

MOURNING BECOMES RIDICULOUS

Music by Chuck Muckle

Book and Lyrics by David Eisner

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TIME AND PLACE: the city of Mycenae and environs, ancient Greece

CAST BREAKDOWN:

CLYTEMNESTRA	-- Queen of Mycenae, alto
AEGISTHUS	-- her present husband, baritone
ELECTRA	-- daughter to Clytemnestra and the late Agamemnon, mezzo/belt
CHRYSOTHEMIS	-- her sister, alto belt
ORESTES	-- her brother, tenor
PEDAGOGUS	-- their tutor, baritone/character singer

the women of Mycenae (CHORUS)

CHLOE	the youngest, soprano/mezzo
PHOEBE	the most mature, soprano
LAVERNE	the quirkiest, mezzo

the VICTIMS OF HISTORY (VOH)
(a non-singing chorus of ghosts - doubled by rest of cast when possible)

-helpful if these actors can sing-

OEDIPUS
CASSANDRA
ACHILLES
PANDORA

(Light up outside the city of Mycenae, ancient Greece. The VICTIMS OF HISTORY – OEDIPUS, CASSANDRA, ACHILLES and PANDORA - are immersed in their daily lamentations. They are facing downstage, while OEDIPUS faces upstage.)

VICTIMS OF HISTORY

The dawn breaks...

OEDIPUS

The dawn breaks...

VOH (except OEDIPUS)

Turn around, Oedipus, O blinded king..

(One of them pokes him. He faces forward.)

OEDIPUS

Oh shishlik. The dawn breaks...

But here in the city of Mycenae, it matters not.

There are no birds to sing, no flowers to bloom, no dreams to dream.

In this once-shimmering city, there is only bleakness, past and future. The bleakness of the life of Electra.

(Lights up on ELECTRA, hauling water to the palace.)

VOH

Electra!

CASSANDRA

The dawn breaks...

But it cannot help you see that Electra is a princess.

Mistreated, abused, and not much fun to be around.

I am Cassandra, and in this age of foresight, we know all.

And seeing each event before it happens multiplies the horror.

Electra knows her tale must end in revenge.

She has mourned her father, Agamemnon, for sixteen years.

But the Fates have decreed she can do nothing

Until she is rescued by her long-lost brother, Orestes.

(Lights up on ORESTES, with spear, guarding hovel door.)

VOH

Orestes!

ACHILLES

Still in hiding with his tutor, Pedagogus.

(PEDAGOGUS pulls ORESTES back into hovel.)

VOH

Pedagogus!

The dawn breaks...

ACHILLES

And through my heel- my Achilles' heel –
Protrudes the piercing instrument of my demise.
There is no escape from this dung heap called life.
So Electra must wait with her sister, Chrysothemis,

(Lights up on CHRYSOTHEMIS, out side the palace, with a
laundry basket on her head.)

VOH

Chrysothemis!

ACHILLES

Until their brother Orestes returns
To avenge the murder of their father,
Agamemnon, the great war hero,
(Light on grave.)
Who, coming home from battle, was murdered –
Axed by his wife Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus.

(Lights up on CLYTEMNESTRA and AEGISTHUS embracing.)

VOH

Clytemnesstra and Aegisssthus!

The dawn breaks...

PANDORA

A cruel joke. And it is all my fault.
The gods warned me of the power of my box. Pandora's Box.
Out flew evil,

CASSANDRA

treachery,

ACHILLES

accidents of war,

OEDIPUS

accidents of love,

CASSANDRA

Accidents of set pieces crashing down and knocking out lead
actors.

PANDORA

Then, worst of all,
Still inside my box was...hope.

VOH

Hooooope!

PANDORA

With hope, we look into the future and see wondrous
objects:

OEDIPUS

Ships that fly through the sky.

CASSANDRA

Crocks with snap-on lids.

ACHILLES

Buildings that pierce the clouds.

PANDORA

Yo yos. These are a few of our favorite things.
And yet,

VOH

The dawn breaks,
And we, the Victims of History, feel

CASSANDRA

A spark,

OEDIPUS

a glimmer,

ACHILLES

a shaft

PANDORA

Of that hopeless hope
Whereby the Fates increase our pain a thousand fold.

