



# **THE EUMENIDES**

**AESCHYLUS**

**Global Grey ebooks**

# THE EUMENIDES

BY  
AESCHYLUS

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*The Eumenides By Aeschylus.*

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**Chorus:**

From home to home we chase the matricide.

**Apollo:**

What? to avenge a wife who slays her lord?

**Chorus:**

That is not blood outpoured by kindred hands.

**Apollo:**

How darkly ye dishonour and annul  
The troth to which the high accomplisners,  
Hera and Zeus, do honour. Yea, and thus  
Is Aphrodite to dishonour cast,  
The queen of rapture unto mortal men.  
Know, that above the marriage-bed ordained  
For man and woman standeth Right as guard,  
Enhancing sanctity of troth-plight sworn;  
Therefore, if thou art placable to those  
Who have their consort slain, nor will'st to turn  
On them the eye of wrath, unjust art thou  
In hounding to his doom the man who slew  
His mother. Lo, I know thee full of wrath  
Against one deed, but all too placable  
Unto the other, minishing the crime.  
But in this cause shall Pallas guard the right.

**Chorus:**

Deem not my quest shall ever quit that man.

**Apollo:**

Follow then, make thee double toil in vain!

**Chorus:**

Think not by speech mine office to curtail.

**Apollo:**

None hast thou, that I would accept of thee!

**Chorus:**

Yea, high thine honour by the throne of Zeus:  
But I, drawn on by scent of mother's blood,  
Seek vengeance on this man and hound him down.

**Apollo:**

But I will stand beside him; 'tis for me  
To guard my suppliant: gods and men alike  
Do dread the curse of such an one betrayed,  
And in me Fear and Will say "Leave him not".

*Exeunt omnes*

*The scene changes to Athens. In the foreground, the Temple of Athena on the Acropolis; her statue stands in the centre; Orestes is seen dinging to it.*

**Orestes:**

Look on me, queen Athena; lo, I come  
By Loxias' behest; thou of thy grace

Receive me, driven of avenging powers--  
 Not now a red-hand slayer unannealed,  
 But with guilt fading, half-effaced, outworn  
 On many homes and paths of mortal men.  
 For to the limit of each land, each sea,  
 I roamed, obedient to Apollo's hest,  
 And come at last, O Goddess, to thy fane,  
 And clinging to thine image, bide my doom.

*Enter the Chorus of Furies, questing like hounds.*

**Chorus:**

Ho! clear is here the trace of him we seek:  
 Follow the track of blood, the silent sign!  
 Like to some hound that hunts a wounded fawn,  
 We snuff along the scent of dripping gore,  
 And inwardly we pant, for many a day  
 Toiling in chase that shall fordo the man;  
 For o'er and o'er the wide land have I ranged,  
 And o'er the wide sea, flying without wings,  
 Swift as a sail I pressed upon his track,  
 Who now hard by is crouching, well I wot,  
 For scent of mortal blood allures me here.  
 Follow, seek him--round and round  
 Scent and snuff and scan the ground,  
 Lest unharmed he slip away,  
 He who did his mother slay!  
 Hist--he is there! See him his arms entwine  
 Around the image of the maid divine--  
 Thus aided, for the deed he wrought  
 Unto the judgment wills he to be brought.

It may not be! a mother's blood, poured forth  
 Upon the stained earth,



None gathers up: it lies--bear witness, Hell!--  
 For aye indelible!  
 And thou who sheddest it shalt give thine own  
 That shedding to atone!  
 Yea, from thy living limbs I suck it out,  
 Red, clotted, gout by gout,--  
 A draught abhorred of men and gods; but I  
 Will drain it, suck thee dry;  
 Yea, I will waste thee living, nerve and vein;  
 Yea, for thy mother slain,  
 Will drag thee downward, there where thou shalt dree  
 The weird of agony!  
 And thou and whatso'er of men hath sinned--  
 Hath wronged or God, or friend,  
 Or parent,--learn ye how to all and each  
 The arm of doom can reach!  
 Sternly requiteth, in the world beneath,  
 The judgment-seat of Death;  
 Yea, Death, beholding every man's endeavour  
 Recordeth it for ever.

**Orestes:**

I, schooled in many miseries, have learnt  
 How many refuges of cleansing shrines  
 There be; I know when law alloweth speech  
 And when imposeth silence. Lo, I stand  
 Fixed now to speak, for he whose word is wise  
 Commands the same. Look, how the stain of blood  
 Is dull upon mine hand and wastes away,  
 And laved and lost therewith is the deep curse  
 Of matricide; for while the guilt was new,  
 'Twas banished from me at Apollo's hearth,  
 Atoned and purified by death of swine.  
 Long were my word if I should sum the tale,

How oft since then among my fellow-men  
 I stood and brought no curse. Time cleanses all--  
 Time, the coeval of all things that are.  
 Now from pure lips, in words of omen fair,  
 I call Athena, lady of this land,  
 To come, my champion: so, in aftertime,  
 She shall not fail of love and service deal,  
 Not won by war, from me and from my land  
 And all the folk of Argos, vowed to her.

