't come outside if he were about. No, he's away from here.

Chorus: I would be more willing to speak encouragement if this were so.

Elektra: He is not here, I assure you. What do you want to say?

Chorus: Your brother – is he coming or not?

Elektra: He says he is but he does nothing.

Chorus: It's common to drag the heels when great things are to be done.

Elektra: Well, I didn't drag mine when I had him rescued from their clutches.

Chorus: Be of good cheer. He's a good man – he'll come to the aid of those he loves.

Electra: I believe you, or I would not have lived this long.

Chorus: No more words. I see your sister, Chrysothemis, coming from within., Agamemnon's daughter, like you, and Klytaimnestra's. She has offerings for the dead in her hands.

Chrysothemis: Sister, why have you left the palace? What are you saying to these women? Don't you realize, even now, that you are living in a fantasy world? I too grieve at our plight and if I had the fortitude I would tell you my feelings. But I am convinced that in adversity one should lower one's sails and appear inactive and unconcerned. I wish you would learn this lesson. You must judge for yourself what is best, but to live an unencumbered life one must listen to those in power.

Elektra: To lose sight of the father who begat you and yet to have concern for your mother! For shame! All this advice you give me is hers, not yours. So choose – either hate her or side with her and forget those who love you. You have just said that if you had the fortitude you would proclaim your hatred of those two. I am trying to avenge all the

wrongs our father suffered and yet you do nothing to help. Indeed you would hinder me. Are we doomed to cowardice as well as tribulation? Tell me what I will gain if I cease my lamentations –or learn from me. Am I not alive? A wretched life, I know, but it's enough for me – I am a thorn in their side and this brings some satisfaction to our dead father, if the dead feel any joy. In theory you hate them as I do, but in practice you side with our father's killers. I would never kow-tow to them, not even if you gave me all those possessions of which you are so proud. Have your groaning board, your high-class lifestyle. So long as I am sustained conscience-free I have no wish for your riches. You would feel as I do were you wise. Though you may be called the child of the best of all possible fathers, align yourself with the mother if you must! In the eyes of most people you are a base traitor to your dead father and your loved ones.

Chorus: No more bitterness, for God's sake! Both of you raise valid points – learn from each other.

Chrysothemis: Ladies, I am used to her "advice". I wouldn't have paid it any mind if I hadn't been aware of the utter ruin in store for her – it will end all her cries of woe.

Elektra: Out with it, then! If it is greater than what I already suffer I'll be silent ever after.

Chrysothemis: I'll tell you all I know. If you don't cease your cries, they are going to send you where the sun doesn't shine, to repeat your litany from a subterranean prison. Think on that, and don't blame me for your misfortunes. It is time you learnt sense.

Elektra: That is their plan for me?

Chrysothemis: Yes. As soon as Aigisthos returns.

Elektra: Then the sooner he comes the better.

Chrysothemis: Wretch, what was that you wished for?

Elektra: For Aigisthos to come, if those are his intentions.

Chrysothemis: So you can undergo yet more pain? Where are your wits?

Elektra: So I can get as far away from you all as possible.

Chrysothemis: Are you aware of the way you live now?

Elektra: My life is an enviable one.

Chrysothemis: It would be if you were to learn wisdom.

Elektra: Don't tutor me to spurn my friends.

Chrysothemis: I don't. Rather concede to the powerful.

Elektra: No, *you* play the flatterer! It's not my way.

Chrysothemis: It's good to avoid disaster by prudent thought

Elektra: Disaster will come, if it must, so long as I avenge my father.

Chrysothemis: Our father forgives us, I know.

Elektra: Those are a coward's words of comfort.

Chrysothemis: .You refuse to listen to my advice?

Elektra: I do. I hope I'm never so devoid of sense.

Chrysothemis: Then I'll go where I've been sent.

Elektra: Where are you going? What are those offerings for?

Chrysothemis: Our mother has sent me to pour them on our father's grave.

Elektra: How could she? She hates him more than anyone else.

Chrysothemis: And she killed him. That's what you mean.

Elektra: Who advised her to do this? Who wanted it?

Chrysothemis: Some nightmare prompted it, I suspect.

Elektra: Protective gods, be with me now.

Chrysothemis: Does her fear give you some assurance?

Elektra: Tell me what she said and I'll answer.

Chrysothemis: I know only a little.

Elektra: And that is...? A little word has been known to make or break a man.

Chrysothemis: It's said she saw our father coming back to life, that he took the sceptre he bore in life (the one Aigisthos now carries) and affixed it to the altar. Foliage sprouted from it, overshadowing the whole of Mykenai. I heard this from someone who was there when she was telling the Sun her dream. That's all I know except that it is this fear which prompted her to send me on this errand. By the gods of our house, listen to me, have prudence, don't destroy yourself. You reject me and it will only cause you more trouble.

Elektra: My dear, don't take those offerings in your hands to the tomb. Neither human nor divine laws sanction the offerings of sacrifices and libations at the instigation of a woman of sin. Cast them into the air, bury them deep in the earth, don't bring them near our father's resting-place. When she dies, let her keep these treasures herself in the Underworld. Only the foulest woman on earth could have dedicated these hated libations to the man she killed. Think! Would our father wittingly accept these gifts from her who

killed him, dishonoured him, mutilated his corpse and, as though offering a libation, wiped the bloodstains in his hair? Do you really believe they will clear her of her homicide? No. But enough of this! For me too cut some locks of your hair and take these possessions of mine (meager, yet mine) and give them to him – a lock of my shining hair and my plain, unadorned girdle. Beg him on your knees to come out of the ground and kindly grant us aid against our foes. And let her own son Orestes with overpowering strength crush them beneath his heel that we may henceforth crown him more richly than now we do. I suspect that these foul visions of hers were to some extent his doing. Yet, sister, do me a favour here, not to mention both yourself and that most beloved of men, our own dead father.