VOH

So here we wander the Aegean,

PANDORA

And every twenty four hours or so,

VOH

The dawn breaks...

(The Chorus – CHLOE, PHOEBE and LAVERNE, are awakened.)

CHLOE

Stop!

PANDORA and CASSANDRA

And we repeat our lamentations,

PHOEBE

Get out of here!

VOH

And guarantee a tragic ending to every miserable life..

LAVERNE

Shut up already!

PHOEBE

(to herself)

I was having this wonderful dream...

CHLOE

(to herself)

And I haven't had a dream in sixteen years...

PANDORA

Foolish women of Mycenae,

VOH

The dawn breaks...

LAVERNE

As will your faces if you do not take yourselves
And cease your clarion call of cow ca-ca.
We Mycaneans see everything the future holds.
Who needs to know of microchips
When we still make wine with our feet.
Mycenae is a city of mis-fortune tellers,
And four more we need like we need another souvlaki stand.

PANDORA

But we thought...

LAVERNE

Get you hence! Remove yourselves! Amscray!
Beyond all gates, beyond all doubt, beyond the blue
horizon!

(The VOH hesitate.)

LAVERNE

Now shove off!
(They scatter; OEDIPUS goes the opposite way.)
Rex! This way out!

PHOEBE

Good work, Laverne.

LAVERNE

Sometimes you just gotta speak their language.

CHLOE

You were perfect.

LAVERNE

I was pissed. Their dreck woke me up from this weird
dream. And now, of course, I can't remember it.

PHOEBE and CHLOE

You too?

PHOEBE

THE GODDESS HERA CAME TO ME IN A DREAM.

CHLOE and LAVERNE

IN A DREAM?

LAVERNE

IN A DREAM!

AND SHE SAID, "OH WOMAN, STOP BREAKIN' THOSE EGGS,
START BREAKIN' THE NEWS,
AND LET EVERYBODY KNOW:

THAT THERE'S A NEW AGE COMIN',
AND THERE'S NO ONE WHO CAN SAY WHAT'S IN STORE;
YES, THERE'S A NEW AGE COMIN',
THE FATES HAVE GIVEN UP
AND REFUSE TO WRITE THE FUTURE ANYMORE.
YES, THERE'S A NEW AGE COMIN',
AND IT'S NOT WHERE YOU'VE BEEN COMIN' FROM BEFORE."

LAVERNE

Well, if the Fates ain't writin' the future, who is?

PHOEBE

That, she didn't say.

LAVERNE

Please, let it be someone with a sense of humor.

CHLOE

THE GOD APOLLO CAME TO ME IN A DREAM.

PHOEBE and LAVERNE

LUCKY YOU!

CHLOE

INA DREAM!

AND HE SAID, "YOU GOTTA STOP WORKIN' THE GRAPELEAVES,
START WORKIN' THE GRAPEVINE,
AND LET EVERYBODY KNOW:

THAT THERE'S A NEW AGE COMIN',
AND IT'S GONNA SEEM A LITTLE BIZARRE;
YES, THERE'S A NEW AGE COMIN',
THE FATES HAVE GIVEN UP
SO YOU GET TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE
IF YOU AREN'T REALLY PLEASED WITH WHERE YOU ARE;
YES, THERE'S A NEW AGE COMIN',
AND IT'S NOT WHERE YOU'VE BEEN COMIN' FROM SO FAR."

PHOEBE

SHE SAID, "KEEP ON EXPECTING THE UNEXPECTED,
NOW THAT THE FATES ARE ALL THROUGH."

CHLOE

HE SAID, "YOUR PRESENT AND PAST ARE NOW DISCONNECTED.
YOUR FUTURE IS ALL UP TO YOU!"

LAVERNE

Oooh!

PHOEBE and CHLOE
LIFE IS CONSISTENTLY INCONSISTENT,

LAVERNE

It is?

PHOEBE and CHLOE
SHIFTING IN FRONT OF YOUR EYES.

LAVERNE

I feel sick.