Now, be she far away in Libyan land  
 Where flows from Triton's lake her natal wave,--  
 Stand she with planted feet, or in some hour  
 Of rest conceal them, champion of her friends  
 Where'er she be,--or whether o'er the plain  
 Phlegraean she look forth, as warrior bold--  
 I cry to her to come, where'er she be,  
 (And she, as goddess, from afar can hear,)  
 And aid and free me, set among my foes.

**Chorus:**

Thee not Apollo nor Athena's strength  
 Can save from perishing, a castaway  
 Amid the Lost, where no delight shall meet  
 Thy soul--a bloodless prey of nether powers,  
 A shadow among shadows. Answerest thou  
 Nothing? dost cast away my words with scorn,  
 Thou, prey prepared and dedicate to me?  
 Not as a victim slain upon the shrine,  
 But living shalt thou see thy flesh my food.  
 Hear now the binding chant that makes thee mine.

Weave the weird dance,--behold the hour  
 To utter forth the chant of hell,

Our sway among mankind to tell,  
 The guidance of our power.  
 Of Justice are we ministers,  
 And whosoe'er of men may stand  
 Lifting a pure unsullied hand,  
 That man no doom of ours incurs,  
 And walks thro' all his mortal path  
 Untouched by woe, unharmed by wrath.  
 But if, as yonder man, he hath  
 Blood on the hands he strives to hide,  
 We stand avengers at his side,  
 Decreeing, "Thou hast wronged the dead:  
 We are doom's witnesses to thee".  
 The price of blood, his hands have shed,  
 We wring from him; in life, in death,  
 Hard at his side are we!

Night, Mother Night, who brought me forth, a torment  
 To living men and dead,  
 Hear me, O hear! by Leto's stripling son  
 I am dishonourèd:  
 He hath ta'en from me him who cowers in refuge,  
 To me made consecrate,--  
 A rightful victim, him who slew his mother.  
 Given o'er to me and fate.

Hear the hymn of hell,  
 O'er the victim sounding,--  
 Chant of frenzy, chant of ill,  
 Sense and will confounding!  
 Round the soul entwining  
 Without lute or lyre--  
 Soul in madness pining,  
 Wasting as with fire!

Fate, all-pervading Fate, this service spun, commanding  
 That I should bide therein:  
 Whosoe'er of mortals, made perverse and lawless,  
 Is stained with blood of kin,  
 By his side are we, and hunt him ever onward,  
 Till to the Silent Land,  
 The realm of death, he cometh; neither yonder  
 In freedom shall he stand.

Hear the hymn of hell,  
 O'er the victim sounding,--  
 Chant of frenzy, chant of ill,  
 Sense and will confounding!  
 Round the soul entwining  
 Without lute or lyre--  
 Soul in madness pining,  
 Wasting as with fire!

When from womb of Night we sprang, on us this labour  
 Was laid and shall abide.  
 Gods immortal are ye, yet beware ye touch not  
 That which is our pride!  
 None may come beside us gathered round the blood feast--  
 For us no garments white  
 Gleam on a festal day; for us a darker fate is,  
 Another darker rite.  
 That is mine hour when falls an ancient line--  
 When in the household's heart  
 The god of blood doth slay by kindred hands,--  
 Then do we bear our part:  
 On him who slays we sweep with chasing cry:  
 Though he be triply strong,  
 We wear and waste him; blood atones for blood,  
 New pain for ancient wrong.











Then test the cause, judge and award the right.

**Athena:**

Will ye to me then this decision trust?

**Chorus:**

Yea, reverencing true child of worthy sire.

**Athena:** (*to Orestes*)

O man unknown, make thou thy plea in turn  
 Speak forth thy land, thy lineage, and thy woes;  
 Then, if thou canst, avert this bitter blame--  
 If, as I deem, in confidence of right  
 Thou sittest hard beside my holy place,  
 Clasping this statue, as Ixion sat,  
 A sacred suppliant for Zeus to cleanse,--  
 To all this answer me in words made plain.

**Orestes:**

O queen Athena, first from thy last words  
 Will I a great solicitude remove.  
 Not one blood-guilty am I; no foul stain  
 Clings to thine image from my clinging hand;  
 Whereof one potent proof I have to tell.  
 Lo, the law stands--"The slayer shall not plead,  
 Till by the hand of him who cleanses blood  
 A suckling creature's blood besprinkle him".  
 Long since have I this expiation done--  
 In many a home, slain beasts and running streams  
 Have cleansed me. Thus I speak away that fear.  
 Next, of my lineage quickly thou shalt learn:

An Argive am I, and right well thou know'st  
 My sire, that Agamemnon who arrayed  
 The fleet and them that went therein to war--  
 That chief with whom thy hand combined to crush  
 To an uncited heap what once was Troy;  
 That Agamemnon, when he homeward came,  
 Was brought unto no honourable death,  
 Slain by the dark-souled wife who brought me forth  
 To him,--enwound and slain in wily nets,  
 Blazoned with blood that in the laver ran.  
 And I, returning from an exiled youth,  
 Slew her, my mother--lo, it stands avowed!  
 With blood for blood avenging my loved sire;  
 And in this deed doth Loxias bear part,  
 Decreeing agonies, to goad my will,  
 Unless by me the guilty found their doom.  
 Do thou decide if right or wrong were done--  
 Thy dooming, whatsoe'er it be, contents me.