Chorus: These are pious and loving words she speaks. Be wise, dear lady, do as she says.

Chrysothemis: I shall. Justice points just one way and that is to action. I beg you, friends, for silence while I perform these rites. Even if our mother gets wind of this, I am sure I will still have the courage for this painful deed.

Chorus: Unless I'm crazed, Justice is on her way,

A portent pure and mighty, and She'll pay

Swift vengeance. I acquired bravery

When these propitious dreams were told to me.

Your kingly father never shall expire,

Nor shall that timeworn axe, forged in the fire,

That axe of bronze which took him from us all

When with one treacherous blow, she let it fall.

The Erinys, inexorable, stands –

A dire fate will issue from her hands.

Avenge the outrage of their marriage-bed,

Just retribution on the guilty spread!

That wretched contest which old Pelops won

Still brings more grief to each successive son.

It was a wicked piece of treachery

Which flung poor Myrtilos into the sea

From off his golden chariot. Since that race

This house has seen no respite from disgrace.

Klytaimnestra: Still at liberty, I see! Aigisthos isn't here to prevent you, as he constantly does, from venturing abroad and shaming our loved ones. With him away you have no respect for me at all, you who have frequently denounced me to countless people as a merciless and lawless ruler who treats you and yours with contempt. First of all, there is no arrogance in me, and secondly I denounce you merely because I am so often denounced by you. Your one pretense for this is your father – that I killed him! Yes, I! That's right! I don't deny it! Justice, too, is responsible, give her credit as well. You should have been her ally, if you had any sense. This father of yours, whom you mourn endlessly, sacrificed *your* sister to the gods, alone among all the Greeks. As if his grief as her father could equal that of her who bore her – me! All right, then, why did he do this? Tell me. For the Greeks, do you say? What right had they to slay my daughter? For his brother Menelaus? Then surely he should pay me retribution for that too? Did Menelaus not have two sons, more deserving to be sacrificed than Iphigeneia? Born of the same father and mother – the mother responsible for that whole expedition? Was Hades more avid for my children's lives than hers? Or did that murderous man your father transfer his affections from my children to those of Menelaus. A thoughtless, evil father, then! That's my judgment, even if it isn't yours. It would be Iphigeneia's too if she were able to speak. So what has transpired does not upset me. But if you judge me harshly, make sure your own judgment is just before you start blaming your neighbour.

Elektra: You cannot say that your words spring from any grievous action on my part. But if you will allow me, I will speak in praise of both my departed father and my sister.

Klytaimnestra: Go ahead! If you always began like that, I would find your words agreeable.

Elektra: Here it is – you say you killed my father. What could be more shameful than such an admission, whether your deed was just or unjust? I say it was unjust and spurred on by the despicable man who now shares your bed. Ask Artemis the Huntress what retribution she sought by harnessing the countless winds of Aulis. I'll tell you (divine law forbids questioning her). My father, so I hear, once while at leisure in the goddess's grove, startled a spotted stag, which he then shot dead with a boastful cry of triumph. This angered Leto's daughter, causing her to deny the Achaeans passage until he sacrificed his own daughter in compensation for the beast. That is why she was sacrificed – otherwise the army would have been denied achieving either homeland or Troy. That is why, under compunction and fighting the inevitable, he finally sacrificed Iphigeneia. It had nothing to do with Menelaus. If this deed was, according to you, to further his brother's cause, did you have to kill him? What sort of justice is that? Watch out! Ratify a law like that and you'll bitterly regret it. Killing one man on another's behalf would necessitate your death first, if there is any justice. Mind you don't find yourself inverting a pretext. Please tell me why you act so detestably, you, the consort of a killer, with whose assistance you slaughtered our father, from whose seed you created new life so you can eradicate our noble line. How can I approve of that? Is this atonement for your

daughter's death acceptable? No, it's disgraceful! A fine thing to marry such an odious man and claim it's for your daughter's sake. Yet I must not chastise you, as you are constantly reminding me that I am slandering my own mother! No, a tyrant rather than a mother! Look at the miserable life I lead in your thrall and that of your paramour! Orestes, too, poor man, who barely escaped your clutches, lives an exile's life as wretched as my own. You have often accused me of looking after his welfare so that he may be my avenger. I would if I could, be sure of that! Tell everybody this is so! Call me a vicious and impious slanderer, what you will! Knowing what you've done, I could scarcely avoid vilifying your very nature.

Chorus: She's breathing fire. If this is justice she speaks, I've lost all my judgment.

Klytaimnestra: What sort of judgment do you require in her case? She insults her own mother – at her age! How can she act so shamelessly?

Elektra: I do feel ashamed, believe it or not. I know why I act in this unseemly and uncharacteristic way. Your hostility and your deeds force me to it against my will. Base action is taught by example.

Klytaimnestra: Wicked child, it seems you have too much to say about me and my words and my deeds.

Elektra: You do the talking, not I. Deeds invite words.

