



SCRIPT

Alcestis Revisited: Red Hot Death

Directed by Scott Sedar

ACT I

Scene 1

Washington, DC. The centre of the scene represents a portico with columns and a large double-door of the Palace. APOLLO AND HIS POSSE enter. In his left hand he carries a large unstrung golden bow. He moves slowly and majestically, turns, and raises his right hand in salutation to the Palace. He speaks to his POSSE.

APOLLO

(Yelling!) Man, I can't believe this! (He throws his fists in the air.) Guess what happened? Zeus killed my son, Kenneth. Zeus had the nerve to drive a bolt of lightning through Kenneth's chest. I was so doggone mad, I was gonna blow up Zeus's house, but I killed his bodyguard, Cyclops, with a .9mm instead. Then, I came to the Parklands in southeast DC to help my friend out. Admetus. I've been watching him, making sure ain't nothing bad happening to him..

ADMETUS enters another part of the stage he dials his cellphone.

APOLLO

I protect him, I paid his debt and I helped his family. I, Apollo, the richest man on this earth, helped him when he had no food on the table. (His cell phone rings.) Hold on, I got someone calling me. Hello?

ADMETUS

Man, I got something to tell you.

APOLLO

What?

ADMETUS

The Grim Reaper said he was coming for me. But, don't worry I got someone to take my place.

APOLLO

Who?

ADMETUS

Hold on, let me tell you the story. See, first I went to my parent's house and asked them. And you know what my father said? I'ma' tell you what he said, "no, son, you need to take hold of your responsibility." So I said, "Man forget you" and left. Next, I went to my wife and man was she easy. She said, "Oh baby, of course, of course. I'll die for you." Man, is she dumb or what?

DEATH AND HIS POSSE enter. DEATH knocks on the floor to awaken the people in ADMETUS' palace.

APOLLO

Nope, just loyal. Until this day Admetus, I have kept you from death, you were supposed to go to the afterworld for all eternity. But no, I will let someone that you love suffer and surrender her life for you. You've tried your parents, and they wouldn't do it for you. You've asked the whole world, but your wife, your dear sweet wife said yes because she loves you. (He sees DEATH knocking) Now here comes Death coming to take her down to Hades.

ADMETUS

Aren't you gonna answer it, Apollo?

APOLLO

No.

ADMETUS

But why I gotta open the door?

APOLLO

Because it's your house! (Hangs up phone.)

ADMETUS

(Hangs up phone. Goes to hide himself.) Prima donna.

DEATH AND HIS POSSE, with a drawn gun in his hand, moves stealthily towards the Palace; then sees APOLLO and halts abruptly. APOLLO inching forward like a gunfighter steps in DEATH'S path. The two Deities confront each other.

APOLLO

So if it isn't my old friend Death. (Apollo has his hand on his pistol.)

DEATH

Well, well, well, if it isn't Apollo himself. (He oddly stares at Apollo.) I'm sorry don't mind me staring. I'm just trying to figure out why you're here. Didn't you already stop the death of Admetus? You could've went on the Fates. Now, you have your pistol ready to play Captain Sav-a-lot for Alcestis and break your deal with me.

APOLLO

I have to carry this with me all the time. Plus, Admetus is my homeboy, stuff happening to him gets me all worked up. If he cries, I cry, you get it!

DEATH

So, you're Admetus's little guard dog. Man, is Admetus paying you?

APOLLO

Money is the last thing I need. It ain't like that. He's my boy and he ain't going out like that. His issues are my problems.

DEATH

You mean to take Alcestis's body from me too?

APOLLO

What you mean "too"? I never took Admetus from you in the first place.

DEATH

Well, it sure does seem like it cuz if I had him he wouldn't have been seen at Iverson Mall yesterday. And he wouldn't still be above ground now.

APOLLO

Naw, his wife took the bid instead of him and you came for her early. Man, you getting' me guh!

DEATH

I know, ha! I'm bringing her down to where the dead folks are.

APOLLO

Man, whatever, roll out. Just take her then. You won't listen to me anyway.

DEATH

Look, I'm gonna kill, who I'm gonna kill. This is my job. You have my word. Admetus is safe until it is his time again.

APOLLO

Ease up! You gon' get him. Can you at least let them say their last goodbye's. And . . . wait, isn't there a way for her to get old?

DEATH

I feel you. But I'm not really the patient type. I like to speed things up.

APOLLO

So we can't agree on this.

DEATH

How about . . . no!

APOLLO

You drive a hard bargain.

DEATH

Don't get me wrong, Apollo. Behind the black robe and the scythe, I'm a pretty decent and reasonable guy. I just try to get a kick out of my career. Plus, the younger they are, the better.

APOLLO

Can't you make an exception. If she dies old, she can have an expensive casket and the biggest ceremony. She's the King's wife, for goodness sake.