**Athena:**

Too mighty is this matter, whatsoe'er  
 Of mortals claims to judge hereof aright.  
 Yea, me, even me, eternal Right forbids  
 To judge the issues of blood-guilt, and wrath  
 That follows swift behind. This too gives pause,  
 That thou as one with all due rites performed  
 Dost come, unsinning, pure, unto my shrine.  
 Whate'er thou art, in this my city's name,  
 As uncondemned, I take thee to my side,--  
 Yet have these foes of thine such dues by fate,  
 I may not banish them: and if they fail,  
 O'erthrown in judgment of the cause, forthwith  
 Their anger's poison shall infect the land--  
 A dropping plague-spot of eternal ill.

Thus stand we with a woe on either hand:  
 Stay they, or go at my commandment forth,  
 Perplexity or pain must needs befall.  
 Yet, as on me Fate hath imposed the cause,  
 I choose unto me judges that shall be  
 An ordinance for ever, set to rule  
 The dues of blood-guilt, upon oath declared.  
 But ye, call forth your witness and your proof,  
 Words strong for justice, fortified by oath;  
 And I, whoe'er are truest in my town,  
 Them will I chose and bring, and straitly charge,  
 "Look on this cause, discriminating well,  
 And pledge your oath to utter nought of wrong.

*Exit Athena.*

**Chorus:**

Now are they all undone, the ancient laws,  
 If here the slayer's cause  
 Prevail; new wrong for ancient right shall be  
 If matricide go free.  
 Henceforth a deed like his by all shall stand,  
 Too ready to the hand:  
 Too oft shall parents in the aftertime  
 Rue and lament this crime,--  
 Taught, not in false imagining, to feel  
 Their children's thrusting steel:  
 No more the wrath, that erst on murder fell

From us, the queens of Hell.  
 Shall fall, no more our watching gaze impend--  
 Death shall smite unrestrained.

Henceforth shall one unto another cry

"Lo, they are stricken, lo, they fall and die  
 Around me!" and that other answers him,  
 "O thou that lookest that thy woes should cease,  
 Behold, with dark increase  
 They throng and press upon thee; yea, and dim  
 Is all the cure, and every comfort vain!"

Let none henceforth cry out, when falls the blow  
 Of sudden-smiting woe,  
 Cry out in sad reiterated strain  
 "O Justice, aid! aid, O ye thrones of Hell!"  
 So though a father or a mother wail  
 New-smitten by a son, it shall no more avail,  
 Since, overthrown by wrong, the fane of Justice fell!

Know, that a throne there is that may not pass away,  
 And one that sitteth on it--even Fear,  
 Searching with steadfast eyes man's inner soul:  
 Wisdom is child of pain, and born with many a tear;  
 But who henceforth,  
 What man of mortal men, what nation upon earth,  
 That holdeth nought in awe nor in the light  
 Of inner reverence, shall worship Right  
 As in the older day?

Praise not, O man, the life beyond control,  
 Nor that which bows unto a tyrant's sway.  
 Know that the middle way  
 Is dearest unto God, and they thereon who wend,  
 They shall achieve the end;  
 But they who wander or to left or right  
 Are sinners in his sight.  
 Take to thy heart this one, this soothfast word--  
 Of wantonness impiety is sire;  
 Only from calm control and sanity unstirred

Cometh true weal, the goal of every man's desire.

Yea, whatsoever befall, hold thou this word of mine:

"Bow down at Justice' shrine,

Turn thou thine eyes away from earthly lure,

Nor with a godless foot that altar spurn."

For as thou dost shall Fate do in return,

And the great doom is sure.

Therefore let each adore a parent's trust,

And each with loyalty revere the guest

That in his halls doth rest.

For whoso uncompelled doth follow what is just,

He ne'er shall be unblest;

Yea, never to the gulf of doom

That man shall come.

But he whose will is set against the gods,

Who treads beyond the law with foot impure,

Till o'er the wreck of Right confusion broods--

Know that for him, though now he sail secure,

The day of storm shall be; then shall he strive and fail,

Down from the shivered yard to furl the sail,

And call on Powers, that heed him nought, to save

And vainly wrestle with the whirling wave,

Hot was his heart with pride--

"I shall not fall", he cried.

But him with watching scorn

The god beholds, forlorn,

Tangled in toils of Fate beyond escape,

Hopeless of haven safe beyond the cape--

Till all his wealth and bliss of bygone day

Upon the reef of Rightful Doom is hurled,

And he is rapt away

Unwept, for ever, to the dead forgotten world.

*Re-enter Athena, with twelve Athenian citizens.*

**Athena:**

O herald, make proclaim, bid all men come.  
 Then let the shrill blast of the Tyrrhene trump,  
 Fulfilled with mortal breath, thro' the wide air  
 Peal a loud summons, bidding all men heed.  
 For, till my judges fill this judgment-seat,  
 Silence behoves,--that this whole city learn,  
 What for all time mine ordinance commands,  
 And these men, that the cause be judged aright.

