

**PROLOGUE**  
**Before Agamemnon's Tomb, day**  
*Orestes, Pylades*

1. MUSIC MAIN TITLE UP, FADE OUT UNDER:
2. PYLADES Orestes, this seems to be the tomb of your murdered father.
3. ORESTES Hermes, guide of the dead, guardian of your father's powers, I pray you give me strength. For I have come back to this land from exile. On this grave, this burial mound, I call my father, imploring him to hear me . . .
4. Here is a lock of hair, an offering to Inachus, the stream where I was raised. And here another, a token for the dead. I was not here, my father, to mourn your death. I could not stretch my hand out to you at your burial.
5. MUSIC FADE UP ELECTRA AND CHORUS, CHANTING BACK
6. Look there!
7. PYLADES A band of women, all in black, marching toward us. What can have happened?
8. ORESTES Has some fresh hardship struck the house?
9. PYLADES No, they seem to be bringing libations here to honor your father.
10. ORESTES You must be right. I see my sister, Electra, with them. She weeps, clearly in great pain. — O Zeus, let me avenge my father's death! Support me as my ally in this struggle. — Pylades, let us stand aside, so I can learn what brings these suppliants to this place.

**PARADOS**

11. MUSIC SOLEMN MARCH.
12. CHORUS I am sent here from the palace with libations for the dead. Blood flows down my cheeks from cuts my nails have scratched. As life drags on, my heart consumes itself with grief — the sound of it in our robes, as we rend the woven linen and weep for carefree times lost forever.

1. CHORUS cont'd  
Fear shrieked through the house last night, foreboding cries, heard in the deepest recesses, that chilled us as we slept. The readers of dreams, divinely inspired, declared that the wrath of the dead is surging up from their graves against their murderers. O Earth, my mother Earth!
2.  
To protect herself from harm, the godless queen sends me here with appeasing gifts, loveless gifts. But I fear to pray as she instructed. For what can atone for blood once spilled?
3.  
O house of desolation! Darkness grips the palace where a king was slain. Gone is its former greatness, unassailable in its might. Its glory rang in every ear, echoed in every heart. Only fear remains. For now, in all men's eyes, success is revered more than god himself. But Justice is vigilant. She tips the scales. For some her strike comes swiftly by daylight. For others she lurks till dusk, while others she swallows in an eternal night.
4.  
The nurturing earth drinks her fill of blood, which cries out for revenge, and will not dissolve or seep away. The guilty live in utter desperation. Madness preys upon their minds, an all-consuming infection.
5.  
Just as the virgin's bed once stained can never be redeemed, in such a way, though all rivers flow into one cleansing stream, bloody hands never shall wash clean.
6.  
As for me — the gods set a fatal noose around my city, Troy, and I was led from my father's house a slave. Now I do what I have to do, beating down my bitter rage. Against my will, I follow my masters' orders, right or wrong. Still, behind my veil I deplore the iniquity of my masters, and am chilled with secret horror.

### EPISODE ONE

#### The Same

*Electra, Chorus, Orestes (Pylades)*

7. ELECTRA  
You women of my house, since you are here attending me in prayer, give me your counsel. What should I say as I pour these grave offerings? How frame my words to make my prayer worthy of my father? Shall I say that I bear these gifts from a doting wife to her beloved husband — from my mother? I do not dare. Shall I recite the words men often use, "Repay in kind these worthy gifts." No! Let him repay them as their treachery deserves!

1. ELECTRA cont'd  
Or should I stand here in silence and dishonor, the way my father died — empty these urns with eyes averted, let the earth drink, then hurl the vessel from me and retrace my steps, like someone sent to remove the household trash? Help me, friends! We share a common hatred. Do not hide your hearts. I am no one you need fear. Fate awaits each of us — whether free or in bondage. Speak up, if you know of something better.
2. CHORUS  
I respect your father's tomb, as if it were an altar. So I will speak straight from my heart, as you have asked.
3. ELECTRA  
Then talk to me, out of your reverence for my father's grave.
4. CHORUS  
As you pour, bless those who are your friends.
5. ELECTRA  
Of those close to me, who can I call friends?
6. CHORUS  
First, name yourself — then anyone who hates Aegisthus.
7. ELECTRA  
Then I will pray on my own behalf. Shall I include you too?
8. CHORUS  
If you wish.
9. ELECTRA  
Who else should I add to join with us?
10. CHORUS  
Orestes, though he is far from home.
11. ELECTRA  
Good. You advise me well.
12. CHORUS  
Remember, too, the guilty slayers.
13. ELECTRA  
In what way? I have never practiced this. Teach me.
14. CHORUS  
Let some god or mortal man come down on them.
15. ELECTRA  
You mean as judge or as avenger? Which?
16. CHORUS  
Pronounce these words — and clearly — “One who will exact life for life.”
17. ELECTRA  
Is it pious thus to petition gods?
18. CHORUS  
Why wouldn't it be? How can it be impious to pray for the punishment of evil?
19. ELECTRA  
Oh Hermes, mighty herald, moving between earth above and earth below, messenger to the dead, aid me now. Summon the spirits there beneath the ground who guard my father's house, to hear my prayers. And call on Earth herself, who, giving birth and nurturing all things, in due.