Klytaimnestra: By Queen Artemis, you'll not get away with this insolence. Wait till Aigisthos gets here.

Elektra: See! You're angry now, even though you let me say what was on my mind. You don't understand the word "listen".

Klytaimnestra: Will you not let me make the sacrifice to ensure our good? I let you say all wanted to say, after all.

Elektra: Go ahead, please! I will be silent. No more words.

Klytaimnestra: You there, take up the offerings. Then I can pray that our Lord will release me from the fears which surround me. Phoibos, Protector, hear my whispered prayer. This is no conversation among friends – one mustn't reveal all when this woman is nearby. She may spew whirling words of vitriolic hatred to the whole city. Hear me when I speak, for speak I will. Lord Apollo, I have had an ambiguous vision tonight – if it is of good omen, fulfil it, if bad, visit it on my foes. Frustrate any who would wrest my power from me, let me continue to rule unharmed over the House of Atreus, let me live in harmony with my loved ones and the children who bear me no ill-will and wish me no harm. Be gracious, Lykeian Apollo, and grant my prayer for the benefit of us all. The rest I suspect you know without my saying it. You are a god and it is natural that Zeus' children know all.

Tutor: Strangers, ladies, might I know if this is the domain of King Aigisthos?

Chorus: It is, sir. You are right in your guess.

Tutor: And am I in the presence of his consort? Her looks are those of a queen.

Chorus: Right again. She is.

Tutor: Greetings, Majesty. I bring great news from a friend for both you and Aigisthos.

Chorus: I heard you. First tell me who sent you.

Tutor: Phanoteus the Phokian who has wonderful tidings for you.

Klytaimnestra: What are they? Tell me. Clearly they will be welcome words if they come from a friend.

Tutor: In brief, Orestes is dead.

Elektra: No! Then I am too!

Klytaimnestra: What are you saying, stranger? Pay no attention to her.

Tutor: I repeat – Orestes is dead.

Elektra: This destroys me, I live no more.

Klytaimnestra: You! Keep your own counsel. Stranger, tell me, and honestly, *how* did he die?

Tutor: I will tell all – it is my duty. He went to Delphi to compete in the famed Delphic Games. When he heard the herald's ringing tones announcing the first event, the foot-race, he stepped forward eagerly, a magnificent sight (everyone attested to that). His proficiency was equal to the contest and he left the arena the winner of the prestigious prize. How can I tell you the whole story in just a few words? I cannot – his performance was so great. Know this, though – he was judged victor in all the events and everyone applauded, calling out the name of 'Orestes of Argos, the son of Agamemnon, who once mustered the illustrious Greek army.' Well, so much for the contests. But when a god strikes, it is impossible to escape unharmed. Another day, the day of the horse-races set for sunrise, Orestes entered as did the other charioteers. One was an Achaian, one a Spartan, two were Libyans, masterly horsemen; next came Orestes (making five) with his Thessalian horses, an Aitolian with sandy-coloured colts, a Magnesians, an Ainian with snow-white horses, an athlete from God-built Athens and in the tenth chariot a Boiotian. The appointed judges positioned the chariots by lot and at the sound of the brass trumpet they were off! They shook the reins, whipping up their horses, and the whole course was filled with the sound of rattling chariots. Dust swirled up into the sky, and the lash was not spared as they sped hugger-mugger, each trying to leave behind his rivals' axles and neighing steeds. Everywhere foam from the snorting animals splattered their backs and the whirling wheels. At first all the chariots remained upright, but then the Ainian's hard-mouthed colts broke away and, with six laps completed, on the seventh they

smashed head-on with the Barkaian's wheels. After that one calamity chariot crashed into chariot and fell headlong until the whole plain of Krise was littered with toppled horses. Seeing this, one of the Athenian team, a skilled charioteer, moved out and slowed down, allowing this tangled web of horseflesh to pass him by. Orestes was in last place, confident in his finishing spurt. But when he saw that the Athenian team was the only other team still in the race, with a piercing cry he urged his swift horses after them. Neck and neck they raced, now one now the other inching ahead. Orestes, on every lap, grazed the post as he turned, checking the inner steed while whipping on his fellow. Poor wretch, he safely negotiated every lap, chariot and rider both intact. But...! As he eased up on his left rein, with the horses already on the turn, he inadvertently crashed into the post, smashing the wheel and axle, tumbling from the chariot and twisting in the lacerated thongs. As he fell to the ground the colts took off across the arena. When the spectators saw him fall from his chariot, a great cry of anguish went up for the youth, to have done so well only to suffer such misfortune. One second he was prostrate on the ground, the next rolling over, his legs in the air. Eventually the other entrants managed to get his errant steeds under control and rescued his bloody corpse – none of his friends could have recognized it, poor man. They burned his body immediately on a pyre and now some Phokaians have been chosen to bring this mighty man here, reduced to a handful of ashes in a small bronze urn, that he might be entombed within his own country. There you have it – pitiful to hear indeed but for us who witnessed the event the greatest calamity ever seen.

Chorus: O God! The royal house is gone, totally uprooted, destroyed like its ancestral leaders.

Klytaimnestra: Zeus, is this good fortune? Or is it ill news, though beneficial to me? It's painful to prolong life with adversity.

Tutor: Lady, why does this news cause you sorrow?

Klytaimnestra: Motherhood is an awesome thing. One cannot hate one's offspring under any circumstances.