*Apollo approaches.*

**Chorus:**

O king Apollo, rule what is thine own,  
 But in this thing what share pertains to thee?

**Apollo:**

First, as a witness come I, for this man  
 Is suppliant of mine by sacred right,  
 Guest of my holy hearth and cleansed by me  
 Of blood-guilt: then, to set me at his side  
 And in his cause bear part, as part I bore  
 Erst in his deed, whereby his mother fell.  
 Let whoso knoweth now announce the cause.

**Athena:** *(to the Chorus)*

'Tis I announce the cause--first speech be yours;  
 For rightfully shall they whose plaint is tried  
 Tell the tale first and set the matter clear.

**Chorus:**

Though we be many, brief shall be our tale.  
(*To Orestes*) Answer thou, setting word to match with  
word;  
And first avow--hast thou thy mother slain?

**Orestes:**

I slew her. I deny no word hereof.

**Chorus:**

Three falls decide the wrestle--this is one.

**Orestes:**

Thou vauntest thee--but o'er no final fall.

**Chorus:**

Yet must thou tell the manner of thy deed.

**Orestes:**

Drawn sword in hand, I gashed her neck. Tis told.

**Chorus:**

But by whose word, whose craft, wert thou impelled?

**Orestes:**

By oracles of him who here attests me.

**Chorus:**

The prophet-god bade thee thy mother slay?

**Orestes:**

Yea, and thro' him less ill I fared, till now.

**Chorus:**

If the vote grip thee, thou shalt change that word.

**Orestes:**

Strong is my hope; my buried sire shall aid.

**Chorus:**

Go to now, trust the dead, a matricide!

**Orestes:**

Yea, for in her combined two stains of sin.

**Chorus:**

How? speak this clearly to the judges' mind.

**Orestes:**

Slaying her husband, she did slay my sire.

**Chorus:**



Therefore thou livest; death assoils her deed.

**Orestes:**

Then while she lived why didst thou hunt her not?

**Chorus:**

She was not kin by blood to him she slew.

**Orestes:**

And I, am I by blood my mother's kin?

**Chorus:**

O cursed with murder's guilt, how else wert thou  
The burden of her womb? Dost thou forswear  
Thy mother's kinship, closest bond of love?

**Orestes:**

It is thine hour, Apollo--speak the law,  
Averting if this deed were justly done;  
For done it is, and clear and undenied.  
But if to thee this murder's cause seem right  
Or wrongful, speak--that I to these may tell.

**Apollo:**

To you, Athena's mighty council-court,  
Justly for justice will I plead, even I,  
The prophet-god, nor cheat you by one word.  
For never spake I from my prophet-seat

One word, of man, of woman, or of state,  
 Save what the Father of Olympian gods  
 Commanded unto me. I rede you then,  
 Bethink you of my plea, how strong it stands,  
 And follow the decree of Zeus our sire,--  
 For oaths prevail not over Zeus' command.

**Chorus:**

Go to; thou sayest that from Zeus befel  
 The oracle that this Orestes bade  
 With vengeance quit the slaying of his sire,  
 And hold as nought his mother's right of kin!

**Apollo:**

Yea, for it stands not with a common death,  
 That he should die, a chieftain and a king  
 Decked with the sceptre which high heaven confers--  
 Die, and by female hands, not smitten down  
 By a far-shooting bow, held stalwartly  
 By some strong Amazon. Another doom  
 Was his: O Pallas, hear, and ye who sit  
 In judgment, to discern this thing aright!--  
 She with a specious voice of welcome true  
 Hailed him, returning from the mighty mart  
 Where war for life gives fame, triumphant home;  
 Then o'er the laver, as he bathed himself,  
 She spread from head to foot a covering net,  
 And in the endless mesh of cunning robes  
 Enwound and trapped her lord, and smote him down.  
 Lo, ye have heard what doom this chieftain met,  
 The majesty of Greece, the fleet's high lord:  
 Such as I tell it, let it gall your ears,  
 Who stand as judges to decide this cause.

**Chorus:**

Zeus, as thou sayest, holds a father's death  
 As first of crimes,--yet he of his own act  
 Cast into chains his father, Cronos old:  
 How suits that deed with that which now ye tell?  
 O ye who judge, I bid ye mark my words!

**Apollo:**

O monsters loathed of all, O scorn of gods,  
 He that hath bound may loose: a cure there is,  
 Yea, many a plan that can unbind the chain.  
 But when the thirsty dust sucks up man's blood  
 Once shed in death, he shall arise no more.  
 No chant nor charm for this my Sire hath wrought.  
 All else there is, he moulds and shifts at will,  
 Not scant of strength nor breath, whate'er he do.

**Chorus:**

Think yet, for what acquittal thou dost plead:  
 He who hath shed a mother's kindred blood,  
 Shall he in Argos dwell, where dwelt his sire?  
 How shall he stand before the city's shrines,  
 How share the clansmen's holy lustral bowl?