DEATH

So, you saying help the rich? I don't do favorites! Did I make an exception for Elvis?

APOLLO

That's new talk coming from you, trying to show off. When did you become captain of the debate team?

DEATH

Imagine how many times I've had to do this. If it was that simple those who could afford to buy death would not die until they got old.

APOLLO

Uh huh, I see. You're not gonna look out for me, are you?

DEATH

After all this rappin' my answer still has not changed. You know me.

APOLLO

That's wrong man. You be loafin'. That's why nobody don't mess with you. Hated by mankind and the gods.

DEATH

That's a-ight. They don't have to like me, but they have to give me their souls. You can't always have it your way, this ain't Burger King!

APOLLO

You think you doin' it real big, don't you? Well, I gotta cake baked for you. Somebody's gonna put you in your place. He'll be stationed right here in Admetus's house and I'm sure he'll be able to "persuade" you to give Alcestis to him.

DEATH

Faking will win you nothing. Talk is cheap and until any of that happens, which is never, I'll have Alcestis at Hades's spot and be done with this fiasco. I'm gonna take her and introduce her to my sword. For all who are hurt by this blade's sharpness are sent to the god's below. Now, move it or lose it. And you know what "it" is!

APOLLO steps aside. DEATH enters the Palace.

ACT I

Scene 2

The hair salon for the rich and famous of Washington. The co-owners of the salon enter. CIVIC LEADERS enter.

LINDA CROPP

Why is it so freaking quiet in Admetus's house? Is there anyone can tell us what's going on? Did Alcestis get peaced or is she still looking at the sunshine?

SHEILA JOHNSON

Did you hear anything, Police Chief Lanier? Has Death killed her yet?

CATHY LANIER

No, Ms. Johnson, and there's no one at the gates. I thought I heard a scream and a gun shot.

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

O, God, can you heal this disaster?

ADRIAN FENTY

But if she was dead Representative Norton, there would be no silence.

MS. DOUGLAS

Naw, she's gone. R.I.P.

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

But, Ms. Douglas, they haven't taken her from the house yet.

LINDA CROPP

Why are you so sure, Eleanor? How could Admetus have a funeral for her without the paparazzi around or her family there? She is too magnificent.

SHEILA JOHNSON

But, Linda, here are the gates and I don't see the signs of a custom ceremony.

CATHY LANIER

Ms. Johnson, I can't see the coffin and there's no sign of people in black.

ADRIAN FENTY

But this is her sentenced day to die.

MS. DOUGLAS

Mayor Fenty, what are you talking about?

ADRIAN FENTY

She must go below where Grandma and Pookie lay

MS. DOUGLAS

Mayor, that hurts. You ain't have to say it like that. I liked Alcestis.

MAYOR FENTY

Of course, Ms. Douglas. Those who claim to be called good men, men from southeast, northeast, and even in Maryland, feel sad for the woman.

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

There is no place on earth that can help Alcestis. Here is a lady that is dying for her husband and she is the sweetest woman to step foot in Hades. We are here for Alcestis who was so loyal to us. For she is gone down into the gates of Hades. There's only one who can save her.

CATHY LANIER

Look, the maid's coming from the house. But why is she crying? She might know about Alcestis's death. (Speaking to the Maid.) We would like to know, is Alcestis dead or alive?

ACT I

Scene 3

From the Palace come two women in tears. LILA is a maid, DORIS is of the personal attendants on the Queen. A TV reporter speaks to the weeping women.

LILA

I . . . I . . . can tell you she is dead and alive.

TV REPORTER

How can she be both alive and dead?

LILA

Death is taking her slowly. Her life is fading right now.

DORIS

I am mad that a good husband and wife have to be split apart. I feel sorry for him to lose such a wife.

LILA

Admetus won't see her death until it happens.

TV REPORTER

And she can't live any longer?

LILA

No, this is the day of her destiny.

TV REPORTER

My, my, my, Admetus must be risking all he can for her.

DORIS

Everything is all good. Admetus is going to bury her in style.

LILA

Let her at least know that she is dying as the most loyal and noble woman below the sun right now.

DORIS

Loyal and noble? So loyal, who's gonna argue with that? Can any wife show any more love and be willing to die for her husband? The whole state of DC knows that. You will be shocked to hear what she did before her death. It's really gonna amaze you. She dressed in her finest clothes and didn't cry. She gave her children and maids their last farewell. This is what she said:

(The Maid speaks in Alcestis's voice) "Since I am going to this dark place, I kneel and pray for you to take good care of my kids. Give my daughter a good, loving husband, and my son a generous, loving wife. Please don't let my children die like me. Let them have long lives. Here I am in my house where I gave up everything for my husband." *(She weeps.)*

TV REPORTER

I bet Admetus is tripping that she's 'bout to die.