PHOEBE and CHLOE
JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT CHANGE WAS NONEXISTENT,

LAVERNE

I don't wanna change.

PHOEBE and CHLOE
PREPARE FOR A MAJOR SURPRISE!

(LAVERNE remembers.)

LAVERNE

MY GREAT AUNT FLORENCE CAME TO ME IN A DREAM.

PHOEBE and CHLOE

YOUR AUNT WHO?

LAVERNE

NEVER MIND!
AND SHE SAID, "OH, BABY, STOP SPREADIN' TAHINI,
START SPREADIN' THE INFO,
TO LET EVERYBODY KNOW:
THAT THERE'S A NEW AGE COMIN',
CAN YOU SEE WHAT BEING FREE WILL ALLOW?
YES, THERE'S A NEW AGE COMIN',
THE FATES HAVE GIVEN UP,
AND IT SHOULD MAKE YOU VERY GLAD
SINCE KNOWING WHAT THE FUTURE HELD
HAS NEVER MADE A SINGLE HUMAN BEING HAPPY ANYHOW;
YES, THERE'S A NEW AGE COMIN',
AND IT'S NOT WHERE YOU'VE BEEN COMIN' FROM 'TIL NOW!"

CHORUS

YES, THERE'S A NEW AGE COMIN',
CAN YOU SEE WHAT BEING FREE WILL ALLOW?
YES, THERE'S A NEW AGE COMIN',
THE FATES HAVE GIVEN UP,
AND IT SHOULD MAKE YOU VERY GLAD

SINCE KNOWING WHAT THE FUTURE HELD
 HAS NEVER MADE A SINGLE HUMAN BEING HAPPY ANYHOW;
 YES, THERE'S A NEW AGE COMIN',
 AND IT'S NOT WHERE YOU'VE BEEN COMIN' FROM 'TIL NOW!

(CHLOE and PHOEBE start to leave.)

LAVERNE

Phoebe! Chloe! Get back here. They said, "Let everybody know."

PHOEBE

Must we?

LAVERNE

Look, you may want to incur the wrath of Hera or Apollo,
 but when my great aunt Florence Pappadopolous tells you to
 spread the info, the info is what you spread.

CHLOE

True.

PHOEBE

We should go tell someone who is really caught up in the
 past.

LAVERNE

Right.

CHLOE

Who would benefit most from the news.

LAVERNE

Fine, fine.

PHOEBE

Who rails against the Fates.

CHLOE

Who feels doomed by destiny.

LAVERNE

Okay, who?

PHOEBE and CHLOE

Electra.

LAVERNE

Electra?

CHORUS

Electra!

(Lights up on ELECTRA, scrubbing in the palace courtyard.)

CLYTEMNESTRA

(from off-stage, shrilly)

Electra!

(ELECTRA ignores the call. CHRYSOTHEMIS enters with
 laundry.)

Electra!

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Mama's calling you.

ELECTRA

I know.

CLYTEMNESTRA
(from off-stage)

I'm waiting for my bathwater!

ELECTRA

Well, Mother, we are all waiting for something.
(An ax flies, just missing ELECTRA's head.)

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Call me stupid, but sometimes I think you enjoy living like this.

(She exits)

ELECTRA

HERE I AM, STILL IN MOURNING,
DRESSED IN COARSE AND UGLY GARMENTS.
HERE I WORK, LIKE A DRUDGE,
JUST TO SERVE THOSE NASTY VARMINTS.
HERE I HOPE, AND KEEP HOPING.
BUT I HAVE TO ADMIT, HOPES LOOK SLIM;
HERE I STAY, STILL IN MOURNING,
FOR THE FATES HAVE DECREED I MUST BE...WAITING FOR HIM.

WAITING FOR HIM, HAULING CROCKS OF WATER,
WAITING FOR HIM, I'M THE QUEEN'S OWN DAUGHTER.
BUT WHILE MY MAMA PRIMPS, I'M HERE, DEVEINING SHRIMPS
AS I WAIT FOR MY MAN TO SET ME FREE.
OH, TELL ME, FATES, OH WHERE CAN HE BE?