**Apollo:**

This too I answer; mark a soothfast word,  
 Not the true parent is the woman's womb  
 That bears the child; she doth but nurse the seed  
 New-sown: the male is parent; she for him,  
 As stranger for a stranger, hoards the germ

Of life; unless the god its promise blight.  
 And proof hereof before you will I set.  
 Birth may from fathers, without mothers, be:  
 See at your side a witness of the same,  
 Athena, daughter of Olympian Zeus,  
 Never within the darkness of the womb  
 Fostered nor fashioned, but a bud more bright  
 Than any goddess in her breast might bear.  
 And I, O Pallas, howsoe'er I may,  
 Henceforth will glorify thy town, thy clan,  
 And for this end have sent my suppliant here  
 Unto thy shrine; that he from this time forth  
 Be loyal unto thee for evermore,  
 O goddess-queen, and thou unto thy side  
 Mayst win and hold him faithful, and his line,  
 And that for aye this pledge and troth remain  
 To children's children of Athenian seed.

**Athena:**

Enough is said; I bid the judges now  
 With pure intent deliver just award.

**Chorus:**

We too have shot our every shaft of speech,  
 And now abide to hear the doom of law.

**Athena:** (*to Apollo and Orestes*)

Say, how ordaining shall I 'scape your blame?

**Apollo:**

I spake, ye heard; enough. O stranger men,

Heed well your oath as ye decide the cause.

**Athena:**

O men of Athens, ye who first do judge  
 The law of bloodshed, hear me now ordain.  
 Here to all time for Aegeus' Attic host  
 Shall stand this council-court of judges sworn,  
 Here the tribunal, set on Ares' Hill  
 Where camped of old the tented Amazons,  
 What time in hate of Theseus they assailed  
 Athens, and set against her citadel  
 A counterwork of new sky-pointing towers,  
 And there to Ares held their sacrifice,  
 Where now the rock hath name, even Ares' Hill.  
 And hence shall Reverence and her kinsman Fear  
 Pass to each free man's heart, by day and night  
 Enjoining, "Thou shalt do no unjust thing",  
 So long as law stands as it stood of old  
 Unmarred by civic change. Look you, the spring  
 Is pure; but foul it once with influx vile

And muddy clay, and none can drink thereof.  
 Therefore, O citizens, I bid ye bow  
 In awe to this command, "Let no man live  
 Uncurbed by law nor curbed by tyranny;"  
 Nor banish ye the monarchy of Awe  
 Beyond the walls; untouched by fear divine,  
 No man doth justice in the world of men.  
 Therefore in purity and holy dread  
 Stand and revere; so shall ye have and hold  
 A saving bulwark of the state and land,  
 Such as no man hath ever elsewhere known,  
 Nor in far Scythia, nor in Pelops' realm.  
 Thus I ordain it now, a council-court

Pure and unsullied by the lust of gain,  
 Sacred and swift to vengeance, wakeful ever  
 To champion men who sleep, the country's guard.  
 Thus have I spoken, thus to mine own clan  
 Commended it for ever. Ye who judge,  
 Arise, take each his vote, mete out the right,  
 Your oath revering. Lo, my word is said.

*The twelve judges come forward, one by one, to the urns of decision; the first votes; as each of the others follows, the Chorus and Apollo speak alternately.*

**Chorus:**

I rede ye well, beware! nor put to shame,  
 In aught, this grievous company of hell.

**Apollo:**

I too would warn you, fear mine oracles--  
 From Zeus they are,--nor make them void of fruit.

**Chorus:**

Presumptuous is thy claim, blood-guilt to judge,  
 And false henceforth thine oracles shall be.

**Apollo:**

Failed then the counsels of my sire, when turned  
 Ixion, first of slayers, to his side?

**Chorus:**

These are but words; but I, if justice fail me,  
 Will haunt this land in grim and deadly deed.

**Apollo:**

Scorn of the younger and the elder gods  
 Art thou: 'tis I that shall prevail anon.

**Chorus:**

Thus didst thou too of old in Pheres' halls,  
 O'errcaching Fate to make a mortal deathless.

**Apollo:**

Was it not well, my worshipper to aid,  
 Then most of all when hardest was the need?

**Chorus:**

I say thou didst annul the lots of life,  
 Cheating with wine the deities of eld.

**Apollo:**

I say thou shalt anon, thy pleadings foiled,  
 Spit venom vainly on thine enemies.

**Chorus:**

Since this young god o'errides mine ancient right  
 I tarry but to claim your law, not knowing  
 If wrath of mine shall blast your state or spare

**Athena:**

Mine is the right to add the final vote,

And I award it to Orestes' cause.  
 For me no mother bore within her womb,  
 And, save for wedlock evermore eschewed,  
 I vouch myself the champion of the man,  
 Not of the woman, yea, with all my soul,--  
 In heart, as birth, a father's child alone.  
 Thus will I not too heinously regard  
 A woman's death who did her husband slay,  
 The guardian of her home; and if the votes  
 Equal do fall, Orestes shall prevail.  
 Ye of the judges who are named thereto,  
 Swiftly shake forth the lots from either urn.

*Two judges come forward, one to each urn.*

**Orestes:**

O bright Apollo, what shall be the end?

**Chorus:**

O Night, dark mother mine, dost mark these things?

OSESTES

Now shall my doom be life, or strangling cords.

**Chorus:**

And mine, lost honour or a wider sway.