Tutor: Then my journey here was fruitless.

Klytaimnestra: Not so. Why would you say that? You came here with clear proof of the death of my son., life of my life; well, he left the one who nourished him with her body and became an exile. After his departure he never saw me again. He called me to account for his father's death and threatened dreadful punishment. I had no nourishing sleep day or night; Time held me constantly as one dead. But now (released as I am from fear of reprisal from both this girl and that brother of hers – she was the greater threat to my peace, always here, draining my life's blood) we shall pass our days untroubled by her threats.

Elektra: O God! I must wail your fate, Orestes, a fate which provokes a mother's insults. Is this justice?

Klytaimnestra: In this case, yes! Your deserts are yet to come.

Elektra: Hear me, Goddess of Vengeance, avenge this latest death.

Klytaimnestra: She had heard enough and has already effected a satisfactory outcome.

Elektra: Yes, rage on! You're relishing this, aren't you?

Klytaimnestra: Have you two not done enough?

Elektra: *We* have done - we can't stop *you*.

Klytaimnestra: Stranger, you shall be worthy of much compensation if you have stopped her incessant noise.

Tutor: If all is well, I'll leave.

Klytaimnestra: No! That would not satisfy me nor my friend who sent you here. Go in! Ignore these cries, ignore her troubles and those of her kin.

Elektra: Can you believe this is a grieving mother bewailing her lost son? Hah, she went in with a mocking smile. O God, Orestes, dearest, your death kills me too, ripping from my heart my only remaining hope, the hope that you would one day come and avenge *our* father and my wretched self. Where am I to go now? I am desolate! No father, no brother! Must I continue in thralldom to those monsters who killed our father? Is this justice? I'll not go in and eke out my life with them. No, I'll live my barren life here at the gate. Let one of those friends kill me if I offend them. That would doubtless please them as my continued presence upsets them. I have no desire to live.

Chorus: Where are Zeus' thunderbolts, where is the blazing Sun-God? They see all this yet will not show themselves.

Elektra: O! Aiee!

Chorus: Why do you weep, child?

Elektra: O!

Chorus: Stop this wailing!

Elektra: I am nothing.

Chorus: How is that?

Elektra: If you hold out any hope for those who are clearly dead, you insult me in my desolation.

Chorus: There was a king, Amphiareus, who, sent to Hades by means of golden snare, yet beneath the earth –

Elektra: Aahh!

Chorus: - he holds sway.

Elektra: Alas!

Chorus: Yes, alas! You are utterly –

Elektra: - crushed.

Chorus: Yes.

Elektra: I know, I know. His grief found a protector. I have none. He who once lived has been snatched away from me.

Chorus: Your plight is totally wretched.

Elektra: I know only too well. Constant are the endless woes in my life.

Chorus: We know your grief.

Elektra: Don't take me where there is no –

Chorus: What are you saying?

Elektra: - family support left, no father, no brother.

Chorus: All mortals must die.

Elektra: Like him, poor wretch? Tangled in severed coils in the middle of a frantic contest?

Chorus: Such a dreadful end! Who could have foreseen it?

Elektra: Yes! An exile beyond my reach –

Chorus: Ah!

Elektra: - he lies. No grave! No kin to mourn him!

Chrysothemis: Dearest Elektra, joy has impelled me here with all speed, indeed with immodest haste. I bring you great news, news which will banish the former grief under which you groaned.

Elektra: Where could you possibly find me respite from my grief? It is beyond healing.

Chrysothemis: Orestes is here. I tell you, you may see him as clearly as you see me.

Elektra: You are raving surely, poor wretch! You mock our communal grief.

Chrysothemis: By the House of Atreus, I tell you this not in a spirit of mockery. He's here, I tell you.

Elektra: O my God! Who was it told you that you so fervently believe it?

Chrysothemis: I believe my own eyes (I need no other's). That's how I know this report is true.

Elektra: What did you see to convince you and cause you to glow thus?

Chrysothemis: Listen to me, *then* say whether this is wisdom or folly.

Elektra: Tell me, then, if your tale can bring joy.

Chrysothemis: I'll tell you all I know. When I got to Father's ancestral tomb, I saw that from its crown milk had been newly poured and the coffin was strewn with all manner of flowers. I was transfixed at this marvel and looked around to see if anyone was nearby. When I realized that all was quiet and tranquil, I stole nearer the tomb. At the edge of the pyre I saw a newly-cut lock of hair. As soon as I saw it, something struck me forcibly – that this was evidence that Orestes, dearest of all men, was alive. When I held it in my hand, I was filled with joy and silent tears sprang to my eyes. And I know now, as I knew then, that this had come from no-one else but Orestes. Whom else could this affect but you and me? It's clear this was not my handiwork nor yours. You may not leave the house with impunity, not even worship the gods, and Mother has no interest in such an act, or, if she had, it couldn't escape her notice. No, these rites are Orestes' doing. Courage, my love! One's fate doesn't always remain unchanged. Up to now *our* fate has been cruel, but today perhaps augurs bounteous good fortune.

Elektra: O still so naïve! How I pity you!

Chrysothemis: What? Is this not joyful news?

Elektra: You have no idea what you are, your mind is elsewhere.

Chrysothemis: I know what I saw. It was quite clear!

Elektra: He's dead, you poor fool. Salvation won't come from that direction, don't look for it.

Chrysothemis: O God, who told you that?