1. ELECTRA cont'd
 

course takes back the swollen tide of their increasing store. As I pour out these offerings, I call upon you, father, to pity me — and dear Orestes, too! How can we rule in our own home? We are beggars now, as if our mother sold us in exchange for Aegisthus, her partner in your murder.
2.
 

I live like a slave. Orestes languishes in exile, estranged from his birthright. In their profligacy, those two oppressors squander all the wealth you strove for. And so I pray you, dear father, let fortune bring Orestes home! Make me better than mother, my hand more virtuous! Those are my prayers for us.
3.
 

Our enemies — for them, my father, I pray that someone will come as your avenger, to slay your slayers in retribution, as is just. As I pray for our well being, I include this curse — may they be trapped by their own wickedness. Send your blessing to the earth above, with help from gods, and Earth, and Justice, all combined to bring us victory.
4.
 

SHE POURS THE LIBATIONS.
5.
 

Those are my prayers, and over them I pour these libations. (to Chorus) Your duty now is to crown my prayers with flowers, reciting your mournful chant for the dead.
6. CHORUS
 

(chanting) Come, let our tears begin,  
fall, and die, as our master died.  
Let them guard us from evil,  
preserve the good, and keep away  
with our outpoured libations  
the polluting curse.  
Hear me, oh hear me,  
my honored master!  
May your disembodied soul hear my prayer.
7.
 

Oh, bring one now to redeem this house,  
some powerful spear man,  
one who bends a Scythian bow;  
or wields the sword  
for fighting hand to hand.
8. ELECTRA
 

My father has now received his offerings. The earth has drunk them up. But look — here is something odd.



1. ORESTES I know your heart is with Orestes.
2. ELECTRA Yes, but how have my prayers been answered now?
3. ORESTES I am here. You need look no more for allies. I am the most devoted one you have.
4. ELECTRA No, stranger! You weave some net to trap me in.
5. ORESTES If so, I plot against myself as well.
6. ELECTRA You just want to mock my distress.
7. ORESTES If I mock you, I mock myself.
8. ELECTRA Orestes . . . is it truly you? Can I call you Orestes?
9. ORESTES Yes. Orestes stands before you. Why take so long to recognize the truth? When you saw the lock of hair, that token of my grief, your mind flew to the thought of me. Here. Put this hair in place. See, it is mine. And it matches yours. Study this mantle — You made this. You worked the loom. Look at this design, these animals, you wove them.
10. ELECTRA BEGINS TO WEEP.
11. Govern yourself! Be calm! Remember — our nearest in blood hates us both.
12. ELECTRA O dearest member of your father's house. the seed of hope through all our suffering — trust to your own strength and win back your patrimony. Oh, I am so happy! To me you are four different loves. You take the place of the father we lost, the mother who betrayed us, and the sister cruelly sacrificed. And as well, you are my faithful brother. You alone sustained my sense of worth. May Power and Justice stand allies with us now — and may almighty Zeus stand the third.
13. ORESTES O Zeus, look down on what we do! See the abandoned fledglings of the eagle, whose father perished in the viper's coils, that deadly net. Orphans now, we bear the pangs of hunger, not yet strong enough to bring our father's quarry to the nest. Behold our condition, Electra and myself, fatherless children, outcasts, banished from our own home.
14. If you destroy these fledglings, what respect will you receive at feasts from hands like his, their father's, who offered you such abundance? Who will trust your omens? If this royal stock decays, it cannot consecrate your altars

1. ORESTES cont'd with sacrificial oxen. Stand by us. You can raise our house from wreckage, make it great again, though now it lies in ruin.
2. CHORUS Children, hope of your father's house, speak softly. Someone may hear you and carry tales to those in power. Oh how I wish to see them dead one day, roasting in flames, sizzling like pitch.
3. ORESTES Apollo's great oracle surely will defend me. It commanded me to take revenge on those who slew my father, to strike them down the way they struck him down.
4. Otherwise, I would pay with countless miseries. Some would come from demons under the earth — ravaging disease, flesh-eating sores, poisonous fangs tearing living tissue, scabrous suppurating wounds. And other ills — attacks by vengeful Furies, roused by murdered kinsmen demanding vengeance, bringing wild imaginings, madness. For such an outcast, there is no sanctuary, no respite — until at last, despised, friendless, he withers in all-consuming pain and dies.
5. Am I wrong to trust such oracles? Even if I did not, the deed must still be done. One end answers many calls — the gods' decree, compassion for my father, the theft of my patrimony. And there is my duty to my countrymen, most glorious of men, wasters of Troy. They should not have to bow to a pair of women. For Aegisthus is at heart a woman. Or, if there is any manhood in him, we will test it soon enough.
6. CHORUS Omnipotent Fates, bring all this to pass! Through Zeus' power, make all things right. For Justice turns the scales exacting retribution and shouts, "Blood for blood! Blow for blow. Transgressors must pay." So runs the lesson of three generations.
7. ORESTES Oh father of dread, what can I say or do so far from your distant resting place to send light against your darkness? — Although, I have heard it said that the homage of mourners can comfort the sons of Atreus, former princes of this house.
8. CHORUS My child, among the dead, not even savage jaws of fire can destroy the soul. He will show his rage in time. The dead are mourned, the guilty discovered. A eulogy for a father, strong and clear and just, seeks far and wide to confound offenders.

