



# SCRIPT

## Oedipus 2K3: Ghetto Fab

Directed by Kathleen Akerley

### Prologue

Oedipus: My people, everybody here today, living in DC, why you fakin' with all the fancy clothes? Why have you come to my doorstep with your baggy leather pants and white silk shirts and black leather jackets, with all this money? I don't want to send my messengers back and forth, so I came for myself to hear what you have to say with your own mouth.

Hey you there, the CEO of the record label, you're the big cheese, so speak for all my peeps. Tell me what's going on. I don't care if you need something from me or not, just tell me what happened. I couldn't be that heartless to ignore your presence. Tell me, have you come to witness my magic or tell of your dread?

Priest: Oedipus. We have come to ask you for help. You have money, power and contacts. Make some calls. Meet some people. Do what you can, just help. A plague has come upon our town, rotting it of its beauty. Our people are dying from drugs, drive-bys and anthrax. Snipers are shooting us down in the streets and terrorists have made us scared to leave our homes. Our children's lives are ending as soon as they begin. Our roads are empty and filled with broken glass.

You're not the President, but you can make a difference. You've come to save our city from the newborn sphinx. We believe you are capable of bringing peace back to our city, so you can rule over the living, not the dead.

Oedipus: That's terrible, but I have no solution to you problems. I know that you have life-threatening illness, but none of you is as sick as I am. My spirit is aching for the city. For me, for you. I've sent Creon, brother of the queen, to Delphi to try to solve our dilemma, but he hasn't returned. I've been out to Dulles about a thousand times this week, but I never found him. I'll be an old man by the time he gets back.

Priest: We're in luck. They tell me Creon's on his way.

Oedipus: I hope his news is as good the mood he's in.

Priest: That's what it has to be. They're practically having a celebration in the streets.

Oedipus: Here he comes now. Here's our good news. (Creon enters.) Oh Prince, son of Menoikeus. What's up? What answer do you bring us from the gods? Tell me what they said.

Creon: It's not good, but I'll tell you. Great things will happen if, and only if, these words are taken well.

Oedipus: How is this helping me? I'm still hanging between hope and fear.

Creon: Do you really want to talk in front of all these people?

Oedipus: Let them hear it. I will not part from my people. There's no shame in anything if it deals with my city.

Creon: Then I will tell you what I heard at Delphi: In plain words, the gods want someone to leave the land of D.C. Someone is here feeding this curse like rotting meat feeding maggots. They brought this upon us, now we must get rid of this nuisance.

Oedipus: What do you mean, a curse? How will we get rid of it?

Creon: By exile or death, blood for blood. Death is what brought the plague upon us, and death will take it away.

Oedipus: What death? Who was murdered? Surely the gods have named him?

Creon: Do you know our main man Laios? I mean, before you came.

Oedipus: Yeah, but I never saw him. I just hear about him. Why?

Creon: He was murdered, and Apollo wants us to find whoever did it and kill him.

Oedipus: That was a long time ago. Where can we find a clue to solve this dilemma after so many years?

Creon: Whoever it may be, he lives in this very town. Here in D.C. are clues that we might otherwise overlook. They will tell us who did it.

Oedipus: Where did he die? Was he killed here on this land, somewhere in this house, or in a foreign land?

Creon: He took a short trip and didn't come back.

Oedipus: And there was no one there? No witness to tell what happened? Did he travel alone?

Creon: All of them were killed except one, but he was so scared he could only remember one thing.

Oedipus: What was it he remembered? It could help us a lot.

Creon: That a rack of people jumped him. He said a gang of about 25 overpowered them and the king.

Oedipus: But why would anyone jump the king? Unless somebody paid him...

Creon: We went over that, but nobody said anything.

Oedipus: Why couldn't anyone find the killers?

Creon: We were distracted by the sphinx's rampage.

Oedipus: All right, I'll find whoever did it. Whoever killed King Laios might try and kill me. At any cost, I will not stop to avenge Laios and this town. I will exterminate all evil in this town. That murderer will be sorry. Get everybody in town here and tell them what I said.

Priest: Come, everybody. We got what we wanted. The King himself has promised to kill whoever murdered King Laios. Mighty Oedipus has promised it. Good bye plague.

Parados

Chorus: What is the man upstairs saying, as fear comes over me and my heart goes wild?

Now I remember you, the healer, with your powers, and I wonder how you can send my worst fears, like a nightmare never ending.

Out of the darkness, let us pray.

Now my troubles have no end and no man can fight off death.

Now the plague goes on like the sparks on fireworks, and there are no guns or weapons that can destroy these monsters, and there are no shields that can defend you from the plague.

God, please help us get rid of the venomous plague.

Lift it from this place.

Let the earth rotate and show the sun again.

Scene I

Oedipus: My seeds, masses of the living, from the bloodline of our grandfathers: Why shatter your souls at these tragic movies? If this is your prayer, it may be answered. Listen to me, do what I say, and your troubles will be over.

I never heard of this story until today. No one ever told me Laios had been murdered in cold blood out on a strange street. I came here after all that drama was over. But this is what I do know: If the killer thinks he can get away with this, he's wrong. As long as I am in charge here,

the killer he'll never be safe. I'll hunt him down if it's the last thing I do. And if anybody knows who the killer is and they don't tell me, well, I'll do them just like I do the murderer himself.

Since our murdered King can't get his revenge, I'll get it for him. I'm the one who's taken his place. I live in his house. I married his wife. If he had had kids, his son would be my children's brother. I'm going to find the murderer, and I'll make him suffer. And if you're true to this city, then you're on my side.

Choragos: Since you've got me in court, man, I swear I didn't do it. I'm no snitch, but I'd tell you who the killer was if I knew. Fact is, I don't know. But if the oracle knows so much about this crime, can't the oracle tell who did it?

Oedipus: That's a good question. I'm glad you asked. But no man in this world can tell the gods what to do.

Choragos: There is one more thing...