Elektra: A man who's still nearby. Orestes was killed, he says.

Chrysothemis: Where is he? This has stunned me!

Elektra: He's within. This is hardly shattering news to our mother. Quite the reverse!

Chrysothemis: O God! Who then performed those rites for our father?

Elektra: I suspect someone placed them there as a memorial of Orestes' death.

Chrysothemis: Doomed! I rushed here with joyful news, unaware of our bitter fate. But now I'm here, I find both past and present equally hateful.

Elektra: True! But listen to me and you may free us of this burden.

Chrysothemis: Am I to raise the dead?

Elektra: I don't mean that. I'm not that stupid.

Chrysothemis: What am I able to do?

Elektra: Be brave and do as I say.

Chrysothemis: If it's of service, I shan't refuse.

Elektra: Success does not come without toil.

Chrysothemis: I know. I'll do whatever I can.

Elektra: Here's my plan. I know (and I'm sure you do too) that we have no friends to help us. Hades has taken them all and left us desolate. Until I heard that our brother was no longer living and breathing on earth, I held on to the hope that he would come and avenge Father's death. Now, since he is no more, I turn to you – don't shrink from aiding your sister in snuffing out our father's killer – Aigisthos. I hide nothing from you and rightly so. Why do you just stand there? I have just offered you some real hope. Your destiny is anguish at the loss of your patrimony as well as interminable grief as you grow old unwed, a virgin. You can no longer hold out any hope. Aigisthos is not so rash as to allow our tree to flourish – that would cause him distress obviously. But if you follow through with my plan, you will be honouring our dear departed father and our brother too, and furthermore you will be a free woman, as you were born, and achieve a worthy marriage. Everyone desires happiness. Do you not see what great renown you will win us both if you listen to me? What citizen, or even foreigner, will not, when he sees them, greet them with words of praise? "Look, friends! Those two sisters redeemed their family line, crushed their enemies and, with no thought for their own safety, revenged a murder. They are worthy of our friendship and our respect. Their courage impels us all to do them honour at our feast and throughout the city." That's what they'll all say – our fame will endure even after our death. Listen to me, my dear, join me in avenging our father and brother, rescue me from misery, save yourself too. You must know that the noble must never lead shameful lives.

Chorus: Your words are prudent. Both you and your audience may benefit from them.

Chrysothemis: Ladies, before speaking my sister should have exercised some caution, if she had had any sense. What was she thinking when she adopted this rash attitude and called upon my help? Can't you see? You're a woman, not a man, you have less power than your adversaries. Their star shines daily, but ours has vanished and has led to

nought. Who can plot the demise of such a man as Aigisthos and escape scot-free? Our wrongdoing will merely spawn more wrongdoing if your words are heeded. No freedom, no help is available if, while receiving an honourable reputation, we die ingloriously. Death is not the most terrible thing – no, when it is one's time to die, yet still death is denied, that is the worst. I beg you, curb your anger before our entire house brings us down and isolates us utterly. I shall keep your words secret (they shall go no further). But you too must conceal your intents from now on – you have not got the power to subdue those in command.

Chorus: Listen to her. Prudence and wisdom are man's best possessions.

Elektra: Your words don't surprise me. I knew well that you'd reject them. I must act alone, then, as I won't back down.

Chrysothemis: Oh no! Would you had had the same mind when our father died. You would have achieved all your goals.

Elektra: My natural inclination was the same then but my will let me down.

Chrysothemis: See that it continues to do so.

Elektra: You're not going to help me so you reprimand me for my plan.

Chrysothemis: It stands to reason that this is a criminal act.

Elektra: I admire your reasoning but I detest your cowardice.

Chrysothemis: I shall hold my ground, as I do now, even when you thank me for my advice.

Elektra: That will never happen.

Chrysothemis: You have an eternity to weigh these words of mine.

Elektra: Leave! You're no use to me!

Chrysothemis: I am, but you refuse to accept it.

Elektra: Go on, tell our mother everything!

Chrysothemis: No, I don't hate you for your enmity.

Elektra: Do you realize what disgrace you will cause me?

Chrysothemis: No disgrace! I am trying to teach you prudence.

Elektra: Should I espouse your justice?

Chrysothemis: When you learn wisdom, you'll be able to lead the way for both of us.

Elektra: Your advice is dreadfully ill-conceived.

Chrysothemis: And you...? Just advice for an unjust act.

Elektra: What? Do I not have justice on my side?

Chrysothemis: Sometimes even justice causes harm.

Elektra: I have no desire to live under such justice.

Chrysothemis: If you do what I say, I shall earn your praises.

Elektra: I shall go through with my plan. You don't frighten me.

Chrysothemis: In truth? You'll not be persuaded?

Elektra: Bad advice is the worst thing of all.

Chrysothemis: My words have failed to teach you wisdom.

Elektra: My plan is an old one, far from new-formed.

Chrysothemis: I shall leave, then. You won't hear my words and I won't hear your plans.

Elektra: Go in, then! I'll never listen to you, however much you want me to. Your quest is folly itself, quite fruitless.

Chrysothemis: If you deem this wisdom, go ahead. When things go wrong, then you'll approve of my advice.

Chorus: Behold the clever denizens of the air

Who fend for those who gave them breath and life –

Why cannot we give corresponding care?

By heavenly law and Zeus's lightning-strife

There's none of us shall go unpunish'd long.