WAITING FOR HIM, BAKLAVA TO BAKE NOW,
WAITING FOR HIM, I COULD USE A BREAK NOW
BUT I DARE NOT RELAX, SINCE MAMA BOUGHT HER AX.
SO I WAIT FOR MY MAN TO SET ME FREE.
OH-OH DESTINY, HOW LONG WILL HE BE?

DAYS FADE LIKE OLD RED UNDERWEAR,
YEARS FLY BY LIKE BATS.
SEASONS PASS LIKE KIDNEY STONES.
WAITING SIXTEEN YEARS,
WHERE EACH SECOND'S A SLAP IN THE FACE,
BUT AFTER SIXTEEN YEARS,
I'VE GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO DISGRACE.

(The CHORUS enters.)

WAITING FOR HIM, SCRUBBING, SWEATING, SLAVING,

WAITING FOR HIM, I WILL GO STARK RAVING.
 MY MIND CAN LOSE ITS WAY, THE BODY GETS TO STAY;
 IT WILL WAIT FOR MY MAN TO SET ME FREE.
 SO NO MATTER WHEN MY BRAINWAVES START TO DIM,
 I'LL STILL BE
 WAITING FOR...

CHORUS

HIM.

CHLOE

Good morning, Electra.

ELECTRA

What's good about it?

PHOEBE

We have some good news for you.

ELECTRA

Is it about Orestes? When will he get here? Did he get my
 last letter? How does my hair look?

LAVERNE

Get a grip, girl. The news ain't about your brother.

ELECTRA

Oh. 'Bye.

CHLOE

It will affect him, however.

ELECTRA

Indeed. What is this 'good' news?

LAVERNE

The Fates are no longer writing our futures.

ELECTRA

Nipping at the ouzo again?

PHOEBE

It's true.

ELECTRA
 (leaving)

Right.

CHLOE

We dreamt it last night.

ELECTRA

(stops and turns back to them)

Nobody dreams anymore.

LAVERNE

All three of us, Electra. The same dream.

ELECTRA

I spend sixteen years living a living hell for nothing? I
 am steeping in evil, and the Fates won't guarantee Orestes

returning to avenge this abuse? How in Hades is this "good news?"

CHLOE

You need a change of perspective, Electra.

ELECTRA

It's hard to change your perspective when you're up to your cerebellum in slime.

LAVERNE

That's pretty fancy talk for a girl who was named after a Buick.

ELECTRA

Take your "good news" elsewhere; perhaps the stables, where people won't notice the smell so much.

PHOEBE

Now your life is full of opportunities.

ELECTRA

It looks the same to me.

CHLOE

How can we convince you things have changed?

ELECTRA

Bring the birds back to Mycenae.

PHOEBE

We can't do that...

ELECTRA

Flowers?

CHLOE

Even if they started sprouting now, it would take weeks...

ELECTRA

How about Orestes?

LAVERNE

You're on.

PHOEBE and CHLOE

Laverne!

ELECTRA

(hands Laverne a scrap of paper)

Here's the address. He lives with our old tutor.

PHOEBE

(grabs the paper)

Laverne, if Orestes comes back, he'll kill Clytemnestra.

CHLOE

(grabs the paper)

And be driven mad by the Furies until he ends his life.

LAVERNE

(grabs the paper)

That was when the Fates were in charge.

(to ELECTRA)

We'll get him. On one condition.

ELECTRA

Name it.

LAVERNE

You imagine what your life will be like when you're in charge of it.

CLYTEMNESTRA

(from off-stage, shrilly)

Electra!

(ELECTRA reacts)

CHLOE

Don't worry, dear.

PHOEBE

Things really have changed.

LAVERNE

We'll be right back.

ELECTRA

I'll be...waiting.

(The CHORUS exits. ELECTRA picks up the pails and moves toward the palace.)

CLYTEMNESTRA

(from off-stage)

Electra! What are you doing?

ELECTRA

(calling back)

I'm thinking about my future.

(to herself)

What if we all get to choose our futures? I get to choose, fine, but then so do Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. And that's their two choices against my one. And I know what they'll choose to do. Choice? Ha! I have no choice but to be...