1. ELECTRA  
Hear us now, my father, as, in turn, we mourn and weep.  
Your two children at your tomb now sing your death song.  
Your tomb has welcomed us, two suppliants and outcasts.  
What in this is good? What is free from woe? Who wrestles  
death and wins?
2. CHORUS  
But if god wills it, he can turn our dirges into joyful songs.
3. ORESTES  
My father, if only you had died by some Lycian spear at  
Troy! You would have bequeathed glory to your children in  
their home. Men would now honor them. You would have  
won a tomb raised high in foreign lands, a death your home  
could lightly bear.
4. CHORUS  
Dear to the men you loved, the ones who died so bravely,  
you would stand majestic in the underworld, minister of the  
mightiest gods below, who rule the dead. In life, you were a  
king of men — the one who holds the staff that every man  
obeys.
5. ELECTRA  
I do not want you dead, my father, not even under Trojan  
walls, with all those others who perished by the spear  
where the Scamander flows. No. I wish your killers had  
been killed by their own kin, just as they murdered you.  
Then people in far-off lands would hear about their deaths  
and not our own distress.
6. CHORUS  
Children, what you wish for is finer than gold, greater than  
the bliss of those who live beyond the northern wind. But  
wishing is easy. Even so, that double whip is lashing home  
— for now forces under the earth are stirring to help us.  
Our oppressors are marked for their polluted hands. Your  
day is imminent!
7. OESTES  
Our words, like arrows, bore into the earth straight to my  
father's ear.
8. ORESTES  
O Zeus, Zeus, send us from the world  
below your long-delayed revenge, pay back  
the evil wrought by human hands. Oh, let  
that come to pass — and thus avenge all  
fathers.
- CHORUS  
Let my heart cry out in triumph when that  
man is slain, when that woman dies! Why  
should I hide what reigns within me —  
hatred, driving like a storm, a tempest  
raging in my heart?

1.     ELECTRA  
 Oh, when will mighty Zeus strike them  
 with his fist — split their skulls apart?  
 Give our land some sign — confirm our  
 faith. From these crimes I seek the rights of  
 justice. Oh Earth, hear me, and you,  
 divinities below.
2.     ORESTES  
 Lords of the world below, alas, see the  
 mighty curses of the dead. See survivors of  
 the line of Atreus, here in our helplessness,  
 cast out from home, dishonored. Oh Zeus,  
 where can we turn?
3.     ELECTRA  
 To what can we appeal? What else but to  
 the agonies we suffer, anguish from the  
 one who bore us, our mother. So let her  
 grovel. She'll not appease our pain. We're  
 bred from her, like wolves, whose savage  
 hearts do not relent.
4.     ELECTRA                                     Oh cruel and reckless mother! — that savage burial of a  
 king, his people barred, no mourning procession — you  
 dared place him in the tomb without the sacred rites.
5.     ORESTES                                     She will pay for his dishonor, by the gods and my own  
 hands! Let me kill her. Then let me die.
6.     CHORUS                                     And let me tell you this — she first tore off his limbs, then  
 hung them round his neck. Thus she buried him, to burden  
 your life with crushing pain. You hear me? Your father's  
 death she made a travesty.
7.     ELECTRA                                     You tell of events I was not allowed to see. I was thought  
 worthless, caged like some rabid dog. Hear that! Carve that  
 on your heart.
8.     CHORUS                                     Listen well and let her story steel your resolve. Things now  
 stand as they stand. You want to know what comes, but you  
 must wait, ready to strike with no backward glance.
9.     ORESTES                                     Father, I call on you! Stand by your children!

1. ELECTRA Through these tears I join his call!
2. CHORUS In unison, our voices blend as one — hear us! Return into the light. Join us against our enemies.
3. ORESTES Now war god Ares goes to meet the war god Ares. Right fights with right.
4. ELECTRA Dear gods, let justice choose the victor!
5. CHORUS ORESTES
- These entreaties make me shudder. This doom's been long delayed, but it does come for those who pray.
- O family bred for torments, for bloody strokes of ruin, for pains beyond enduring and endless grief!
- The cure for all these ills comes not from some stranger outside the house, but from within — by pain and blood.
- To gods beneath the ground we raise our voices. Hear us, you blessed gods of earth! Give victory to these children!
- Father, you may not have perished like a king, but, in answer to my prayer, make me the master of your house.
- ELECTRA
- I, too, father, supplicate you — destroy Aegisthus and set me free.
- ORESTES
- Don't let the seed of Pelops disappear. With us alive, in death you cannot die.
- ELECTRA
- Father, hear my last appeal — Behold your children huddled at your tomb. Take pity on them, your son and daughter.
6. CHORUS It is well to prolong your prayer, for that will honor this neglected tomb. But since your heart is rightly set to act, it is time to test your fortune, time to start.
7. ORESTES You are right. But first we might ask this question — Why did that woman send out these libations? What did she hope to gain? If you know her reason, tell me now. I want to hear.
8. CHORUS My child, I do know. I was there. She had foreboding dreams.
9. ORESTES Do you know the nature of her dreams?
10. CHORUS She gave birth to a snake. That is what she told me.
11. ORESTES What else occurred?