LILA

Yep, he cryin'. He is in so much pain. He holds his wife close to his heart. He will keep feeling sorry too. It won't escape him. She is draining away. This is a great woman the house is losing. She wants to look at the sunlight one more time since she won't see it again. Here she comes.

DORIS AND LILA go back into the women's quarters of the Palace.

ACT II

Scene 1

From the door of the Palace comes a splendid but tragical procession. ADMETUS enters, supporting ALCESTIS. The boy a clings to his Grandmother, JUANITA WADE. There is a train of attendants and waiting women, who bring a low throne for the fainting ALCESTIS.

JUANITA WADE

O God, is there anyway that people can get over their hurt and sorrow some way? Will I have to cut my hair to honor and wear the black to gather with others and sob? We have to still pray for her. God, my savior let them have a chance. Give Admetus that wish. Turn her away from death for now, away from the presence of Hades. Admetus, what a loss. This can make a man kill himself. This is the worst. But you two will be together again one day.

ALCESTIS

O look at the sky, the beautiful sun. *(She sighs.)*

ADMETUS

Death sees us hurting. We haven't done anything to the gods, so why do they bring us destruction?

ALCESTIS

My beautiful house, my people, the place I was married.

ADMETUS

Don't be down, baby. It is not quite your time. Don't depart from me now. The gods have power and I would think they would feel sorry for you.

ALCESTIS starting up and gazing wildly in terror, chanting

I feel it's my time to die. I can see him now waiting, the pilot of Death's ship, Charon, with his hand held out saying, "What's holding you? Hurry up now. You are keeping us up." Death is impatient. He's taking me away, can't you see it? He's frowning under those evil eyes. Come on, it's Death. Just turn me loose. I must walk the road to where I will die.

ADMETUS

It's sad that I've made you die for me. It's wrong that it has to be us to have bad luck. Everyone will be so sorry for you. Me and the kids are gonna be in pain.

ALCESTIS

Just let me go. I can no longer be happy. Death's near. I can feel him. He's stalking me. Babies, I will no longer be with you anymore. Y'all will be without a mother now. Don't cry for me. Just live your lives and be happy.

ADMETUS

Don't leave me and the children. Please! There will be nothing left of me if you die. This is worse than my own death. Don't give in. Your love is more precious to us than anything. Fight, don't leave.

ALCESTIS

(She tries to stand.) Admetus, you know I love you. I put you first before everyone else. I could have chosen any man in this country but I chose you. I don't want you to grieve for me. And without you my children will not be. Your mother and father sacrificed for you to be here in honor. You are the only one they had. And they would be hopeless without you. Keep my children by your side. Please don't marry a woman who is not as kind as I am. 'Cuz she'll be so jealous of me . . . no, don't do that. I must die. Not tomorrow, not next month, or 1,000 years from now. Today, I will be counted as one of the dead. So goodbye. Now you can tell the world, my children, that your mother was brave. *(She falls back.)*

JUANITA WADE

Have no fear. Admetus will do all that you ask. If he doesn't, he will bring it on himself.

ADMETUS

It will be done. Do not be scared. No one will ever be called my wife except for you, my love. I will never find another lover that is sweeter than you. I shall remember you everyday of my life.

You sacrificed and saved my life. I will end the partying in here. I will have an artist make a statue of you. I'll put it in the house and hold it like it's you. You can come to see me in my dreams to comfort me. Wait for me in that place. I will have them bury me at your side, so my heart can be against your heart.

JUANITA WADE to ADMETUS

Because we are friends, Admetus, I will help you bear with your loneliness.

ALCESTIS

My dear children, you heard your father. Now make sure that he will not hurt you by marrying anyone else and that he will always remember me.

ADMETUS

I will keep my promise 'till the end.

ALCESTIS placing the children's hands in his

Just take the children. They are your responsibility . . . to keep, to love.

ADMETUS

I will take good care of them. They are very dear just like you.

ALCESTIS

And you must take care of them like I once did.

ADMETUS

I will be both parents to them

ALCESTIS

I guess it is my time to go.

ADMETUS

I don't know what to do without you.

ALCESTIS

Time will tell.

JUANITA WADE

Oh Lord, just let me go with you.

ALCESTIS

No, remember, I'm dying. That is enough.

ADMETUS

Oh God, you are taking a beautiful wife from me.

ALCESTIS growing faint

It is true. It is my time, my eyes are getting weak.

ADMETUS

But I am so lost without you.

ALCESTIS

There is no use in talking to me anymore. I am not here.

ADMETUS

No, lift your head up. Please don't leave your children behind.

ALCESTIS

I don't wanna, but I have to. It's farewell.

ADMETUS

Just take a look at your children

ALCESTIS

No, no, there's nothing else I can do.

JUANITA WADE

Are . . . are . . . are you really leaving us?

DIAMOND

This is the end of the whole banana as we know it.