Oedipus: Go ahead and tell me. Don't hold back anything, because I'm serious.

Choragos: Well, everybody knows that Teiresias is a psychic. Even though he's blind, he can see the future almost as well as the oracle.

Oedipus: Creon told me that, and I'm not wasting any time. I've sent for him already. Twice, as a matter of fact. I'm surprised he's not here yet.

(Enter Teiresias)

Choragos: Here he is, the one man who can help us solve this mystery.

Oedipus: Teiresias, the wise man. The one who knows everybody's secrets, and the secrets of the gods, too. Blind as you are, you can see what a mess we're in. And only you can save us. Read your magic 8 ball, use your Ouija board, and tell us who killed Laios.

Teiresias: There's nothing worse than knowing the truth when the truth won't help. I shouldn't have come here.

Oedipus: What's the matter? Why are you acting so cold?

Teiresias: Let me get out of here. You deal with your problems and I'll deal with mine.

Oedipus: That's not very helpful. Come on, tell us what you know.

Teiresias: You're better off not knowing. I wish I was as ignorant as you. There's no way I'm gonna tell.

Oedipus: Wait a minute. You know something and you won't tell us? Whose side are you on?

Teiresias: Don't even bother asking me again. The truth is too terrible to tell. My mind's made up.

Oedipus: You old fool. Now you're getting on my nerves. You better tell me, cause I'll find out one way or another.

Teiresias: Do what you have to do. I don't care what you think.

Oedipus: You don't care? Well, here's what I think. You planned it, and you got some thug to do the job for you. If you had eyes, I'd say you did it yourself. Murderer.

Teiresias: What? Then I will tell. You're the murderer yourself. Now do what you promised you'd do. Either kill yourself or leave town.

Oedipus: How dare you. You think I'll let you go after talking to me like that?

Teiresias: I'm already gone. The truth just set me free.

Oedipus: Who told you to play this game? You're supposed to be a wise man?

Teiresias: You told me to. Remember, I didn't want to tell you.

Oedipus: Tell me what? I don't understand. Say it again more clearly.

Teiresias: I said you're the one who killed Laios.

Oedipus: There you go again. That's twice you've lied on me. Now you're gonna pay.

Teiresias: Okay, you want some more? Do you want me to make you really mad?

Oedipus: Say what you want. No one believes you anyway.

Teiresias: I say you're living a lie, and you can't see how sick you are. You're a shame to the world and to your family and to yourself.

Oedipus: You're even blinder than I thought. You can't hurt me or anyone who sees the light of day.

Teiresias: That's right. I'm not the one who's going to hurt you. I'll leave that to the gods.

Oedipus: Tell me, who put you up to this? Was it Creon?

Teiresias: Creon? No, I'm just telling the truth. You'll get what's coming to you.

Oedipus: Uh huh. Money, power, respect. Now I see Creon's just a hater. I thought I could trust him, thought he had my back. But he was just hatin' on everything that's mine.

So he brings in this fake palm reader from the psychic hotline, this Miss Cleo wannabe. Tell me, have you ever once got it right? You don't know who's going to win the game until the buzzer sounds.

Who saved this town from the Sphinx? You and your fortune cookies couldn't solve the riddle. But then I came along, and I figured out what no one else could. And I didn't need a crystal ball to help me.

And you think you can bring me down? So you can get in with Creon when he's king? Well you and your man Creon will suffer for this.

Choragos: Don't get so mad, Oedipus. He's just angry, and you are too. We don't need any more fighting. We just want to do what's right for our city.

Teiresias: Yeah, you're the king. But I'm the one who knows what's going on. I don't need Creon to speak for me when I have Apollo on speed dial.

Listen up. Go ahead, make fun of my blindness. But you're the one who's blind, even with two good eyes. You can't see how sick your whole life is. You don't know whose house you're living in, or who you're living with. Who's your father? Who's your mother? Do you even know? What have you done to them?

One of these days, and it's gonna be soon, your parents' curse will strike you. You'll wish you never had eyes to see the evil you've done. So go ahead and curse Creon. Curse me, too. I'm just glad I'm not you.

Oedipus: Don't you talk about my parents! Wait a minute, who do you think my parents are?

Teiresias: Today you'll know your father, and it will crush you.

Oedipus: Don't talk to me in riddles. What are you trying to say?

Teiresias: I thought you were supposed to be so good at solving riddles.

Oedipus: That's how I saved this town.

Teiresias: Too bad it can't save you. You think the man who killed Laios is a stranger, but soon you'll find out it's someone you know very well. Someone who's not blind yet, a homeless street person who's still rich. Someone whose kids will call him brother, and his wife will call him son. Go think it over, and if I'm wrong then you can say I didn't predict the future. I'm outta here.

Ode I (what's really going on)

The Corinthian crystal of forevisions ponders the ancient king killing

and a calm, bloody palm.

That butcher=s departure time has arrived.  
He must be more powerful than the fiasco  
of the night sky without stars, for Daedalus,  
armed with Icarus= mechanical wings,  
gracefully flits to King Midas= castle.  
And the nymphs follow the hopeless, hopeless nymphs.  
Alas, Olympus, to the zenith.  
Leers and glares are the least of his worries--  
It is a fact that he will not rest until his demise is in effect.  
Like a demonic worm in hell, released to feed  
upon the flesh of wicked earthlings,  
catastrophic death compels him, but  
his sprawling can=t evade destiny.  
For the earth=s conscience calls him empty,  
and the nymphs follow the hopeless nymphs.  
But now the more absurd has come  
from the keen-eared elder who can read your fate  
with the simple shake of a tail feather.  
As free as a fallen leaf, my soul floats,  
but can=t find stability in this quarrel,  
or any reason for embracing tranquility.  
Oh exhausted Jesus with perfect SAT scores,  
with the knowhow to give his own night courses...  
For the parasite of knowledge needs a new host.