1. CHORUS She set it in a bed wrapped in swaddling clothes, just like a child.
2. ORESTES And that newborn snake, what did it want for nourishment?
3. CHORUS She dreamt she offered it her teat.
4. ORESTES Didn't the monster bite?
5. CHORUS No. But with her milk it sucked out blood.
6. ORESTES It is an omen! Her vision means a man.
7. CHORUS She woke up screaming, terrified. Many torches extinguished at night were lit throughout the house to calm her. Then she sent out these libations for the dead — in the hope they would work like medicine for her distress.
8. ORESTES I pray to Earth and to my father's tomb that this dream will fulfill itself in me. I think it matches me in every point. That snake came from the same womb as did I — it was wrapped up in my swaddling clothes and sucked the milk that nourished me, mixing it with blood so that she screamed. It portends that she will die by violence, from nursing such a violent beast. Me. I am that snake. And I will kill her. That is the meaning of this dream.
9. CHORUS Your reading of her dream rings true. So be it! Tell your friends the rest — what they must do or take care not to do.
10. ORESTES My plan is simple. First, Electra, you must go inside. Keep this bond with me a secret. The two in there deceived a noble man, then killed him. So we will use deceit on them. They'll die in the same net. Lord Apollo, whose predictions never err, has ordered this.
11. I will approach the outer gates, claiming to be a stranger. Pylades goes with me as guest and ally of the house. We two will speak the dialect of Phocis. If no one at the gate admits us because of the turmoil within, we will stay there, so that any passer-by will want to know what is going on, why Aegisthus shuts his doors against a suppliant.
12. If I then get past the gate, across the outer threshold, then find that man seated on my father's throne or meet him face to face, his eyes will shift and fall, I promise you. Before he can ask my name and country, I will cut him

1. ORESTES cont'd down. Our Fury never lacked for blood — for her third helping she will drink his.
2. Electra, you must stay alert within the house so that nothing goes amiss. You women, be careful what you say — keep mum — speak only when you must. As for the rest, I invoke Apollo to cast his eyes down here and be my guide when the time comes for crossing swords.
3. MUSIC BRIDGE.

### STASIMON ONE

4. CHORUS Earth brings forth many horrors — terrors and agonies — the sea's arms hold monsters, savage beasts. Between the earth and heaven hang fiery lights, suspended high. Winged birds and beasts that walk along the ground can also speak of storms, the whirlwind's power.
5. But who of us can speak about the arrogance of men and women's reckless passion conspiring in all our deadly woes? Passionate desire wins out. It wins a fatal victory in every woman. It ends all married love in men and beasts.
6. Witness Althaea, ruthless child of Thestius, who planned her own son's ruin. She burned the fatal torch, knowing that Meleager's life, from the time he first appeared howling from his mother's womb, depended on that wood. And so it was — he stayed alive until her fire doomed him.
7. The tale is told of murderous Scylla, who killed her father, the minion of his enemies. Tempted by a gift from Minos, a golden necklace made in Crete, she plucked out the hair that made Nisus immortal. As he lay peacefully asleep, he died, murdered by that bitch, and Hermes led him away.
8. In these stories of pitiless savagery, we must include the loveless marriage that laid a curse upon this house — schemes devised by a cunning woman against her warrior lord, a man even his foes respected. I value a hearth and home where passions hold no sway, where women suppress their waywardness.
9. Of all such crimes, the worst occurred on Lemnos, where all the women slew their men. At that story, people moan — they weep for that atrocity. When some new troubles come, men measure them by Lemnos. Horror at that deed brought on the hatred of the gods, and thus, cast out by

1. CHORUS cont'd                      mortals, acursed, that women's race died out. No human can reverse what the gods despise. Are not all these crimes despicable?
2.    Justice wields her sword. She thrusts it home. Hungry and sharp, it cuts deep, through the lungs. Thus, those who transgress and test the majesty of Zeus, perish in misery.
3.    The anvil of Justice now holds firm. Fate hammers out her blade — she forges it in time. At last the brooding Fury comes, infamous avenger — leading a youth inside the house to cleanse it of the blood-taint, the curse upon the house from ages past.
4. MUSIC                                      BRIDGE.