ALCESTIS

(Falling back dead.) Good . . . goodbye.

ADMETUS

(Staring at the body.) I'm doomed.

JUANITA WADE

It's over now. Admetus's wife has gone.

EUMELUS

(Standing.) Ohh, no! She's gone grandma. She is not here anymore. She was so mean to leave us here. Mommy, hear me, I am crying out to you. Your little boy. I kiss and weep for you.

ADMETUS

She's dead, and she won't be coming back. It's time to step up now.

EUMELUS

I don't want to live without a mother, and sister, I really want you to feel the same. I feel your pain, Daddy. You need to get a life. Your marriage is nothing, incomplete. You and Mom sure didn't last too long. The house is off the hook now that Mom is gone.

DIAMOND

Mom is gone, gone!

JUANITA WADE

Admetus, it's time to stop being a punk and face your fears. You are not the only one to lose your woman. Hey, don't worry—death comes to everybody. *She exits with the children.*

ADMETUS

I understand. But all of this did not have to happen, not at this time. But since we have to put all that stress behind us and bury her, stick with me. Stand by my side, shout hymns. Let's go to Iverson Mall and get some RIP t-shirts, then go to the gogo and party with CCB. I give her props. She died for me, and no one else would.

ACT II

Scene 2

The body of ALCESTIS is carried solemnly into the Palace, followed by ADMETUS, With bowed head, holding one of his children by each hand. When all have entered, the GRANDMOTHER speaks.

JUANITA WADE

(Singing) Alcestis, I hope you have a good time in the underworld. Let death and his people know that you are the bravest woman ever to be carried down into that darkness. Make sure everybody knows that you the fliest and you the stuff. No one can replace you. If your husband tries to get married again, he will be hated. His own mother and father wouldn't die for him, and they were already old. But you stepped up for him. I love you daughter. Good bye.

ACT III

Scene 1

From the left HERACLES enters. He is black-bearded and of great physical strength; he wears an athletic jersey. He speaks with former Mayor Marion Barry.

HERACLES

(With a gesture of salutation) Ay, ya'll. Where Admetus at?

MARION BARRY

He's here. But what brings you to Southeast . . . again?

HERACLES

I got a job to do, son.

MARION BARRY

What do you have to do?

HERACLES

Son, we about to do a UUV. I'm going to Virginia, to bring Diomedes his Escalade.

MARION BARRY

Boy, stop faking. Do you even know Diomedes?

HERACLES

No, I don't even know where he live.

MARION BARRY

You can't do it. This is too hard.

HERACLES

It's my job. I got to do what I got to do.

MARION BARRY

You gonna have to kill or be killed.

HERACLES

Chow down, chump. I been in fights before.

MARIAN BARRY

What good will that do? It ain't easy out here in these streets.

HERACLES

'll be taking home my prize.

MARION BARRY

No way, son.

HERACLES

It's easy. Look, what's hard for you is easy for me.

MARION BARRY

You think that but, um, they some hard core people round that way.

HERACLES

Sounds like my life. It is hard every step of the way. I have to fight all the sons the war god ever got him. I have to master all the horses. I am Alcamene's son. And no man alive has ever seen me break.

MARION BARRY

Here comes Admetus: the king of Southeast himself.

ACT III

Scene 2

ADMETUS comes slowly on the Stage, preceded and followed by guards and attendants. The King has put off all symbols of royalty, and is dressed in black. ADMETUS dissembles his grief throughout this scene, in obedience to the laws of hospitality, which were particularly revered in Thessaly. Heracles enters. He's been drinking.

ADMETUS

Heracles, you my dog for life. We all want to welcome you to our hood.

HERACLES

Thanks. Much happiness to you.

ADMETUS

I wish. But I know you mean well.

HERACLES

What is the matter with you all. Why is everyone wearing black?

ADMETUS

Someone died, and the funeral is tomorrow.

HERACLES

It's not one of your kids, is it?

ADMETUS

Oh no, not them. My kids are at their grandmother's house.

HERACLES

If it was your father, then it was about time.

ADMETUS

No, he is still living. My mother too.

HERACLES

Not your wife, Alcestis?

ADMETUS evasively

Yes and no. It's two ways I can answer that.

HERACLES

So are you saying . . . wait a minute, is she dead or alive?

ADMETUS ambiguously

She is. It's just that she has gone away. It scares me.

HERACLES perplexed

I don't understand you. Are you trying to be funny?

ADMETUS

I know you know what's happening, and what is going on. Don't you?

HERACLES

I know that she is dying for you.

ADMETUS

How can she live if she has promised to do that?

HERACLES

Don't feel sorry for her before she dies. Wait for the right time.

ADMETUS

The point of dying is . . . well, there is no point. Once you're dead, you are lost and gone.

HERACLES

Hold up. Lost and gone are two different things.

ADMETUS

That's your opinion, Heracles. Not mine.