## Scene II

Creon: Gentlemen, I have been notified that I am being accused of Laios' death. These accusations come from Oedipus, but I'm not going to sit here and take it. He's gonna blame me for anything that goes wrong now. But I'm not going to be disrespected.

Now, it's probably just gossip, probably private--forget I said anything--but the fact is people don't trust me now.

Choragos: He didn't mean it. He was just upset.

Creon: I know you heard him say I did it. Like someone conned the old man into lying. Maybe it was blackmail.

Choragos: I don't know. I don't know about other people, but Oedipus is here himself.

Oedipus: Back again? Why? That's rude of you to come into my crib, you killer. Did you think I don't know you've been planning to kill me, trying to take my place. Do you think I'm a punk? Do I look like a dummy? I get your game now. You're a fool, that's what you are. You can win my place in this city or you can buy it. But a low-life like you can't do either.

Creon: Are you done? Let me explain. You won't understand until you listen.

Oedipus: I find it hard to listen to a person I don't trust. I don't take advice from my enemies.

Creon: Above all, I have to disagree.

Oedipus: I don't want to hear your lies.

Creon: You can't get anything by being stubborn. If you think you can, then you're wrong.

Oedipus: No one can betray their own people and not get dealt with. Kill you lies.

Creon: For real, what did I do to you? You can't buy the hype. Don't believe everything.

Oedipus: You're the one that told me to go get the fortune teller.

Creon: Right. I did. I'd do it again, too.

Oedipus: Okay, so tell me, how long has it been since Laios--

Creon: What about Laios?

Oedipus: Since he disappeared. Remember?

Creon: That was a long time ago.

Oedipus: Was Teiresias working here then?



Creon: He was, and he was good, too.

Oedipus: What did he say about me then? Was I mentioned?

Creon: Not that I know of. If he did I wasn't there.

Oedipus: Didn't you investigate?

Creon: Yeah, we did, but we didn't find out anything.

Oedipus: Why didn't he accuse me? If he says it now, why didn't he say it then?

Creon: I don't know. I'm the type of person who minds his own business. Especially when I don't have anything to go on.

Oedipus: There is something you know, but can you tell it?

Creon: What are you talking about? If I know, then why can't you know?

Oedipus: If the old man wasn't in on it with you, then he wouldn't have said I killed Laios.

Creon: You're making too big a deal out of it. Now, I have some questions for you.

Oedipus: Go ahead. I never killed anyone.

Creon: Answer this: You married my sister. Why?

Oedipus: Yeah, I married your sister.

Creon: And the two of you run things together?

Oedipus: I give her everything she wants.

Creon: So I just follow both of you?

Oedipus: You are no friend.

Creon: No! Listen! I wouldn't want that type of power. All it comes with is stress. No sleep. I don't want power. I already have all the rights that come with it. Why would I want to be in charge, when I can already get my way with no responsibilities? And why would you want to treat your friends like this when you already have enough enemies?

Choragos: That's a good point. That's something a smart man would think about.

Oedipus: What do you want me to do? Just sit here and watch while he takes everything I have?

Creon: So what do you want me to do? Leave town?

Oedipus: No, I want you dead, so people can see what happens to backstabbers.

Creon: You still don't believe me?

Oedipus: Why should I?

Creon: Then you're a fool.

Oedipus: And you're just pure evil.

Creon: What if you're wrong?

Oedipus: I'm still in charge.

Choragos: Chill out, both of you. Here comes Jocasta, and you're lucky she's here. She can talk some sense into you both.

Jocasta: Oh you stupid little boys. What's up with all this noise? Aren't things bad enough in this town without you two beefing over every little thing?

(To Oedipus) Come on in the house. And you, Creon, go on home now. We don't need any more of this drama about nothing.

Creon: Nothing? Listen, sister, your husband wants me out of town or either dead.

Oedipus: That's right, baby. Cuz I just caught him planning to kill me.

Choragos: Oh please, you two. Just listen to Jocasta, and do what she says.

Oedipus: What do you want me to do?

Choragos: You better respect my man Creon's word. He's never been a fool and he's never lied to you. Now he swears he's telling the truth.

Oedipus: Keep talking.

Choragos: He's been a true friend to you. It's not right for you to turn on him all of a sudden, and with no proof.

Oedipus: Don't you see? What you say means I'm a dead man.

Choragos: Man, I swear on Helios, my right hand man. And let me die alone in the middle of nowhere. Don't take what I said to heart. I'm just tired of my friends dying. Do I have to deal with all this plague and your madness too?

Oedipus: Then you better let him go. And let me die if you wanna be so pressed, or be chased out of town like a sucka. And Creon, do what you do. For you, lies will follow you everywhere.

Creon: You give up just as ugly as you fight. You're just making yourself mad.

Oedipus: Man, just go. Leave me alone, hear?

Creon: Okay. You don't know me, but the people in the street know me. They know I'm for real.

Choragos: Jocasta, didn't you just ask the king to go inside?

Jocasta: First, tell me what's going on.

Choragos: Everyone's accusing everyone else, and no one has any proof.

Jocasta: But what are they saying?

Choragos: Oh just forget about it and let it rest. We've all suffered enough.

Jocasta: Oedipus, I'm your wife. Tell me why you're so upset.

Oedipus: Okay, I'll tell you. I don't trust any of these men the way I trust you. It's Creon. He's out to get me.

Jocasta: Keep going. Try to explain it to me.

Oedipus: He says I killed Laios.

Jocasta: Does he have proof, or is he just running his mouth?

Oedipus: He didn't come right out and say it. He got the old fortune teller to say it for him.

Jocasta: Don't worry about it then. No fake psychic can tell you anything you don't already know. And I have proof--here's what happened to me.

The oracle once told Laios that his own son would kill him. Now, you've heard what happened: Laios was jumped by a gang of thugs out in the street, over by where three roads come together. But that son was only three days old when the king tied up the baby's feet and left him to die in the mountains.