## EPISODE TWO

### The Palace

*Orestes, Pylades, Servant, Clytemnestra, Nurse*

5. SOUND                                      BANGING.
6. ORESTES                                      You in there! You hear this knocking?
7. PYLADES                                      Try again.
8. SOUND                                      MORE BANGING.
9. ORESTES                                      Anyone in there?
10. PYLADES                                      All right, a third attempt.
11. SOUND                                      BANGING.
12. ORESTES                                      You have visitors! Are you coming out?
13. PYLADES                                      Anyone in there?
14. ORESTES                                      Does not Aegisthus welcome strangers?
15. SOUND                                      LARGE DOOR OPENS UNDER:
16. SERVANT                                      (approaching) All right. All right. I hear you. Stranger, what country are you from? Who are you?
17. ORESTES                                      Announce me to the masters of the house. I have come to bring them news. And hurry! Night's black chariot is speeding overhead, time for people on the road to rest — drop anchor where all strangers feel welcome. Tell one of the masters of the house to come — the mistress, or better the master. We could speak more frankly to a man. After

1. ORESTES cont'd                   all, delicacy can obscure meaning. When we talk man to man, we can get to the point, say plainly what we mean without reserve.
  
2. CLYTEMNESTRA                   (approaching) Stranger, welcome. Just ask for what you need. Inside we have all the luxuries of home — warm baths and beds to soothe away your pains. We live under the eyes of Justice here. But if your business is more serious, men's work, then we will send for Aegisthus.
  
3. ORESTES                            I come from Phocis — in Argos on private business, transporting this pack of goods. I need to pause and rest. On my way here I ran into a man, a stranger to me. He told me where he was going and asked my route. As we talked, I learned his name — Strophius. He too came from Phocis. And he said this, "Well, friend, since you are heading to Argos, give a message to Orestes' parents, something they have a right to know, so please remember it: Orestes has died.
  
4.                                        "Do not forget this. Then, when you return, you can tell me whether his family wants to bring him back or have him buried here in Phocis, where he is a stranger, forever outcast. Right now his ashes sit in a bronze urn. The man was truly mourned."
  
5.                                        That is my message. whether I tell it to anyone who cares, I do not know. But Orestes' parent ought to be informed.
  
6. CLYTEMNESTRA                   I . . . this news . . . what you just said . . . it is shattering . . . that curse we cannot repress. It haunts the house, ranges everywhere . . . Someone kept safe and far away from here the curse seeks out. Its arrow strikes and kills. It takes those I love, drives me to desperation. And now Orestes. He was careful. He kept his feet well clear of muddy ground where hidden danger lurks. He offered hope that the Furies' predatory revels in this house might finally end. Now, from what you say, we have lost that hope.
  
7. ORESTES                            For myself, with hosts as prosperous as you, I wish you had seen me as the bearer of good news and welcomed me for that. What is kinder than the link between a stranger and his host? But to my mind, it would have been profane if I had not told his loved ones, as I promised, and as hospitality demands.
  
8. CLYTEMNESTRA                   Worry not. You will receive what you deserve. In this house you are no less welcome for your news. If not you, someone else would have brought it. Strangers on the road

1. CLYTEM cont'd) should be treated as honored guests at the end of along day's journey.
2. (to Servant) You there — take this wayfarer and his attendant to the guest rooms. See to their comfort the way this house requires. Those are my orders. See you follow them. I will hold you responsible. Meanwhile, I will find the master of the house, and tell him the news. We do not want for friends, from them we will seek advice about this death.
3. SOUND THEY ENTER HOUSE. DOOR SHUTS.
4. CHORUS Sisters in bondage, how long before we can show how strongly we support Orestes? O **sacred Earth, mound above that noble corpse, commander of ships** — hear me now, help me now! The moment has come for Persuasion to approach with her deceit, for that stealthy god, Hermes of the lower world, to guide the contest, the fatal clash of swords.
5. DOOR OPENS. NURSE APPROACHES, WEEPING.
6. It seems the stranger's plan is working. Here comes Orestes' nurse. I see she's crying. (to Nurse) Cilissa, where are you going, with your unpaid companion Sorrow?
7. NURSE My mistress ordered me to fetch Aegisthus to meet the strangers — and hurry — so he can find out clearly, man to man, the news that has just arrived. In front of servants, she puts on a gloomy face, but deep down her eyes are laughing at how well things are going for her.
8. For the rest of us in the house, the stranger's news is devastating. Aegisthus will be happy to hear it, but I feel terrible! The old family troubles, hard to endure, have already weakened my heart, given me chest pains. But a blow like this — I have never had to bear such misery. My poor Orestes! When he was born, I got him from his mother. I nursed him. I spent all night on my feet, answering his cries. So much tiring work — all for nothing.
9. A helpless child like that you have to keep an eye on day and night, as if he were a dumb beast — watch his moods, his expressions. A baby cannot tell you what he needs, if he is hungry or thirsty or has wet himself. So I had to acquire the art of a sooth sayer. I would be wrong sometime and there would be a mess for me to clean.