HERACLES

Well, who are we feeling sorry for now? Is it in the family?

ADMETUS

A woman. We are talking about a woman, aren't we?

HERACLES mistaking his meaning

Is she blood or an outsider? Or a friend of the family?

ADMETUS

Not a blood relative. She just meant a lot to me.

HERACLES

How she die up in your crib and she don't even live there?

ADMETUS

Her father died so she moved in with us.

HERACLES

I am sorry. I should have come to see you when you're in a good mood.

ADMETUS

What do you mean by that?

HERACLES

Um...maybe I'll go stay with another friend.

ADMETUS

No. You can't do that to me. You'll make me look bad.

HERACLES hesitating

Friends who stay with friends they feel sorry for are in the way.

ADMETUS decisively
The dead are dead. Life goes on. Get on in the house.

HERACLES
Boy, you trippin'. It's wrong to party in a house where someone just died.

ADMETUS
There are separate rooms. You can sleep in the guest room.

HERACLES
Just let me go.

ADMETUS
You will not stay with another friend.

HERACLES enters the Palace; when he has gone in,
ADMETUS turns to a guard.

ADMETUS
You, open the guest room across from the backyard. Then go to the carryout and get him some food. And make sure you close his door, so he won't have to hear

The guard goes into the Palace.

ACT III **Scene 3**

DANCERS entertain ADMETUS and HERACLES and guests inside the Palace.

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
Admetus, are you crazy? What are you thinking of? Entertaining guests here and your wife just died.

ADMETUS
Listen, Congresswoman, if I put my friend out, would you like me better? No. I still would have been sad. This man is my best friend. I got to give him props.

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
Okay. But if he's your best friend, why did you hide the truth from him? What's up wit dat?

ADMETUS
He would not have come inside if he knew the trouble he was getting into. I know my house doesn't know how to push friends away and not treat them right.

He exits.

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

Well, this is a very beautiful house.

MARION BARRY

He's got a plasma t.v. and a jacuzzi in every room.

ADRIAN FENTY

There's silk sheets and gold doorknobs and a pit bull guarding every door.

MS. DOUGLAS

I guess if he's that rich, he must know what's right.

SHEILA JOHNSON

So, really, it was nice of Admetus to take Heracles in.

MS. DOUGLAS

My bad.

ACT IV

Scene 1

The funeral procession of ALCESTIS enters. The body, carried on a bier by guards, is followed by ADMETUS and his two children. Behind them comes JUANITA WADE, a train of attendants and maids carrying the funeral offerings. All are in mourning. ADMETUS calls APOLLO on his cellphone.

ADMETUS

Apollo, the funeral is today. Are you coming? You have to do this, cause this is my wife and you are my friends, and you have to support me. So are you coming or not? Apollo? Apollo?

PHERES, the father of ADMETUS, enters, followed by attendants bearing funeral offerings.

JUANITA WADE

Yeah, but hold up—I see your Daddy coming. He's bringing flowers and some nice jewelry to bury her in.

PHERES

Son, I know how you feel, losing your wife. She was so fine. I brought you these flowers and stuff cause I really appreciate her dying so you could live. I like having you around. You know what people say: Marry a woman like her or don't get married at all.

He lifts his hand in salutation to the body of ALCESTIS.

ADMETUS

(Furiously) Daddy, I never asked you to come here. Who invited you to the funeral? And she will not wear any bling you brought her. She don't need nothing from you. If you like having me around so much, you should have stepped up and taken my place. You got nothing to cry for

now. And stop calling me Son, cause from now on, you ain't my Daddy. If you want someone to take care of you when you get old, you better get to work and make some more babies, cause I ain't no child of yours.

JUANITA WADE

Boy, you trippin'. You better stop making a scene. We have enough trouble already.

ADMETUS turns angrily to depart, but PHERES prevents him.

PHERES

Those are some mighty strong words, Son. Don't come off at me like that. Who do you think you're talking to? I brought you into this world, and I can take you out of it.

Look, I never asked you to die for me, and I never said I'd die for you. That's not how we do things around here. You weren't man enough to face it when your time came, so you let your wife die for you. You're the punk who killed her, not me.

So what are you going to do, get married again, and let your new wife die next time death comes for you? You'll always find some girl dumb enough to marry you, and then you'll live forever. But don't be calling me names when you're the one who's a punk.

JUANITA WADE

Hold up now, old man. That's no way to talk to your son.

ADMETUS to PHERES

No, go ahead and talk. But I've got something to say, too.

PHERES

I would have been crazy to die for you.

ADMETUS

Oh yeah? You're old and I'm young. How much time you got left anyway?

PHERES

As much as I can get. I've only got one life to live.

ADMETUS

Well, you sure are stretching it out.

JUANITA WADE

That's no way to talk to your father.

ADMETUS

I'm just saying, you must really like getting old.