**Apollo:**

O stranger judges, sum aright the count  
 Of votes cast forth, and, parting them, take heed



Ye err not in decision. The default  
 Of one vote only bringeth ruin deep,  
 One, cast aright, doth stablish house and home.

**Athena:**

Behold, this man is free from guilt of blood,  
 For half the votes condemn him, half set free!

**Orestes:**

O Pallas, light and safety of my home,  
 Thou, thou hast given me back to dwell once more  
 In that my fatherland, amerced of which  
 I wandered; now shall Grecian lips say this,  
 "The man is Argive once again, and dwells  
 Again within his father's wealthy hall,  
 By Pallas saved, by Loxias, and by Him,  
 The great third saviour, Zeus omnipotent--"  
 Who thus in pity for my father's fate  
 Doth pluck me from my doom, beholding these,  
 Confederates of my mother. Lo, I pass  
 To mine own home, but proffering this vow  
 Unto thy land and people: "Nevermore,  
 Thro' all the manifold years of Time to be,  
 Shall any chieftain of mine Argive land  
 Bear hitherward his spears for fight arrayed."  
 For we, though lapped in earth we then shall lie,  
 By thwart adversities will work our will  
 On them who shall transgress this oath of mine,  
 Paths of despair and journeyings ill-starred  
 For them ordaining, till their task they rue.  
 But if this oath be rightly kept, to them  
 Will we the dead be full of grace, the while  
 With loyal league they honour Pallas' town.

And now farewell, thou and thy city's folk--  
 Firm be thine arm's grasp, closing with thy foes  
 And, strong to save, bring victory to thy spear.

*Exit Orestes, with Apollo.*

**Chorus:**

Woe on you, younger gods! the ancient right  
 Ye have o'erridden, rent it from my hands.

I am dishonoured of you, thrust to scorn!  
 But heavily my wrath  
 Shall on this land fling forth the drops that blast and burn  
 Venom of vengeance, that shall work such scathe  
 As I have suffered; where that dew shall fall,  
 Shall leafless blight arise,  
 Wasting Earth's offspring,--Justice, hear my call!--  
 And thorough all the land in deadly wise  
 Shall scatter venom, to exude again  
 In pestilence on men.  
 What cry avails me now, what deed of blood,  
 Unto this land what dark despite?  
 Alack, alack, forlorn  
 Are we, a bitter injury have borne!  
 Alack, O sisters, O dishonoured brood  
 Of mother Night!

**Athena:**

Nay, bow ye to my words, chafe not nor moan:  
 Ye are not worsted nor disgraced; behold,  
 With balanced vote the cause had issue fair,  
 Nor in the end did aught dishonour thee.  
 But thus the will of Zeus shone clearly forth,

And his own prophet-god avouched the same,  
 "Orestes slew: his slaying is atoned".  
 Therefore I pray you, not upon this land  
 Shoot forth the dart of vengeance; be appeased,  
 Nor blast the land with blight, nor loose thereon  
 Drops of eternal venom, direful darts  
 Wasting and marring nature's seed of growth.

For I, the queen of Athens' sacred right,  
 Do pledge to you a holy sanctuary  
 Deep in the heart of this my land, made just  
 By your indwelling presence, while ye sit  
 Hard by your sacred shrines that gleam with oil  
 Of sacrifice, and by this folk adored.

**Chorus:**

Woe on you, younger gods! the ancient right  
 Ye have o'erridden, rent it from my hands.  
 I am dishonoured of you, thrust to scorn!  
 But heavily my wrath  
 Shall on his land fling forth the drops that blast and burn.  
 Venom of vengeance, that shall work such scathe  
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 Unto this land what dark despite?  
 Alack, alack, forlorn  
 Are we, a bitter injury have borne!  
 Alack, O sisters, O dishonoured brood  
 Of mother Night!

**Athena:**

Dishonoured are ye not; turn not, I pray.  
 As goddesses your swelling wrath on men,  
 Nor make the friendly earth spiteful to them.  
 I too have Zeus for champion--'tis enough--  
 I only of all goddesses do know.  
 To ope the chamber where his thunderbolts  
 Lie stored and sealed; but here is no such need.  
 Nay, be appeased, nor cast upon the ground  
 The malice of thy tongue, to blast the world;  
 Calm thou thy bitter wrath's black inward surge,  
 For high shall be thine honour, set beside me  
 For ever in this land, whose fertile lap  
 Shall pour its teeming firstfruits unto you,  
 Gifts for fair childbirth and for wedlock's crown:  
 Thus honoured, praise my spoken pledge for aye.

**Chorus:**

I, I dishonoured in this earth to dwell,--  
 Ancient of days and wisdom! I breathe forth  
 Poison and breath of frenzied ire. O Earth,  
 Woe, woe, for thee, for me!  
 From side to side what pains be these that thrill?  
 Hearken, O mother Night, my wrath, mine agony!  
 Whom from mine ancient rights the gods have thrust  
 And brought me to the dust--  
 Woe, woe is me!--with craft invincible.