1. NURSE cont'd Oh, yes, I was wet nurse, nanny and washerwoman, all in one. For his father entrusted him to me. Now he's dead. They just now told me. That is why I'm crying. Well, I must go. I have to fetch Aegisthus, the man who brought this house to ruin. He'll be glad enough to hear my words.
2. CHORUS Did she tell him how to come and what to bring?
3. NURSE "How to come?" What do you mean?
4. CHORUS Did she tell him to bring guards or come unattended?
5. NURSE She said he should bring his spearmen.
6. CHORUS Say nothing of that to Aegisthus, that hateful tyrant. Tell him to come alone, with a cheerful heart, as quickly as he can. He must not suspect a thing. The messenger can straighten a crooked message.
7. NURSE What? Are you happy at this news?
8. CHORUS Why not, if Zeus turns evil into good?
9. NURSE How can that happen? Orestes, the hope of this house, is gone.
10. CHORUS Do not be too sure. A seer who claimed that would be a bad one.
11. NURSE What are you saying? Do you know something more than I?
12. CHORUS Hurry! Relay your message. Do as instructed. The gods will see to their own affairs.
13. NURSE All right, I'll go and do as you suggest. (leaving) With blessings from the gods, I pray all this works out for the best.
14. MUSIC BRIDGE.

### STASIMON TWO

15. CHORUS Now, in answer to my prayers, I implore you, Zeus, father of Olympian gods, redeem this house, give it good fortune, preserve those who seek to restore due order. In every word we cry, we plead for justice. O Zeus, preserve it well!
16. Zeus, inside that palace set him face to face before his foes. If you exalt him he will gladly repay you, three or four times over.

1. CHORUS cont'd  
You know that orphan colt, child of a man you cherish, stands now in harness, yoked to a chariot of pain. Control the way he runs, preserve his pace, so he will last the course, and we may see him surge, as he races to his goal.
2.  
You gods who lurk within the inner chambers of this house, proud of its wealth — hear me, like-minded spirits — cleanse that ancient blood of crimes committed long ago. Let old murder cease to breed.
3.  
And Apollo, you who dwell in that massive well-built cavern, grant that this man's race may raise its head once more, so that with loving eyes we see the veil of darkness yield to freedom's light.
4.  
May Hermes, Maia's son, sustain him in virtue. He sends the best winds to keep an undertaking on course, when he chooses — and when he so desires, he reveals much that hides from our view, or darkening men's eyes with riddles, turns day to night.
5.  
Then at last, we will proclaim the deliverance of this house — no shrill lament of those who mourn, but robust songs the sea wives sing when the wind blows fair, "Good sailing now! For me, for me this means true wealth — safety for the ones I love."
6.  
Orestes, do your part — when your moment comes, be brave. When she cries "My son!" cry in return "My father's son!" Then, guiltless, slay her. Take on the heart of Perseus. Satisfy the rage of those you love under the earth, and here above. With blood and death, purge the house of iniquity.
7. MUSIC BRIDGE.

### EPISODE THREE

#### The Same

*Aegisthus, Chorus, Servant, Clytemnestra, Orestes, Pylades*

8. AEGIS THUS  
(approaching) A stranger's story called me here. I hear that travelers have brought shocking and unwelcome news — Orestes is dead — yet one more burden laid upon this house, which still bears festering wounds from earlier woes.
9.  
But is it true? That's what I must confirm. Or is it some women's gossip, which flares up briefly, then dies down to nothing? Can you ease my mind? What do you know?

1. CHORUS Well — we did hear something of the kind. But go inside. You can learn it from the guest himself. Hearing it from us is not like hearing him face to face.
2. AEGISTHUS Yes, I want to see this messenger and learn if he witnessed Orestes' death, or if he's just repeating some vague rumor. I will see through any deception. (leaving) These keen eyes of mine will not be fooled.
3. SOUND PALACE DOOR OPENS, SHUTS.
4. CHORUS Zeus, Zeus, what do I say? How start praying for divine aid? How find adequate words? Blood-stained blades are about to clash within, either wiping out the seed of Agamemnon, or, kindling freedom's blazing light, winning for Orestes throne and wealth. The ambush now is set — noble Orestes by himself must contest two foes. Let him emerge the victor!
5. AEGISTHUS SCREAMS IN PAIN FROM INSIDE THE PALACE. TREMULO UNDER:
6. (severally) Listen!
7. What was that?
8. What has happened in the house?
9. Don't go in there! Let this work be done, without blood stains on our hands. That way no blame can fall on us.
10. SERVANT (entering) Oh, it's horrible!
11. CHORUS So it ends.
12. MUSIC OUT.
13. SERVANT My master is slain! He is dead. I'll cry it out again, a third time, Aegisthus is no more!
14. BANGS ON DOOR.
15. Come on! Come on! Open this door! Hurry! Unbolt the women's doors! A strong right arm is all it takes! Not to help Aegisthus — he's already dead. No point in trying. Come on! Am I shouting to the deaf? Are all of you asleep? A waste of time. Where has Clytemnestra gone? What is she up to? Her own head rests on the chopping block — the blade could strike at any moment.
16. SOUND SMALL DOOR OPENS,