PHERES

Who are you burying here? Is someone dead, or not?

ADMETUS
My wife is dead.

PHERES
You can't say I had anything to do with it.

ADMETUS
Uh huh. I hope you need me some day.

PHERES
Go out to the club and flirt. You'll find another girl to die for you.

ADMETUS
It's your fault. She did what you wouldn't do.

JUANITA WADE
Hold up now son-in-law.

PHERES
No sir, not me. I love my life. I know when I got a good thing going.

ADMETUS
You sound like a zombie talking, not a man.

PHERES
Watch your mouth, boy. There's a dead body listening.

ADMETUS
I wish it was you. When you die, I'm gonna spit on your grave.

JUANITA WADE
That's no way to talk.

PHERES
Go ahead. I don't care what you do after I'm dead.

ADMETUS
You're so old you've lost you whatever sense you had.

PHERES
I got enough sense not to give my life up for your sorry behind.

ADMETUS
Get out of here. I got work to do.

PHERES

(Turning away) Oh, I'll go. You killed her, and you can bury her, too. But she's got plenty of family back home. You don't think her brothers are going to let you get away with this, do you?

PHERES goes out by the way he entered, followed by his attendants. ADMETUS gazes angrily after him.

ADMETUS

Just get out, before I call the cops. Go back to your ugly wife and you can both grow old and lonely. I hope I never see you again. Now let's go do what we have to do. Let's take her to the funeral home.

The Procession moves slowly along the stage, and is joined by the CHORUS. As they pass, the DEATH salutes the body of ALCESTIS.

DEATH

(Chanting) Bye, Alcestis. It's been nice knowing you. You sure were one fine woman. You're gonna rock the underworld down in Hades.

The Procession files out.

ACT IV

Scene 2

A HOUSEKEEPER and MAID in mourning hurry out from the guests' quarters.

HOUSEKEEPER

Man, I had all types of people come to this house, but I have never seen anybody as ghetto as this one. He rolled up in here like he own something, yelling, and don't even know what happened. Alcestis is gone, and I get to entertain this piece of paper.

MAID

This bamma don't get what just happened. He turned down what we tried to give him. Like that brand new PS3 we gave—he tried to take my head off with it! And when we didn't give him anything, he punked us for it.

HOUSEKEEPER

He got drunk and put a plastic crown on his head and started singing Britney Spears off key while my peoples in mourning. I got to entertain this busta who don't even care about my home skillet biscuit.

MAID

He's just being a unc and now he won't let me say peace out to my home girl. Ain't I right to hate this dude for coming in here while we still mourning?

HERACLES enters. He is drunkenly merry, with a myrtle wreath on his head, and a large cup and wine-skin in his hands. He staggers a little. With drunken gravity,

HERACLES

Hey you with the sad looking melon head. What you trippin' for? The maids and housekeepers who be with the guests are sposed to be jive nice, and you're all mean, muggin' on me, you know? I'm your boss best friend, and you're giving me dirty looks.

Listen up. Chill out, man. Erebody dies, but you have to suck it up and stop trippin'. Just enjoy life while it lasts, because you never know what might happen. Get that chip off your shoulder and have some fun, homes. Don't be sad, because life is just a tornado of weird things.

HOUSEKEEPER

I know that! But we got issues, and you actin' all inappropriate.

HERACLES

Your boss and his wife are still alive. The dead lady was out of the family. Don't trip too hard off of that. The top dog's still here.

MAID

What you talkin' bout, alive? Don't you know what's happening?

HERACLES

Yeah, unless your boss lied to me.

HOUSEKEEPER

You call him a liar? That's what he gets for trying to be nice.

HERACLES

Why shouldn't I enjoy myself then, just cause somebody I don't know is dead.

MAID

Yeah, she was an outsider, and yeah, that's true.

HERACLES

Is there something that went down that I don't know about?

HOUSEKEEPER

Just roll out, slim. This is family business.

HERACLES

These ain't no outsider troubles, man.

MAID

If it was, it would be okay to enjoy yourself.

HERACLES

Yo! Am I being played by my homie?

HOUSEKEEPER

You came at a bad time. You can see we're upset. Can't you see we been crying?

HERACLES

I'm confused. Who died? The old man? It's not one of the kids, is it?

MAID

Man, Admetus' wife died, dog.

HERACLES

What? And all this time I was feeling good up in here.

HOUSEKEEPER

He ain't want to turn you out from the house. He was too nice to turn you away.

HERACLES

Poor Admetus. What a fine, fine woman you lost.

MAID

We all dead on the inside now. I feel dead.

HERACLES now completely sobered

I knew something was wrong when I saw him. But he convinced me it was someone who wasn't blood related that was being buried. So I came in here and had myself a good time, and you just telling me something like this? So where's the funeral?