So that child never murdered his father, and Laios didn't get killed by his son. The oracle was wrong. Nothing happened like he said it would. So don't be afraid of prophecies and fortune tellers and oracles. Only God knows what will happen.

Oedipus: That's weird. I had a flash of a memory while you were talking. It shook me up.

Jocasta: What kind of memory? What do you mean?

Oedipus: You just said Laios was killed where three roads meet.

Jocasta: That's what I heard. That's all I know.

Oedipus: Where was all this?

Jocasta: Somewhere out in Maryland. Near the traffic light at Phokis.

Oedipus: When?

Jocasta: Let's see... It was right before you came here. Just before you became king.

Oedipus: Oh, what kind of mess is this?

Jocasta: What's the matter? Why does that bother you?

Oedipus: Wait. Don't ask me that yet. What did Laios look like like? How old was he, anyhow?

Jocasta: Well, he was tall, had a little gray in his hair. Matter of fact, he kind of favored you a little.

Oedipus: Oh Lord, did I mess up. I can't believe I'm so ignorant.

Jocasta: What are you talking about? You're scaring me, baby.

Oedipus: It looks like the old blind man can see better than I thought. But, can you answer me one more question?

Jocasta: You know I will, but I'm afraid to hear what it is.

Oedipus: Was anyone riding with the King? Did he have his crew with him, like a big man's supposed to?

Jocasta: He had five homies with him—one was an m.c. They were all in his Escalade, and he was driving.

Oedipus: Well, that pretty much settles it. But how'd you find all this out? Who told you?

Jocasta: One of his boys. The only one to make it home alive.

Oedipus: Does he still hang around here?

Jocasta: Naw, when he got back and saw you hanging round Laios' crib, in charge of all his business, he begged me to help him get out of the hood. He wanted to go way out to Northwest, where only shepherds go, as far away from here as he could get. I helped him go, too. I figured I owed him that much.

Oedipus: Do you have his phone number? Can you get him back here?

Jocasta: He's in my book, if the number's still good. Why?

Oedipus: I've figured too much of this out by myself. I want to hear it from the eyewitness.

Jocasta: Then I'll call him, and he'll come. But I'm your wife. Why can't you tell me what it is you're scared of?

Oedipus: Okay, you've got a right to know. I can't hold nothing back from my boo. Especially now, when I'm in the middle of something that feels like it's getting worse and worse. Who else can I tell.

My daddy was Ploybos of Corinth, and my mama was Merope. I was a big shot back in Corinth, got much respect, until something weird happened. One night at a big block party, some drunk fool running his mouth said Polybus wasn't my real daddy. I didn't say nothing then, but I asked my parents the next day, and they went off. Said not to listen to worthless gossip and lies. But it stayed in my mind anyhow.

So I called up the oracle on the psychic hotline, but Miss Cleo wouldn't answer my question. She wanted to talk about a bunch of mess that sounded like Jerry Springer and Jenny Jones put together. About how I would have a whole rack of kids by my mother and I would murder my dad.

So I got out of town. Haven't been back to Corinth since then. I just wanted to get as far away from my home and that awful curse as I could go. And then I wound up here.

Jocasta: Stop it. I don't want to hear any more.

Oedipus: Oh no, you know the rest. I was stopped at a red light where three roads meet. This big black Escalade came up behind me and tapped my bumper. Nothing big, but he shouldn't have done it. I got out and said he'd better have insurance, but he sucker-punched me, just like that. Well, then it was payback time. I pulled him out of that SUV and went up one side of his face and down the other. Then all those thugs piled out, and I had teach them a lesson, too. Killed every last one of them before I was done.

Jocasta: Oh, my lord.

Oedipus: Don't you see? Could that stranger be Laios? That means I'm the one who brought this horrible curse on our city. I'm the one who killed your husband. I'm ten times as evil as all of death row put together. I have to leave D.C., but I can't go back to Corinth either, or I might risk killing my own father and marrying my mom. What kind of horrors does fate have in store for me? How could my destiny be so messed up?

Choragos: This does sound bad, dawg, but there's still hope. Wait til you hear what the shepherd has to say.

Oedipus: You're right, but it's the only hope I have left.

Jocasta: What are hoping he'll say?

Oedipus: I'm hoping he'll say what you said. You said Laios was killed by a gang, and I was traveling solo. If he says it was a gang, then I'm good. But if he says it was one man, then I'm in a whole world of trouble.

Jocasta: Look, I'm sure he said it was a gang. I remember clear as day. But what if he doesn't remember what he said. You know how people mix things up after a few years. Still, the oracle said Laios would be killed by his own son, and that is surely not what happened. My baby was supposed to kill Laios, but it was my poor baby that died first. So just forget it. Don't waste your time worrying about what any old psychic tells you. His prophecies are no more real than Dracula and Freddy Krueger.

Oedipus: Maybe you're right. But let's just get that shepherd here. I want to hear it from him.

Jocasta: I'll call him up. You're my man, and I'll do things your way. Especially this.

Ode II (Treachery in the Air)

Let me be positive in all ways,

but why are all the yellow brick roads I trot belittled?

Let a single word maintain the composure of the multiverse,

from the highest mountain plummeted on down,

for heaven is their remedy tool.

Those ages of the realms of ivory, never of the mortal kind were they begot,

nor are they prisoners of the past, lost in slumber.

Their father is a class above time, and ages not.

The king is a product of ego who rejuvenates his body

with his great poisonous cup of irresponsibility and conceitedness.

And way up from his state of mind, he plummets at unmeasurable speeds.

He plummets into the fog of debris from all the abandoned hope.

That bold man is not bold, but let no just dream be declined.

May God protect the warrior of the town.

In government, in persuasive policy, who will tremble

when his name is mentioned, and on his decree wait?

Sarcasm and the high palm of excessive hate.

Temptation and felony are God's holy law,

and any mortal who dares to grasp no mortal ability in amazement

will be caught up in the web of torment,

heir to the throne for which his sweet talk is sold.