Cry, mortals, cry, go shriek aloud your woe,

Arouse the dead Atreidai with this wrong,

Bring black dishonour to our mortal foe.

All harmony is gone from Atreus' kin –

Two sisters wrangle, sickness everywhere,

A groaning wretch, as you have ever been,
Elektra, you're alone, you have no care
To live, you sound like that sweet nightingale,
That grieving bird – you long to kill those two,
Those dissolute hellhounds who now prevail.
Was ever such a noble soul as you?
No-one would wish to stain a good man's name,
And it's a toilsome choice that you have made –
To take up arms and fight against all shame,
Thus to be called a wise and noble maid.
Crushed by the wealth and power of your foes,
You dwell their underling, a piteous fate.
Vile Destiny has brought you many woes
But Zeus's strongest laws you venerate.

Orestes: Ladies, did we hear correctly when we were given directions? Are we traveling the right way?

Chorus: Where are you going? What do you want?

Orestes: I've been trying to find Aigisthos' whereabouts.

Chorus: You've come to the right place – your directions were accurate.

Orestes: Which one of you will tell those within that Pylades and I have finally reached our destination?

Chorus: This lady here – after all, she is their nearest of kin.

Orestes: Go, lady, tell them two Phokians seek Aigisthos.

Elektra: O no! Clear proof of what we have heard!

Orestes: I don't know what you've heard. But old Strophios has ordered me to tell of Orestes.

Elektra: What is it, stranger? I throb with fear.

Orestes: We bring his scant remains, here in this tiny urn. See!

Elektra: O God, the truth is out now. Misery stares me in the face.

Orestes: If you grieve for Orestes, be assured this urn contains his ashes.

Elektra: Stranger, if his mortal remains lie hidden in this vessel, please give it to me that I may bewail my fate and that of our whole house, and with my sister keen over his ashes.

Orestes: Friends, give it to her. Her request is not one of enmity – she is a friend or maybe a relative.

Elektra: O the best remaining memory of the dearest of mortals. How far from the hopes I had when I let you go do I now take you back! I hold in my hand the nothing which now you are, brother, not the noble youth to whom I said goodbye. I should have died before I smuggled you away to a strange land, to save your life – for now you do indeed lie dead, sharing your father's fate. You met a dreadful end far from home, in another country, separated from your sister. To my shame it was not I who performed your rites, with holy water and a funeral pyre – no, alien hands took care of you and here you are, a handful of dust in a tiny box. So much for the vain ministrations I performed for you with loving concern all those years ago! You were dearer to me than our mother. No-one else cared for you as I did. You always called me 'sister'. In one short day all this is as nought now you are dead. Like a whirlwind you have swept away everything. Father is dead, you too are gone, and thus you have killed me. Our foes mock us. Our mother (who is truly no mother!) is giddy with joy – you often sent me secret reports of her, vowing vengeance. Our sad fates have annihilated all that – they brought me you, not your sweet mortal form but a heap of ashes, a hollow phantom. A pitiful sight! It was a fearful passage you trod, dearest, it has destroyed me. Destroyed me, dear brother! Take me with you – an empty shell destined for emptiness – that I may dwell with you below the earth for evermore. In life we shared everything, in death I desire never to leave you. The dead are free from pain.

Chorus: Elektra, your father is dead, Orestes is dead. Don't grieve overmuch - death must come to us all.

Orestes: God, what shall I say? What use are words? I can say nothing.

Elektra: What painful news are you withholding? What would you say?

Orestes: Are you the noble Elektra?

Elektra: I am, to my misfortune.

Orestes: You poor creature!

Elektra: Do you grieve for me, sir?

Orestes: You are dishonoured, abandoned by the gods.

Elektra: Your slander refers to me alone, sir.

Orestes: Such an ill-fated existence! Deprived of the joys of marriage!

Elektra: What grief do your looks reflect?

Orestes: I knew nothing of your misfortunes.

Elektra: What words of yours have enlightened you?

Orestes: Your endless tale of misfortune.

Elektra: That's barely half of it.

Orestes: How could there be more?

Elektra: I share this house with the murderers.

Orestes: Whose murderers? Where does this come from?

Elektra: Our father's. I am their permanent slave.

Orestes: Who enforces such a state?

Elektra: She's called my mother, but she's far from maternal.

Orestes: What does she do? Is her crime physical or mental?

Elektra: Physical and mental, and in all sorts of ways.

Orestes: Can no-one help you against them?

Elektra: No. The man who could have helped us is in that urn.

Orestes: Wretched creature, how I pity you.

Elektra: You're the only man who does, you may be sure.

Orestes: I am the only man to have come here who feels your pain.

Elektra: Are you here as a kinsman? From where?

Orestes: I'll tell if these folk are on your side.

Elektra: They are. You may speak freely.

Orestes: Put down the urn. I'll tell you all.

Elektra: For God's love, don't ask me to do that, sir.

Orestes: Trust me, I'll see you don't lose it.

Elektra: I beg you, don't take such a treasure away from me.

Orestes: I won't let it out of your sight.

Elektra: Orestes, I am distraught if I may not conduct the burial.

Orestes: Hush! You are wrong to grieve.

Elektra: How is it wrong to grieve for a dead brother?

Orestes: You mustn't say that.

Elektra: Must I dishonour the dead?

Orestes: You distress no-one – it's not in your nature.

Elektra: That is true, if I judge right that these remains are those of Orestes.

Orestes: But they're not, in fact. Those were just words I said.