1. CLYTEMNESTRA (entering) What is this? What are you shouting about?
2. SERVANT I'm telling you the dead are murdering the living!
3. CLYTEMNESTRA Ah! I see. I understand your paradox. By ruse we killed, by ruse we are to die. All right, then, get me an axe — and quickly!
4. SERVANT RUNS OFF.
5. Now we shall see who at last will win, he or I. The wretched business brings me down to this.
6. SOUND THE PALACE DOORS OPEN. ORESTES, PYLADES COME OUT.
7. ORESTES (approaching, carrying Aegisthus' corpse) Look, Pylades, the very one I seek. This fellow here has had enough.
8. SOUND HE LETS THE BODY FALL.
9. CLYTEMNESTRA No, not Aegisthus! not my love, my power . . . dead!
10. ORESTES You loved this man? Then you may rest in a common grave with him — he is one man you will not forsake at his death.
11. CLYTEMNESTRA Hold! My son, my child, take pity on these breasts. Here you often lay asleep and sucked milk that made you strong.
12. ORESTES Pylades, what do I do? I cannot kill my own mother.
13. PYLADES What then of Apollo's command, his prophecy at Delphi? You made an oath. Make all men your foes, but not the gods.
14. ORESTES Wise counsel! As judge in this debate I say you prevail.
15. GRABS CLYTEMNESTRA PULLS HER TO CORPSE.
16. Over here. I want to lay your corpse beside this man. When he was alive, you thought him better than my father, so in death you can sleep by his side. You loved him. The man you should have loved you hated.
17. CLYTEMNESTRA I raised you. Let me grow old with you.
18. ORESTES What? Kill my father and then live with me?
19. CLYTEMNESTRA Fault destiny, my child, as much as I.
1. ORESTES Fault destiny likewise for your death.

2. CLYTEMNESTRA Do you not fear your mother's curse?
3. ORESTES You bore me, then cast me out in misery.
4. CLYTEMNESTRA No, no — I sent you to a friend.
5. ORESTES You sold me in disgrace — a free man's son.
6. CLYTEMNESTRA And the price I charged for you?
7. ORESTES Too shameful to declare.
8. CLYTEMNESTRA Your father, too, committed shameful crimes.
9. ORESTES Charge him not with anything. He strove against danger abroad while you reposed in safety here.
10. CLYTEMNESTRA My son, it goes hard for women without their men.
11. ORESTES Man's labor feeds the woman who sits idle..
12. CLYTEMNESTRA My son, you really mean to do this — to slay your own mother?
13. ORESTES You slay yourself. I am not the murderer. You are.
14. CLYTEMNESTRA Beware! The furious hounds that avenge all mothers will hunt you down.
15. ORESTES What about my father's furious hounds? If I spare you, I shall surely not escape them.
16. CLYTEMNESTRA It seems as if, while still alive, I waste useless tears at my own funeral.
17. ORESTES My father's destiny has chosen you. It decrees that you must die.
18. CLYTEMNESTRA You are the snake I bore and fed.
19. ORESTES Yes. That terror in your dream foretold the truth. You killed the man you should not kill, and now you will suffer what no one should ever see. Come!
20. SOUND THEY GO INSIDE. PALACE DOORS SWING SHUT.
21. MUSIC BRIDGE.

**STASIMON THREE**

1. CHORUS  
The fate of these two victims wrenches the heart. But long-suffering Orestes rides the crest of so much bloodshed, we hope he triumphs — the bright eyes of this house must never fade.
2.  
Just as justice came at last to Priam and his sons, a crushing retribution, so a double lion comes to Agamemnon's mansion, a two-fold slaughter. Apollo's suppliant, the exile, sees his action through, driven on by justice, sent from gods above.
3.  
Raise now a shout of triumph above our master's house, free of misery at last, free of that evil pair who squandered its wealth, and free of its unhappy fate.
4.  
He came back with a secret plan, fighting to win by crafty vengeance. The goddess took him by the hand, true daughter of great Zeus, his guide throughout the fight. Men call her Justice — she who destroys her enemies once she breathes in anger.
5.  
Raise now a shout of triumph above our master's house, free of misery at last, free of that evil pair who squandered its wealth, and free of its unhappy fate.
6.  
From his shrine deep within the earth, Parnassian Apollo predicted that virtuous stealth would conquer long-entrenched deceit. So be it! May I never again serve wicked masters. In true piety, let us praise the gods who rule our lives!
7.  
Behold, a new dawn is breaking! Great chains are falling away. Let this house rise up! Too long has it lain in ruins.
8.  
Time, which brings all things to pass, will soon move through these gates, once purifying rites cast pollution out. That will change the roll of fortune's dice — they shall fall so all can see a fair result, good days for all who dwell within.
9.  
Behold, a new dawn is breaking! Great chains are falling away. Let this house rise up! Too long has it lain in ruins.
10. MUSIC BRIDGE.