Let each man take due earnings then, and avoid his all holy things,

and from sinning in the worst way, let him stand apart.

Else the crackling blast of heaven blows on his head

and though the gullible will honor impious men,

in their countries no catastrophic artist sings.

But shall we lose our belief that something good is going to happen in Delphi's mysteries?

We who have head the zephyrs of the earth.

Invalidated, and the ancient metaphor of God that's so last season.

The duties and the eerie visions must make simple routine, so Lord,

if you're so big and bad incandescent on the throne above all, riddle me this.

Their minds don't ponder the two horses of Apollo's chariot,

and their respect is not the first thing on their minds.

Scene III

Jocasta: People of Washington, big ole rollers of Thebes, ladies and gentlemen down 'round the block, it has occurred to me to drown myself in prayer, but the gods are holding up this air freshener as a gift, as some kind of cruel symbol. Our father, our king, our Oedipus, is not himself. His noble soul is crazy with fantasies of peril, catastrophic dreams, or else he'd look at these new prophecies in light of the old. Right now, what with the state he's in, he'll listen to any fool gossip who talks dread, and speaks fear. He ain't about to listen to us good people. That goes for you, and that goes double for me. Lord, I pray to you, help our king. He's lost like a sailor at sea.

Messenger: Son, can you show the way to 1623, the home of Oedipus or better yet, just tell me where he is.

Choragos: Son, this is the place, he's inside, this is his girl.

Messenger: I wish her happiness in this house, blessed in all the fulfillment of her marriage.

Jocasta: Why you here? What you got to say to us?

Messenger: I have good news for you and your husband only.

Jocasta: What news you bring?

Messenger: It's good news for you, but there is some grief in it.

Jocasta: What is it? How can it be good and bad?

Messenger: Word around here is that somebody was gonna kill Oedipus to be king, Joe.

Jocasta: Go to your master now. The man who Oedipus feared and ran from instead of killing—he's dead, dead by another's hand.

Oedipus: Joe, you sent Antigone to get me? What's up?

Jocasta: Listen to what this man has to say.

Oedipus: Who is he and what does he have to say?

Jocasta: He came from Corinth to tell you about death.

Oedipus: Is that right?

Messenger: I can't say it any plainer: the king is dead. The king of Corinth is dead.

Oedipus: Was he killed or was it his old heart?

Messenger: Little things put old men to rest.

Oedipus: Ok. Now I know. So he was sick. But why would that old man go around telling lies that don't have no way of coming true? I can't believe people thought I would kill my father. Now I have left my home, and you come and give this news of my father's departure from this godforsaken earth, and if for one second, anybody thinks I touched him, they're wrong.

Jocasta: Didn't I tell you, baby?

Oedipus: You did. It was my heart that stopped me from believing you.

Jocasta: From now on, think of those words the way you think of about American Idol: whatever.

Oedipus: Huh! Still...shouldn't I fear my mother's bed?



Jocasta: Why should me, myself and I be afraid, since fate rules us and nothing can be foreseen? Like me, you should live only for the present day. Don't have no more worries about all this family past business. How many men have had crazy dreams!

Oedipus: True. But if only my mother were still alive.

Jocasta: But you don't need to check on that anymore, like I said man—your father's death is the best news in the world right now.

Oedipus: Yeah, and like I said, I hear you—I fear the living woman.

Messenger: Dag. Who's that?

Oedipus: Merope. My mom.

Messenger: Come on! How come?

Oedipus: Just something the gods told me, something men of God told me, I mean. At least everybody believes they're men of God.

Messenger: We gonna talk about this or what?

Oedipus: I know what you wanna know, and I'll tell you. Miss Cleo said I would marry my mother and kill my father.

Messenger: And this is why you ran from Corinth?

Oedipus: Would you have me kill my father?

Messenger: Have you listened to the news I gave you?

Oedipus: I'd pay to hear it again!

Messenger: I knew it, so I'll tell you man—I thought I could get some green from you, but I guess not.

Oedipus: Forget it. I'll never go near my parents again.

Messenger: Son, you still don't know what you're doing.

Oedipus: What is you talking about? In the name of Jesus tell me what's going on!

Messenger: Why are you so scared of going home?

Oedipus: [pause] I'm just scared. I'm scared to go back where I'm from.

Messenger: But scared of what? Why?

Oedipus: I'm afraid the oracle is right.

Messenger: And hell will unleash itself on you through your parents, huh.

Oedipus: That's the weight that's always in my heart.

Messenger: But can't you see there's no gravity among these facts?

Oedipus: How can you say that? They my folks, right?

Messenger: I don't know how to tell you this, so I guess I'll just let the words say it themselves: Polybos was not your father.

Oedipus: You gotta be kidding me.

Messenger: He's no more your pop than I am.

Oedipus: So why did he call me his son?

Messenger: Because I'd given you to him as a gift.

Oedipus: How did he love me so deeply if I wasn't really his? It's like our love was flesh and blood.

Messenger: He didn't have any of his own until you.

Oedipus: How about you? What, did you just bump into me along the way?

Messenger: I found you at the crooked intersection of Kithairon.

Oedipus: What were you doing around there?

Messenger: Looking for my sheep.

Oedipus: Lazy, sheep-losing shepherd?

Messenger: Saved your newborn tail that day, boy.

Oedipus: Saved me from what?

Messenger: One foot in front of the other, but you so blind you can't even see those two feet. Look at your ankles, man.

Oedipus: Now why you wanna bring that up again?

Messenger: I'm the one that set you free—I cut the rope that tied you.

Oedipus: I've had these birthmarks since I can remember.

Messenger: And that's why you've got the name that means "swollen foot".

Oedipus: I can't believe them two! Which one was it, my mother or my father?

Messenger: I don't know man, I got you from some guy who can probably tell you more than I can.

Oedipus: Oh, so now you didn't find me?