**Athena:**

Older art thou than I, and I will bear  
 With this thy fury. Know, although thou be

More wise in ancient wisdom, yet have I  
 From Zeus no scant measure of the same,  
 Wherefore take heed unto this prophecy--  
 If to another land of alien men  
 Ye go, too late shall ye feel longing deep  
 For mine. The rolling tides of time bring round  
 A day of brighter glory for this town;  
 And thou, enshrined in honour by the halls  
 Where dwelt Erechtheus, shalt a worship win  
 From men and from the train of womankind,  
 Greater than any tribe elsewhere shall pay.  
 Cast thou not therefore on this soil of mine  
 Whetstones that sharpen souls to bloodshedding.  
 The burning goads of youthful hearts, made hot  
 With frenzy of the spirit, not of wine.  
 Nor pluck as 'twere the heart from cocks that strive,  
 To set it in the breasts of citizens  
 Of mine, a war-god's spirit, keen for fight,  
 Made stern against their country and their kin.  
 The man who grievously doth lust for fame,  
 War, full, immitigable, let him wage  
 Against the stranger; but of kindred birds  
 I hold the challenge hateful. Such the boon  
 I proffer thee--within this land of lands,  
 Most loved of gods, with me to show and share  
 Fair mercy, gratitude and grace as fair.

**Chorus:**

I, I dishonoured in this earth to dwell,--  
 Ancient of days and wisdom! I breathe forth  
 Poison and breath of frenzied ire. O Earth,  
 Woe, woe for thee, for me!  
 From side to side what pains be these that thrill?  
 Hearken, O mother Night, my wrath, mine agony!

Whom from mine ancient rights the gods have thrust,  
 And brought me to the dust--  
 Woe, woe is me!--with craft invincible.

**Athena:**

I will not weary of soft words to thee,  
 That never mayst thou say, "Behold me spurned,  
 An elder by a younger deity,  
 And from this land rejected and forlorn,  
 Unhonoured by the men who dwell therein".  
 But, if Persuasion's grace be sacred to thee,  
 Soft in the soothing accents of my tongue,  
 Tarry, I pray thee; yet, if go thou wilt,  
 Not rightfully wilt thou on this my town  
 Sway down the scale that beareth wrath and teen  
 Or wasting plague upon this folk. 'Tis thine,  
 If so thou wilt, inheritress to be  
 Of this my land, its utmost grace to win.

**Chorus:**

O queen, what refuge dost thou promise me?

**Athena:**

Refuge untouched by bale: take thou my boon.

**Chorus:**

What, if I take it, shall mine honour be?

**Athena:**

No house shall prosper without grace of thine.

**Chorus:**

Canst thou achieve and grant such power to me?

**Athena:**

Yea, for my hand shall bless thy worshippers.

**Chorus:**

And wilt thou pledge me this for time eterne?

**Athena:**

Yea: none can bid me pledge beyond my power.

**Chorus:**

Lo, I desist from wrath, appeased by thee.

**Athena:**

Then in the land's heart shalt thou win thee friends.

**Chorus:**

What chant dost bid me raise, to greet the land?

**Athena:**

Such as aspires towards a victory  
Unrued by any: chants from breast of earth,  
From wave, from sky; and let the wild winds' breath  
Pass with soft sunlight o'er the lap of land,--

Strong wax the fruits of earth, fair teem the kine,  
 Unfailing, for my town's prosperity,  
 And constant be the growth of mortal seed.  
 But more and more root out the impious,  
 For as a gardener fosters what he sows,  
 So foster I this race, whom righteousness  
 Doth fend from sorrow. Such the proffered boon.  
 But I, if wars must be, and their loud clash  
 And carnage, for my town, will ne'er endure  
 That aught but victory shall crown her fame.

**Chorus:**

Lo, I accept it; at her very side  
 Doth Pallas bid me dwell:  
 I will not wrong the city of her pride,  
 Which even Almighty Zeus and Ares hold  
 Heaven's earthly citadel,  
 Loved home of Grecian gods, the young, the old,  
 The sanctuary divine,  
 The shield of every shrine!  
 For Athens I say forth a gracious prophecy,--  
 The glory of the sunlight and the skies  
 Shall bid from earth arise  
 Warm wavelets of new life and glad prosperity.

**Athena:**

Behold, with gracious heart well pleased  
 I for my citizens do grant  
 Fulfilment of this covenant:  
 And here, their wrath at length appeased,  
 These mighty deities shall stay,  
 For theirs it is by right to sway  
 The lot that rules our mortal day,



And he who hath not inly felt  
 Their stern decree, ere long on him,  
 Not knowing why and whence, the grim  
 Life-crushing blow is dealt.  
 The father's sin upon the child  
 Descends, and sin is silent death,  
 And leads him on the downward path,  
 By stealth beguiled,  
 Unto the Furies: though his state  
 On earth were high, and loud his boast,  
 Victim of silent ire and hate  
 He dwells among the Lost.

**Chorus:**

To my blessing now give ear.--  
 Scorching blight nor singèd air  
 Never blast thine olives fair!  
 Drouth, that wasteth bud and plant,  
 Keep to thine own place. Avaunt,  
 Famine fell, and come not hither  
 Stealthily to waste and wither!  
 Let the land, in season due,  
 Twice her waxing fruits renew;  
 Teem the kine in double measure;  
 Rich in new god-given treasure;  
 Here let men the powers adore  
 For sudden gifts unhopèd before!