Elektra: Where then is the poor man's tomb?

Orestes: There isn't one. The living have no need of a tomb.

Elektra: What are you saying, boy?

Orestes: I am not lying.

Elektra: He *lives*?

Orestes: He does, if I do.

Elektra: You are he?

Orestes: Peruse this ring (it was my father's) and learn the truth.

Elektra: O my dearest one!

Orestes: My feelings precisely!

Elektra: You are *sure*?

Orestes: Believe it.

Elektra: I am really holding you?

Orestes: As you shall from now on.

Elektra: Dearest ladies, fellow-citizens, look! It's Orestes. His death was only a ruse, and by that ruse here he is – alive!

Chorus: We see, child. Tears of joy are springing from our eyes.

Elektra: Dearest brother, you're here, I've found you, see, your quest is over.

Orestes: I am here. But be patient. Hush!

Elektra: What is it?

Orestes: quiet is essential – we don't want those inside to hear.

Elektra: By the virgin-goddess Artemis, they don't frighten me! In there is nothing but a crowd of *women*!

Orestes: Even in women there is a touch of Ares! You know that from experience.

Elektra: Ah, yes, that is all too clear and inescapable, as are my woes.

Orestes: I know. But one day you will be free to speak out – then you must recall all that has happened to you.

Elektra: Endless Time, present Time should allow me to speak out. I have barely been able to hold my peace.

Orestes: I too. So keep this in mind.

Elektra: What should I do?

Orestes: Wait for the night-time before you reveal all.

Elektra: But now you are here who can remain silent? For there you are, against all my expectations.

Orestes: Yes, at the urging of the gods.

Elektra: This is joy past joy – the gods brought to our palace? It's fate.

Orestes: I don't want to curb your joy but I fear it has taken too deep a root.

Elektra: Now that you have decided to be reunited with me, so sweet a meeting after so long a time, now that you have seen my desperate situation, don't...

Orestes: Don't what?

Elektra: Don't disappear again – it would kill me.

Orestes; I would be incensed if anyone made me do so.

Elektra: Truly?

Orestes: Of course.

Elektra: O brother, I never expected to hear your voice again. I could not rein in my joy at its sound. Now I have you here, your dear face is before me and no misfortune can make me forget it.

Orestes: Forbear to speak too much. Don't tell me of our mother's wickedness, don't tell me Aigisthos is frittering away our patrimony, squandering and wasting everything. Thus would we miss our opportunity for action. Tell me something that will fit with the here and now, that in this quest of ours we may, whether openly or in secret, put an end to our foes' mockery. Don't let our mother see you smiling when we go in. No, gasp out my sad tale. When our fortunes truly turn to the better, *then* will be the time for rejoicing and unrestrained gaiety.

Elektra: Brother, I fully concur. All my joy stems from you. I would not interfere and forfeit great gain for small. That would hardly serve the spirit who guides us now. You know what's to be done, of course. You have been told that Aigisthos is presently away but our mother is within. Have no fear that she will see a smile on my face. Ancient grief has consumed me and when she sees me I'll weep incessantly, though it will be with tears of joy. How could it not be when your one mission has shown you to me both dead and living? You have done the impossible. If Father were to walk up to me, alive and well, it would be no wonder – I would believe it. Now you are here, be my guide and tell me your plans. Alone I would have achieved one of two things – honourable deliverance or honourable death.

Orestes: Silence.! I hear someone leaving the house.

Elektra: Go in, friends. Your news can hardly be rejected even though it brings no joy.

Tutor: Have you no sense, no reason? Do you no longer care for life, have you so lost your wits that you can't see that you're in the centre of a whirlwind of troubles? If I hadn't been standing here at the door for some time, keeping an eye out, your deeds might have made their appearance before you yourselves. Luckily I have exercised some care on your behalf. Leave off this endless task, stop this incessant jubilation. Go in, disaster is at hand, it's time to act.

Orestes: How can I possibly go in?

Tutor: Easily. No-one will recognize you.

Orestes: Then you've announced my death?

Tutor: While you're here you are as a dweller in Hades.

Orestes: Did they seem pleased? What did they say?

Tutor: I'll tell you when it's over. As things stand now, everything is neither good nor bad. We are in a kind of limbo.

Elektra: Who is this, brother? For God's sake, tell me.

Orestes: Do you not know?

Elektra: I cannot recall him.

Orestes; Do you not recognize the man to whom you entrusted me once?

Elektra: What man? What are you saying?

Orestes: The man who smuggled me out across the Phokian plain, with your help?

Elektra: The only trustworthy man I could find out of many when Father died?

Orestes: This is the man. Enough! No more questions!

Elektra: Dearest man, my sole saviour from out of the House of Agamemnon! How did you get here? Are *you* he who rescued my brother and me from a sea of troubles? Such service you did us! How could you be here so long and yet remain unrecognized?, laying me low with your tale while holding back the news which would prove so welcome? Welcome to you, father. Yes, you are so like my father. Welcome! Of all men I have both hated and loved you most on the very same day.

Tutor: You have said enough, I think. You have a myriad nights and days, Elektra, in which all will be made clear. But I must tell you two, Orestes, Pylades, that the time is ripe. Klytaimnestra is alone, there is no man in the palace. Delay now and you may be sure you'll be assailed by greater numbers of cleverer men.

Orestes: Pylades, talk is at an end - deeds are needed now. Quick! In! Prostrate yourself before the household gods.