Messenger: I was a shepherd or—I think he was in the market—no—he was a shepherd too and...

Oedipus: Stop! Slow down! Enough of all these triflin' stories. Ok, who was he and can he tell me what I need to know.

Messenger: He was with the old king. I think he was one of his people.

Oedipus: You mean old king Laios?

Messenger: That's him—this guy was one of his men.

Oedipus: Is he still around? Can I see him?

Messenger: These young'ins here might know.

Oedipus: Do anybody here know what this guy's talking about? Seen this shepherd man around the block? Bus stop, train station? Downtown?

Choragos: I think the man he means is that same shepherd you've already asked to see. Jocasta might be able to tell you something.

Oedipus: What kind of fool runaround are you people giving me? Anybody care what I'm after? My own past and our future? Woman, is this the man we asked for that's already on his way?

Jocasta: Just forget about all of this, it's not good for you.

Oedipus: How can you say this when my true birth is at stake?

Jocasta: Just stop asking questions!

Oedipus: Don't you worry.

Jocasta: Stop this now.

Oedipus: I won't listen to you no more. I'm not hearin' it. I gotta know the truth, that's all I'm after now.

Jocasta: I say this for your sake only, it's all for your own good.

Oedipus: My own good? Please. All this stuff, all my life for my sake, and all it is is hurt. If this is for me, I don't want it.

Jocasta: You're wrong as sudden death. I hope you don't ever find out who you are.

Oedipus: One of you all go get that man. I got some questions and he's gonna give me the answers.

Jocasta: You are wrong and that's all there is to it. If you don't wanna listen, you ain't gonna listen, and I ain't gonna rail at you no more. Hard-headed men never change. I'm through (exits quietly).

Choragos: Why'd she leave so eerie-like? Something's not right. I don't like this.

Oedipus: Let it come. The truth must be known, and it's gonna come no matter where I come from. Maybe the queen is ashamed of the truth, but I'm not. I faced the storm before. Bring it on.

Ode III (input of the past)

If the arrival of time were discovered by my cardiovascular thoughts,

Lord now by Heaven I see the torches at the Unifest of the next equinox,

and see the choreography, and hear the choir generate stable biwaves

to form appeasing harmonies in tribute to your soft shadow.

Taxicab where our mighty king was found, O taxicab protector or a noble race,

may the entity who hears us grant his balm, and let his glory come to pass

for our king's rose-petalled ground.

Of the cursed that flower beyond the years, who don't appease you, oh exhausted one,

to Aphrodite of love, frozen in satisfaction where the upland clears

or disposed as dusk's fog. Great Apollo, roamer of unbearably blue temperatures,

was it he who was the first to gaze upon you? Who engulfed you in his human tentacles

from the sweet god-ravisher and who was entertained by our endless trials of torment.

But not all eyes are worthy of time's pupil. Even with a cataract they don't measure up.

All acts have just consequences around these parts.

Offspring by Laios, blessed to death, then blessed to be deprived of that death,  
would God you never embraced, and nourished his lungs with polluted air, contaminated,  
dirty air that my faulty lips accept to weep.

For I cry earth's enigmas.

I was unable to see, and now I understand,  
slumbering, for we breathed easily with content to Corinth,  
while the decades of deception weren't counted.

Scene IV

Oedipus: Yo, I don't know the guy, but I think I see him coming, this shepherd we want. He's old, like this guy here.

Choragos: That's him, I recognize him—and it's true, he was Laios' man. You can believe what he says.

Oedipus: Messenger, is this the same guy we were just talking about?

Messenger: That's him.

Oedipus [to Shepherd]: Come here, look at me and answer every question I ask. You worked for Laios?

Shepherd: Yes, since I was a kid.

Oedipus: What'd you do for him?

Shepherd: All kinds of stuff, but I eventually became his chauffer.

Oedipus: Where all did you drive him around?

Shepherd: Mostly round here, up by Kithairon sometimes, but I'd also make deliveries for him occasionally, all over the place really.

Oedipus: Ever see this guy around on your deliveries?

Shepherd: Who, him?

Oedipus: Yeah, who else? Him!

Shepherd: Nope. Least not that I remember.

Messenger: Now that's kinda off, mister, but I'll remind him. You remember that summer we did all that secret business for our bosses between the two of us? We saw each other practically every day that summer, have a drink sometimes. We never knew each other's names, but we hung for awhile. Now, how about that old boy—any of that sound familiar?

Shepherd: Yes, yes—but that was a long time ago.

Messenger: And you remember one of those "deliveries". A kid.

Shepherd: What are you talking about? We did a lot of quiet jobs, but that wasn't our business to question it.

Messenger: Oedipus was that kid.

Shepherd: You better shut your mouth.

Oedipus: No more keeping quiet old fella. It's you who needs to be careful, not this man.

Shepherd: My King, my Master, what have I done wrong?

Oedipus: You never answered the question about the boy.

Shepherd: This old guy don't know—he's senile—he's just telling old delusional stories, might as well be talking to himself while stomping around the streets...

Oedipus: You better speak straight or I'll make your neck crooked.

Shepherd: For God's sake, don't torture an old man!

Oedipus: Don't torture a young one. Come here fellas, tie this mouse up.

Shepherd: Middle-aged curmudgeon, what else you wanna know?

Oedipus: You know what we wanna know! Did you give this man a boy!

Shepherd: I did. And I wish I'd died that day, either right before or right after I did my job. I was only doing my job...

Oedipus: You'll die now unless you speak the truth.

Shepherd: But if I speak the truth, it'll bring death anyway.

Oedipus: Arrright, have it your way, you wanna keep playing, give it to him fellas—

Shepherd: I told you I gave him the boy!

Oedipus: And where'd you get that boy from? Your house? Somewhere else? Speak up!

Shepherd: A man gave him to me.

Oedipus: Is he here? Do you know who he worked for?