HOUSEKEEPER

Go straight down the road until you see the graveyard. *Returns to the HOUSEKEEPERS' quarters.*

HERACLES

Yo, I gotta save this girl. Bring her back to this house and pay Admetus back for what I did. I gotta go catch the Grim Reaper and crush his ribs till he gimme back the lady. If he refuses, I gotta go to the underworld and ask the man in charge can I bring Alcestis back. I'm gonna bring her back to my man Admetus, who didn't put me out, but took me in, in bad times, cuz he my home skillet. I'll prove that I'm as good a friend as he was to me.

HERACLES exits.

ACT IV

Scene 3

Presently ADMETUS and his attendants, followed by the CHORUS, return from the burial of ALCESTIS. The Civic leaders arrive.

ADMETUS

I don't want to be here. There's nothing to do. Now that my snookums is gone, the house feels empty. What can I do? Where can I go? What can I say? I'm jealous of the dead.

MARION BARRY

You've suffered enough, and now it's time to go on with your life. Keep your head up.

ADMETUS

You have opened this empty box in my heart. What can be worse than a wonderful man losing his gorgeous wife? I wish I never even had a wife or kids, cause then I wouldn't be going through this.

MS. DOUGLAS

You're not the only man that has lost a wife. I understand it hurts, but everybody has their turn. It happens to everyone.

ADMETUS

What's the point of living if I can't have my lady beside me? I wish I had thrown myself down there in the grave with her so I wouldn't have to be alone. It could have been both of us, but instead it's just her. I wish I was beside her now.

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

There was a girl who lost her mother, because her mother was sick and strung out on drugs, but she took it okay. I just want you to know that stuff like that doesn't just happen to you.

CATHY LANIER

Matter of fact, there was a man who lost his son, which is the same as you, except you lost your wife, but he moved on with his life.

ADMETUS

How am I going to do this, tell me. My house is empty because the butter to my toast is gone, and I don't know what to do. When I lost my wife, I lost my happiness.

MS. DOUGLAS

You win some, you lose some. Your life with Alcestis was so good you thought you'd never have any bad luck. Now that's the only kind of luck you have. This happens to other people—why is it so new to you?

ADMETUS

Boys and girls, I think my wife has it better than I do. It might not seem like that, but where she is, she'll have no more pain. Everybody remembers her as the greatest wife that ever lived. And look at me—all I have left is suffering. If I stay outside, I'm reminded of her; if I go in the house, I'm reminded of her. Tell me, what should I do? From now on, everyone who sees me will say, "There goes the punk who let his wife die for him." What kind of life is that?

ADRIAN FENTY

Your wife is gone forever. Nothing you can say will bring her back. You loved her when she was alive, and you can still love her now that she's dead. When people see Alcestis' grave, they will honor her and know she died for the sake of her husband. Now she's a blessed spirit.

He covers his head with his robe, and crouches in abject misery on the steps of his Palace.

HERACLES enters from the side, leading a veiled woman.

MARION BARRY

Hey look who's coming! It looks like Heracles is back.

ADMETUS uncovers his head, and faces the newcomer.

HERACLES

Admetus, you should have told me your wife was dead. If you had, I wouldn't have acted the fool and got drunk. That was wrong, man. You shouldn't treat your friends like that. But I came back because I bought a lottery ticket, and look what I won. They sure have some great prizes in the Powerball. I want to give this woman to you as a consolation prize for losing Alcestis. You can keep her—I swear I didn't kidnap her. The police aren't after her or nothing.

ADMETUS

Look, I don't mean no harm, but, could you find someone else to give her to? We just laid Alcestis in her grave. What are people gonna think? Where would she stay? I can't just leave her with the maids—they're some hard core younguns. And I can't put her in my wife's bed. That's just gross. I can't even stand to look at her, because she looks so much like poor Alcestis.

SHEILA JOHNSON

You just gotta take what life gives you, like it or not.

HERACLES

I just wish I was strong enough to bring your wife back to you. I would do that for you, you know.

ADMETUS

I know you would have. But why bother saying it? There's no way to bring her back.

HERACLES

Then don't be so sad. Try to be strong.

ADMETUS

That's easy for you to say. Your wife didn't just die.

HERACLES

If you want to be sad, go ahead. But what good does it do you?

ADMETUS

Nothing. But I can't help it.

HERACLES

That's all right. Tears don't help anything, but when someone dies, people always cry.

ADMETUS

Losing her just crushed me. I can't explain it.

HERACLES

Yeah, she sure was fine. Erebody knows that. Bump fine—I mean sexy.

ADMETUS

Fine. So fine that I can't ever be happy again.

HERACLES

You'll get over it. You just need to give it a little time. Shake it off.

ADMETUS

You mean the time it takes 'til I die.

HERACLES

Naw. You'll meet someone new, get married again, it'll all be good as it was before.