## EPISODE FOUR

## The Same

Orestes, *Chorus*

1. SOUND PALACE DOORS OPEN. CHORUS GASPS.
2. ORESTES See here at my feet — a pair of tyrants. They slew my father, then robbed my home. Once they sat enthroned in regal splendor. They are lovers still, as you can witness by how they cling in death, true to the oaths they swore. They made a pact to murder my hapless father, and then to die together. Well, they have kept their word.
3. UNFURLS A ROBE.
4. Look again, you who know this house's trials. They used this robe to trap my father. With this they tied his hands and lashed his feet. Spread it out. Stand round in a group — put it on display, my father's death shroud, so that the Father — not mine, the one who sees all things, the Sun — can view my mother's sacrilege. Then he will come when I am judged, to testify that I pursued and slew my mother justly.
5. About Aegisthus' death I need say nothing. As an adulterer, he dies — our law's just punishment. But as for her who planned this evil act against her husband, a man whose children she bore in her womb — I loved her once, but she became my bitter foe, as you can see. What do you make of her? If she were a viper or sea snake, she would never need to bite — her very touch would make men rot, so venomous her heart, so poisonous her soul.
6. What should I call this robe? What fine words will do? A snare for some wild beast? A corpse's shroud? The curtain from a bath wrapped round his legs? No. A hunting net. That name sounds right — robes to trap a man, entangling his feet, something a thief on the road might use to trick and rob a stranger. With such a net he could take so many lives, his pleasure in the work would warm his heart. May I never live with a woman like this one. Before that, let the gods destroy me — let me die without a child.
7. CHORUS Bemoan this horrific act, the monstrous way she died. But pity the survivor, too — his suffering begins to ripen.
8. ORESTES Did she commit the crime or not? Come here. This garment is my witness, dyed with blood — blood from Aegis thus'

1. ORESTES cont'd                    blade. These bloody stains with time have blotted out the fine embroidery.
2.    But I can praise my father. Now at last I am here to mourn him, as I hold this robe, the net that brought about his death. But I lament my act, my suffering. I mourn the entire race, for though I have won, I cannot avoid the guilt which now pollutes me.
3. CHORUS                                No mortal goes through life unscathed, free from pain until the end. One trouble comes today, yet another comes tomorrow.
4. ORESTES                                But still, you need to understand . . . I do not know how this will end . . . I feel like some chariot racer lashing on my team, but we have strayed way off the course . . . My mind is racing . . . it has lost control. Something overpowers me . . . carries me off . . . Deep in my heart, fear prepares a furious song and dance. So while I still have my wits about me, to all my friends I publicly proclaim I killed my mother justly. She was guilty of my father's murder, a woman gods despised.
5.    What drove me on? I cite as my chief cause the Delphic seer, Apollo's priest, who said this to me, "If you carry out this act, you'll go free — no charge of evil. But if you refuse . . . " I will not describe the punishment — no arrow shot from a bow could reach the top of so much agony.
6.    I go a suppliant to earth's central navel stone, Apollo's realm, to that sacred flame, which, people say, never wanes, an exile who murdered his own blood. Apollo's sibyl gave me his orders — I am to go to his shrine, nowhere else. As to how I came to do this brutal act, I call all men of Argos to be my witnesses before Menelaus when he returns. Remember me in years to come. Now I go, wandering in exile again from my country. Whether I live or die, I leave with you your memory of me.
7. CHORUS                                But your deed is a great thing. Why depress your soul with such talk, ominous predictions, bad omens? You have freed the city, all of Argos, hacking off the heads of those two serpents, a healing blow.
8. MUSIC                                SNEAK UP FURIES THEME; HOLD UNDER:
9. ORESTES                                No! — They're here — Look, you women — over there — like Gorgons draped in black — their heads, hundreds of writhing snakes — I can't bear it . . .

1. CHORUS  
What is wrong? What are you looking at? Of all men you have a father's strongest love, so stay calm. Stand up to fear.
2. ORESTES  
This is no illusion of horror, no! They're real! My mother's furious hounds! Snarling for revenge!
3. CHORUS  
The blood on your hands has confounded your mind.
4. ORESTES  
Lord Apollo! They attack me! Hordes of them! Their eyes drip blood . . . it's horrible!
5. CHORUS  
Just one thing can cure you — Apollo's touch will cleanse you, free you of these imaginings.
6. ORESTES  
You do not see them, but I do. They're coming for me.  
(running off) I must escape . . .
7. CHORUS  
Good fortune go with you! And may god watch over and protect you.
8. CHORUS  
The third storm has broken savagely over the palace, and run its course. First, came the torments of those children slaughtered for Thyestes' food. Next came the suffering of a man, our warrior lord, Achaea's king. And now the third — do I call him rescuer or destroyer? When will all this end? When will murder, its tempest spent, rest at last in sleep?
9. MUSIC UP AND CONCLUDE.