Shepherd: God Almighty, don't make me reveal anymore of this terror—

Oedipus: I gotta ask you another question and I'll cut that wrinkled old throat of yours myself.

Shepherd: Mercy on my soul. The boy was from Laios' place, ok? He was from Laios' place.

Oedipus: Just some neighbor or friend of the family's, or part of the family?

Shepherd: Forgive me...help me...what I gotta say's a death sentence for somebody...

Oedipus: Death for somebody, but truth forever and all, so I gotta hear it, you better spit it out!

Shepherd: You have to know, huh? They say it was Laios' kid. But it's your wife who can be sure for you.

Oedipus: My wife! Joe? She gave the baby to you?

Shepherd: My lord, she did.

Oedipus: Do you know why?

Shepherd: I was just told to get rid of it.

Oedipus: Some mother.

Shepherd: There were prophecies...stories...

Oedipus: Then tell me one.

Shepherd: It said the boy would slay his father.

Oedipus: Then why'd you give him to this old man, and make him someone's son?

Shepherd: I felt sorry for the baby, my King, and I thought that if the baby's own family wouldn't take care of him, maybe another family would—maybe they would give him a home. And they did save him, but for what? Cuz if you are who this man says you are, ain't nobody wants to be in your shoes, or have their heart in your soul.

Oedipus: Oh my God, it's true. All those prophecies. Now, O Light, may you finally show me the truth, and may it be the last truth I behold. I am Oedipus, cursed in my birth, cursed in my marriage, cursed in the blood I spilled with my own hand!

Ode IV

Oh, for man's offspring. How much higher are these generations exalted  
that inhale and exhale in the desolate labyrinths of fiasco  
and exist and do not exist simultaneously. Who wields the weight of happiness  
than bands of Aurora beams in altering looks. Or who will cause his thought to remain  
in that state of mind while time candidly passes us by. You're so last season.  
O bare lash of treachery and leaks of disdain. I who bore your catastrophic reign  
consider every man shunned. Like remnants of starlight, your great days cease.  
That cerebrum was a brute spear penetrating all dimensions.  
Far down, how far down you dug them, forceful pitcher,  
at a baffling distance, and handed oh sacred praise down.  
You overcame the enigmas, the untouched wit,  
her clinching, barbaric obsidian blades.  
And though death could blow, you held position like a skyscraper  
to make pale Corinth take heart.  
Veil against our agony.  
Worthy ruler, granter of decrees, omnipotent Oedipus!  
No prince in Corinth was ever so reknowned,  
no prince ever earned such grace and authority.  
And yet, out of all men, the most scornful biography is this man's.  
His gains are gone as soon as he gets them,  
he is an empty soul with no hope, dwelling in the States of Peril,  
fallen to the ranting state of a nymph's condemned life.  
O Oedipus, most exalted one!  
The great gate that guided you to the dawn-given light,



guided you to your dawn-given power,

as provider of the household, as legitimate Son.

All the puzzles of these generations were solved too late.

How could the queen who was Laios' victory,

the blossom that he manipulated as his latitude,

be humble when the verb was validated?

Exodos

Messenger: People of DC, most respected in the city, this is hard to hear and hard to say too. This house is contaminated with the blood of men. Suicide has made its absence felt. Not even the Anacostia and Potomac combined could purify this. Evil is not done naturally, but is premeditated. The greatest griefs are those we cause ourselves.

Choragos: Son what news do you have for us now? It can't get any worse—what else could go wrong?

Messenger: She is dead.

Chorus: No.

Choragos: Hold on!

Messenger: Jocasta.

Chorus: Aww man [crying]. My queen, my queen. What have you done? Who did it? We gonna squad up on 'em, watch!

Messenger: She did it to herself. The full horror of this you can't realize. I saw everything, but I can only give it to you through my own eyes. You still wanna hear this?

Chorus: Yes.

Messenger: You won't guess what she did when she left. She went up to her apartment on the top floor of the high rise. She had her hands in her hair so you couldn't tell her fingers from her braids, her knuckles from the knots.

Second Messenger: We followed her into her place, trying to console her, get her to acknowledge our presence, but she locked herself in the bedroom.

First Messenger: We heard her tear the sheets off her bed, the same one where Oedipus was made, and she called upon Laios, the ghost of a ghost by now, and she moaned a river of

plangent sound for the sins of her love and rule: a husband by her husband, children by her child.

Second Messenger: We were shocked into stillness by that scream.

First Messenger: Then Oedipus busted in looking like he was on drugs, running around the place like he couldn't figure out she was in the bedroom. He was rummaging through the kitchen for knives, tearing through the closets for a cane or a bat or anything to take out his hurt with, but you know how bare that apartment's been the last couple of days—it's like everything's been gotten rid of.

Second Messenger: He was cussing the whole way, the whole time, and I ain't gonna repeat it cuz I couldn't hardly believe it anyway, he was speaking in tongues or something—it was like the devil's language, but he was cussing his wife, his father, his mother, his parents' child, his own children, cursing himself for mixing up all these roles to all these different people. But finally he realized she was in the bedroom and he kicked that door in like it was a kleenex. And there she was.

First Messenger: Hanging right there in front of us, swaying from some sheets she tied to the ceiling fan.

Second Messenger: Oedipus got all still, but then he climbed up and got her down, with tears slowly sliding down his cheeks, but not a sound from his throat.

First Messenger: I ain't never seen nothing like this before—in a nightmare or on the nightly news—but he was holding her dead body, and rubbing her hands, and you know how she had them long old nails she took crazy care of? He starting scratching her hands all over his face, and finally just grabbed two of the pins from her hair, raised them high up in the air, stared at them as we stared at him, and plunged them straight down into his own eyeballs.

Second Messenger: He was crying, and hollering "No more, no more, no more! No more of this you gonna see! All this misery you made and never knew an ounce! Go on into oblivion's guts! Go on into darkness's ocean!"