**Athena:**

O hearken, warders of the wall  
 That guards mine Athens, what a dower  
 Is unto her ordained and given!  
 For mighty is the Furies' power,

And deep-revered in courts of heaven  
 And realms of hell; and clear to all  
 They weave thy doom, mortality!  
 And some in joy and peace shall sing;  
 But unto other some they bring  
 Sad life and tear-dimmed eye.

**Chorus:**

And far away I ban thee and remove,  
 Untimely death of youths too soon brought low!  
 And to each maid, O gods, when time is come for love,  
 Grant ye a warrior's heart, a wedded life to know.  
 Ye too, O Fates, children of mother Night,  
 Whose children too are we, O goddesses  
 Of just award, of all by sacred right  
 Queens who in time and in eternity  
 Do rule, a present power for righteousness,  
 Honoured beyond all Gods, hear ye and grant my cry!

**Athena:**

And I too, I with joy am fain,  
 Hearing your voice this gift ordain  
 Unto my land. High thanks be thine,  
 Persuasion, who with eyes divine  
 Into my tongue didst look thy strength,  
 To bend and to appease at length  
 Those who would not be comforted.  
 Zeus, king of parley, doth prevail,  
 And ye and I will strive nor fail,  
 That good may stand in evil's stead,  
 And lasting bliss for bale.

**Chorus:**

And nevermore these walls within  
 Shall echo fierce sedition's din  
 Unslaked with blood and crime;  
 The thirsty dust shall nevermore  
 Suck up the darkly streaming gore  
 Of civic broils, shed out in wrath  
 And vengeance, crying death for death!  
 But man with man and state with state  
 Shall vow "The pledge of common hate  
 And common friendship, that for man  
 Hath oft made blessing out of ban,  
 Be ours unto all time".

**Athena:**

Skill they, or not, the path to find  
 Of favouring speech and presage kind?  
 Yea, even from these, who, grim and stern,  
 Glared anger upon you of old,  
 O citizens, ye now shall earn  
 A recompense right manifold.  
 Deck them aright, extol them high,  
 Be loyal to their loyalty,  
 And ye shall make your town and land  
 Sure, propped on Justice' saving hand,  
 And Fame's eternity.

**Chorus:**

Hail ye, all hail! and yet again, all hail  
 O Athens, happy in a weal secured!  
 O ye who sit by Zeus' right hand, nor fail  
 Of wisdom set among you and assured,  
 Loved of the well-loved Goddess-Maid! the King

Of gods doth reverence you, beneath her guarding wing.

**Athena:**

All hail unto each honoured guest!  
 Whom to the chambers of your rest  
 'Tis mine to lead, and to provide  
 The hallowed torch, the guard and guide.  
 Pass down, the while these altars glow  
 With sacred fire, to earth below  
 And your appointed shrine.  
 There dwelling, from the land restrain  
 The force of fate, the breath of bane,  
 But waft on us the gift and gain  
 Of Victory divine!  
 And ye, the men of Cranaos' seed,  
 I bid you now with reverence lead  
 These alien Powers that thus are made  
 Athenian evermore. To you  
 Fair be their will henceforth, to do  
 Whate'er may bless and aid!

**Chorus:**

Hail to you all! hail yet again,  
 All who love Athens, Gods and men,  
 Adoring her as Pallas' home!  
 And while ye reverence what ye grant--  
 My sacred shrine and hidden haunt--  
 Blameless and blissful be your doom!

**Athena:**

Once more I praise the promise of your vows,  
 And now I bid the golden torches' glow

Pass down before you to the hidden depth  
 Of earth, by mine own sacred servants borne,  
 My loyal guards of statue and of shrine.  
 Come forth, O flower of Theseus' Attic land,  
 O glorious band of children and of wives,  
 And ye, O train of matrons crowned with eld!  
 Deck you with festal robes of scarlet dye  
 In honour of this day: O gleaming torch,  
 Lead onward, that these gracious powers of earth  
 Henceforth be seen to bless the life of men.

*Athena leads the procession downwards into the Cave of the Furies, under Areopagus: as they go, the escort of women and children chant aloud.*

**Chant:**

With loyalty we lead you; proudly go,  
 Night's childless children, to your home below!  
 ("O citizens, awhile from words forbear!")  
 To darkness' deep primeval lair,  
 Far in Earth's bosom, downward fare,  
 Adored with prayer and sacrifice.  
 ("O citizens, forbear your cries!")  
 Pass hitherward, ye powers of Dread,  
 With all your former wrath allayed,  
 Into the heart of this loved land;  
 With joy unto your temple wend,  
 The while upon your steps attend  
 The flames that fed upon the brand--  
 ("Now, now ring out your chant, your joy's acclaim!")  
 Behind them, as they downward fare,  
 Let holy hands libations bear,  
 And torches' sacred flame.  
 All-seeing Zeus and Fate come down  
 To battle fair for Pallas' town!

"Ring out your chant, ring out your joy's acclaim!"

*Exeunt omnes.*

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