Elektra: Lord Apollo, be gracious and hear us all. Often have I placed before you what offerings I had as I prayed to you. Lykeian Apollo, with all my soul I beg, beseech and entreat you to aid us in our plans, punish with a god's vengeance the wickedness of those two.

Chorus: Now Ares grows apace, his breathing fast;

He will prevail, for they cannot outlast

The ruthless hounds now well inside the gate.

My dream of vengeance can no longer wait.

Our stealthy champion steals with hush'd footfalls

To shed new blood within our father's halls.

Hermes, in guileful camouflage, this day

Seeks out his goal and cannot brook delay.

Elektra: Dearest ladies, these men will do the deed forthwith. Wait! Silence!

Chorus: What do you mean? What are they doing?

Elektra: Klytaimnestra is preparing to sacrifice the holy water at our father's tomb.
Orestes and Pylades are on their way there.

Chorus: Why have you rushed outside?

Elektra: To make sure we don't miss Aigisthos on his return.

Klytaimnestra: *Ahh!* The palace has lost all its allies, it's full of destruction.

Elektra: Someone is shouting in there. Do you not hear, friends?

Chorus: I heard! A horrible cry! It makes me shiver.

Klytaimnestra: *Ahh!* Aigisthos, where are you?

Elektra: Again, a cry!

Klytaimnestra: Child, child, have pity on her who bore you.

Elektra: You had no pity for Orestes or the man who sired us!

Chorus: City! Kin! Today your fate is sealed.

Klytaimnestra: I have been attacked.

Elektra: Strike again, if you're able.

Klytaimnestra: *Ahh!* Again!

Elektra: May Aigisthos receive the like!

Chorus: Your prayers are answered. Ghosts are walking. The long-dead spill in requital the blood of their killers. They're here! Their hands are dripping with the blood of conflict. They have my acclaim.

Elektra: Orestes, how does the situation stand?

Orestes: All is well within, praise be to Apollo.

Elektra: The bitch is dead?

Orestes: You need no longer fear disgrace from a mother's arrogance.

Chorus: Desist! I see Aigisthos coming.

Elektra: Back, gentlemen!

Orestes; That's the man. He's approaching!

Elektra: He's coming from town, off his guard.

Chorus: Across the hall! Quick as you can! So far so good, but more's to be done.

Orestes: Have no fear – we'll do it,

Elektra: Follow your spirit.

Orestes: We are on our way.

Elektra: I wish you success.

Chorus: Pour a gentle greeting into his ear – justice must be exacted with stealth.

Aigisthos: Which of you may tell me where I may find the Phokians who they say reported Orestes' death in a chariot-wreck? You, yes you, you've always been Little Miss Presumption! This news would affect you especially, you must know the answer. Tell me.

Elektra: Of course I know. If I didn't, I'd be neglecting my closest family.

Aigisthos: Where are they, then? Tell me.

Elektra: Within. They've just paid their respects to their hostess.

Aigisthos; Is their report of Orestes' death true?

Elektra: It is. They have established that in deed as well as word.

Aigisthos: May I have proof?

Elektra: You may, though the sight will hardly please you.

Aigisthos: An odd welcome.

Elektra: You *are* welcome if what you see brings you delight.

Aigisthos: Be quiet and reveal it to all Mykenaians and Argives. Then if any had vain hopes in this man, let him behold the man dead and henceforth listen to *my* commands and cease his arrogance in the face of my supremacy.

Elektra: I have duly done my part. Time has taught me to submit to the powerful.

Aigisthos: Zeus, the sight I have seen speaks of retribution. If Vengeance is in the room, I say no more. Remove the veil from those eyes – I must mourn my kin.

Orestes: Remove it yourself. It's for you, not me, to look on and say your farewells.

Aigisthos: You say well, I shall obey. Call Klytaimnestra, if she is about.

Orestes: She's nearby. You don't need to look far.

Aigisthos: God, what's this?

Orestes: Whom do you fear? Do you not know me?

Aigisthos: Who's to blame for these toils I'm enmeshed in?

Orestes: Can you not distinguish between the living and the dead?

Aigisthos: God, I understand! This is indeed Orestes addressing me.

Orestes; You've been deceived. Now you know the truth.

Aigisthos: I am destroyed. Give me leave to speak a little.

Elektra: No, don't, for the love of God. Brother, not a word. When a man is overwhelmed with disaster and on the brink of death, what gain can a little time afford him? Kill him now, give him to those duty it is to bury him – and let it be far from here. That alone will rid me of all my grief.

Orestes: Quick! Go in! This is no longer a contest of words. You must die.

Aigisthos: Why are you taking me inside? If this is a good deed, why does it require darkness? Are you prepared to kill me?

Orestes: Don't give me orders. We will kill you where you killed our father.

Aigisthos: Must this house see all the misfortunes of the House of Pelops, present and future both?

Orestes: It must see your death, that's for sure. That I do prophesy.

Aigisthos: Your father had no such boast of clairvoyancy.

Orestes: You're full of retorts. You delay your progress. On!

Aigisthos: Lead on.

Orestes: You first.

Aigisthos: So I don't escape?

Orestes: Yes, an easy death is not for you. I am to see to it that you suffer. Swift justice for all who live outside the law. Thus will wickedness die.

Chorus: House of Atreus, battered by misfortune, these murders have rescued you from almost certain victory.