First Messenger: While he was saying all this, he just kept slamming into his eyes, bam, bam, with blood just gushing out like thick sobs, a black cloud spewing red hail from a ruined sky.

Second Messenger: This place used to be pretty happy, but where is that now? Nowhere. Just moans of lament—and it all belongs to those we looked up to. This kingdom of glory is now a kingdom of self-deceptive, self-destructive hurricanes.

Choragos: How is Oedipus? Has the storm subsided?

First Messenger: The worst is past but he's in bad shape. We can't do anything for him. He's done. Here he comes now.

Choragos: Oedipus, old boy.

Oedipus: Oedipus...

Choragos: I don't know if I feel fear or compassion. Is there anything we can do?

Oedipus: I've done enough. I've done more than enough, sweet Jesus, good Lord in heaven, and now there's no hell greater than what I've created in my own little corner of the earth. My voice, my heart, my mind—they're like the thunder that barely bubbles underneath the horizon before a summer storm. What has heaven made for me?

Choragos: What has heaven made for you, or what have you made of heaven?

Oedipus: Black clouds in daytime, sunrise at midnight, this is the plague I've made, this is the plague my ignorance craved. This flood of remorse, and no dry land in sight.

Messenger: Pain times pain...

Second Messenger: ...is pain squared man.

Choragos: But how could you do what you did to your eyeballs? What devil, what god, what twisted part of your subconscious rose up with knives and eased them through your eyes? How could you pour tar into the clear streams of your eyes?

Oedipus: Apollo, Apollo, Apollo. Sweet city-kin, the god was Apollo, but that chariot of his didn't haul the sun across the sky, it hauled hell straight through my mind, so I could understand a stitch of what my life was weaving itself into. When the god finally gave me sight, how could I stand to look? Not when every inch of my vision is horror...

Choragos: I guess that's right.

Messengers: Horror, all horror.

Chorus: What now?

Oedipus: If only I'd died when I was a teenager, leaving my home, or what I thought was my home. No more of this would've happened. If I'd never come here to where I found fame, I wouldn't have my father's blood on my hands, or my mother's children for my own.

Choragos: Nothing we can say or do for you. I hate to say it, but you might be right—death is better than this. Murky ignorance is better than this blinding knowledge.

Oedipus: Enough, y'all. I'm through, and now I've got to go, exiled as I said the killer of Laios must be exiled. That's me.

Second Messenger: We can't be the ones to send you out, only Creon can do that. He's the only man near your stature left around here for us to hold onto. Let's see what he says first.

Oedipus: I wouldn't blame him if he just knocked me out, the way I talked to him. I didn't know jack, and I couldn't ask his mercy—I don't deserve it.

Creon: Easy, Oedipus. I'm not here to savor your agony, or to shake my judging finger at you. All y'all over there, get him off the street. I don't care what you think about what's going on, but get him out of public and into private where he belongs. Ain't nobody deserves to have the world watching them suffer in blindness. Get him inside with his blood—it's only right for only family to see family in this kind of situation.

Oedipus: You're better to me than I was to you. If you're this merciful, please give me what I ask.

Creon: And what's that?

Oedipus: Kick me outta here, outta here to where my bad luck and bad decisions can't affect the city I've grown to love. I can't stand to do any more evil to where I come from.

Creon: Ok. I understand. I'd have done that before, but I didn't realize what was going on.

Oedipus: But the plague-bringer must be destroyed, and that's me. I am that evil man.

Creon: How can we go about this best?

Chorus: Yeah, how we gonna right this right?

Oedipus: Let me go back out Kithairon way and die the way my parents wanted me to when I was a baby. I submit to their will, even though it's ages later.

Creon: You got it. How about your kids?

Oedipus: Let my sons be; they'll be alright and can take care of themselves at their age, but the girls—they've never done anything on their own. Creon, take care of them for me. Can you do that?

Creon: I can.

Oedipus: And can you let me touch them one last time, so I can see them with my hands? Please just one last kiss with my hands...is that them I hear? Creon is merciful!

Creon: I know you love 'em, man, and you wouldn't have done any of this if you'd seen.

Oedipus: Come here, girls, dear, dear children—I swear us grown-ups don't know what we do sometimes. How can we? I'm the man who made you at the same fountain I was made, and I never knew the difference until today. I love you deep as the ocean, but I know that your lives will be pretty much loveless from now on. Who will marry you? Knowing how you were born, knowing who and what your father is? Any man who might begin to love you will find out that

your father has killed his father, and conceived you with his mother. And your lives will evaporate in childless dreaming.

Creon: Don't say that, Oedipus.

Oedipus: I have ruined your lives long before they've begun. All I can pray for is whatever happiness you can find, however you can find it. Please Lord, let these two children be happier than you have let me be!

Creon: Okay, come on. Let them go.

Oedipus: I know I have to, but it tears me up.

Creon: Time will pass, and the pain will dull. Let's do this.

Oedipus: I lived blind and now I deserve this. My love is dead. Send me from D.C. You didn't have much use for me before, and I'm only a curse to you now. Take me away.

Creon: Ok. Come on, let's go. But leave the kids here.

Oedipus: You can't take them!

Creon: Enough from you! If you're so remorseful for all this, take action and let go, instead of wailing on and on. This is it! Don't you think for a second that you're the boss around here anymore. Think about how you used to boss around this hood—well that's me now. You can go boss around in blind exile.

Choragos: People of DC, look toward Oedipus, big man that solved the most shadowed spiral of riddles. Power upon power, now bathed in sad eyes.

Chorus: No one look at him with joy. He's got to own up to what he's done, and so we have to own up to what we do, knowingly or not.

Choragos: Ruin swept over him like the surf over a hermit crab, sinking into wet sand. That's you and that's me, and that's each of us. Don't nobody think you got it good, until you're on your death bed, looking back over your life, and see that it's free of suffering.

Chorus: Now that would be a miracle.

Choragos: That would be the favor of the gods—a life without pain, a mind without torment.

**End**