ADMETUS

Man, shut up! How can you say stuff like that?

HERACLES

What, you never even gonna have another girlfriend, long as you live?

ADMETUS

I'm not even gonna think of another woman. Not even Beyonce.

HERACLES

How's that gonna help your dead wife? She'll still be dead.

ADMETUS

Dead or alive, I've got to show her some respect.

HERACLES

Umm, that's real good of you, but it's dumb, too.

ADMETUS

You can call me dumb, you just won't call me getting married again.

HERACLES

You a-ight, dog. I respect you being faithful to your wife. I mean, your dead wife.

ADMETUS

Well, let the gods strike me dead if I do her wrong.

HERACLES offering him the veiled woman's hand.

Okay, you such a big man—I know you'll take this poor woman into your mansion.

ADMETUS

No, please. Oh Zeus, tell your stupid son NO.

HERACLES

You're making a big mistake if you don't. I mean, messing up big time.

ADMETUS

Stop playin', before you give me a heart attack.

HERACLES

Just do what I say. This woman is just what you need.

ADMETUS

I wish you never won her. Why can't you lose the Powerball every time, like everyone else?

HERACLES

Look, if I'm a winner, you're a winner. You know I share the wealth.

ADMETUS

I heard that. But let the girl go, anyhow.

HERACLES

Okay, if you really think I should. But just get a good look at her, and see if you think that's right.

ADMETUS

It's right. Unless you're gonna get mad at me.

HERACLES

I don't mean to be a pain, but I know something you don't know.

ADMETUS

Then do it your way. But it's not gonna make me feel any better.

HERACLES

Some day, you're gonna thank me for this. Just do this one little thing for me.

ADMETUS to his attendants

Came get this girl and find someplace for her to stay.

HERACLES

I'm not giving her up to the housekeepers. Come on, now.

ADMETUS

Then take her in yourself, if that's what you want.

HERACLES

I'm giving her to you. Just you. No one else.

ADMETUS

I ain't gonna touch her. She can go inside by herself if she wants to.

HERACLES

Look, I don't have all day here.

ADMETUS

But I don't want to!

HERACLES

Just suck it up and do what you have to do. Don't be scared of strangers. Just reach out your hand and...

ADMETUS turning aside his head

Aaaaaah! I feel like I'm on a blind date with Godzilla!

HERACLES

You got her?

ADMETUS

Yeah. Aaaaaaaah!

HERACLES

Some day you're gonna get down on your knees and say thanks to your best friend. Just look at this girl. Don't she look even a little bit like someone you know? Don't you feel kinda lucky right now?

Takes off the veil and shows ALCESTIS.

HERACLES

Don't you feel kinda lucky right now?

ADMETUS drops her hand and starts back

Wait a minute. What in the -----is going on here? Is this really my wife, or is some fool playing tricks on me? Youngin, spill the beans. What's going on here?

HERACLES

You see what's going on. Your wife came back.

ADMETUS

But my wife died. Is this some kind of zombie woman?

HERACLES

I don't do horror movies.

ADMETUS

But I buried her myself. What did you do, dig her up?

HERACLES

Um, yeah. But just trust me, she'll be just like her old self.

ADMETUS

So, like, can I touch her? She ain't no ghost or nothing?

HERACLES

Say something to her. You wanted her back, and now you've got her.

ADMETUS (takes ALCESTIS in his arms)

Hey, Baby. It's nice to see you again.

HERACLES

You got her back. I hope you're happy now.

ADMETUS

Yo, Heracles. You my dog for life, for real, for real. You the only one who stuck with me when I was down, and I ain't never gonna forget that. But, um, how did you get Alcestis back from, you know, down there?

HERACLES

I had to fight for her, son.

ADMETUS

Hold up, now. You fought Death to get her back?

HERACLES

You better believe it. I jumped him in the cemetery, right next to her grave.

ADMETUS

But how come she don't talk. That's not like my wife.

HERACLES

She ain't allowed to talk to you yet, not for three days. She's got to work off her time in the grave. So just take her back inside, and from now on, you better think about how good you got it. And keep on treating your guests right, cause I definitely appreciate that. Now, I'm outta here. I got a job to do.

ADMETUS

No, stick around for awhile. I'll make you dinner.

HERACLES

Later, son. You know me, I got to work.

ADMETUS

Well, good luck. Come back by here soon! *(Heracles goes.)*

Boy did I luck out. Smack me, cause I must be dreaming. I can't hardly believe it. Now we definitely gonna party up in here. Live band, free food, and we gonna burn up some sacrifices for the gods! From now on, I'm gonna live it up and have a better life than before. Cause I am one lucky fool, and I don't deny it.

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

There's a lot we don't know.

And even more we don't understand.

What we are expecting doesn't happen.

And what we never even dreamed of comes true anyway.

I guess that's just how it goes.

DEATH

Game over.

End