WAITING FOR HIM, THEY CAN BEAT ME, ROB ME,

WAITING FOR HIM, THEY CAN SHISHKEBOB ME,

OR SET MY HAIR ON FIRE,

OR WHIP ME WITH BARBED WIRE.

STILL I'LL WAIT FOR MY MAN TO SET ME FREE,

AND I WONDER HOW MUCH MORE'S IN STORE FOR ME...

THEY MIGHT RAP ME ON THE KNUCKLES,

BOX MY EARS, TEAR OFF MY TOES,

THEY MIGHT GIVE ME TWO BLACK EYES,
 THEY MIGHT REARRANGE MY NOSE,
 THEY MIGHT KNOCK OUT ALL MY TEETH,
 OR IF THINGS GET REALLY GRIM,

CLYTEMNESTRA
 (from off-stage)

Chrysothemis, get me my ax!

ELECTRA
 THEY MIGHT EVEN CUT MY TONGUE OUT, I'LL STILL BE
 AI-EE-OH-IH!

(Lights out; lights up on PEDAGOGUS's hovel.)

PEDAGOGUS

Okay, Orestes, again.

ORESTES
 (very uninspired)

Mother, prepare to meet thy fate. Stab, stab, slash,
 slash, plunge.

PEDAGOGUS

Well, that's sure to put the fear of Zeus into them.

ORESTES

I'm not going to rehearse anymore. After sixteen years of
 this, I'm as ready as I'll ever be.

PEDAGOGUS

What's gotten into you?

ORESTES

I've been thinking. You say you stole me away from Mycenae
 to train me to avenge my father's murder.

PEDAGOGUS

And that your sweet sister Electra and your brilliant
 sister Chrysothemis await our return.

ORESTES

...our return, yes. But who am I?

PEDAGOGUS

You are the only son of the late, semi-great Agamemnon.

ORESTES

Am I really? No one else but you has ever called me
 "Orestes."

PEDAGOGUS

That's what 'being in hiding' means.

ORESTES

Does it?

PEDAGOGUS
 Have I ever lied to you?

ORESTES
 I don't know. Have you?

PEDAGOGUS
 Of course not.

ORESTES
 How do I know that's not a lie?

PEDAGOGUS
 Fine. How can I convince you you are who I say you are?

ORESTES
 That's just it. You can't.

PEDAGOGUS
 There are the letters from Electra.

ORESTES
 Maybe you wrote them. If someone in person came...

PEDAGOGUS
 Maybe I paid them off.

ORESTES
 Then a couple.

PEDAGOGUS
 I could pay off two...

ORESTES
 Three people. I know you couldn't afford three.

PEDAGOGUS
 So you want three strangers to seek you out and tell you who you are. Where can I find a crib and a manger?

ORESTES
 Hey. This is my future we're talking about.

PEDAGOGUS
 (holding up book)
 No, this is your future.
 "Electra kept on mourning, more and more with passing years.
 Her clothes were torn and tattered, her face was streaked with tears.
 But suddenly when things were very bleak in Mycenae, Orestes reappeared to be the star to light the way."

ORESTES
 But you wrote that.

PEDAGOGUS
 Well, I am the family historian.

ORESTES

But I don't know that.

PEDAGOGUS

And I thought self-doubt didn't kick in for another three thousand years. Do you really expect three strangers to knock at this hovel door, call you by name, invite you back to Mycenae, tell you who you were, who you are and who you're going to be?

ORESTES

(reaching for book)

Can I see when I get to go home again?

PEDAGOGUS

Let's just rehearse the future like I wrote it.

ORESTES

(with only slightly more enthusiasm than before)

Mother, prepare to meet thy fate. Stab, stab, slash, slash, plunge.

PEDAGOGUS

Much better. Maybe a little more hip behind the "plunge."

(There is a knock at the door.)

I'll get that. Come on, again.

(The CHORUS enters.)

PHOEBE

Are you Orestes?

ORESTES

I guess so.

CHLOE

We have a message for you-

LAVERNE

From the people of Mycenae.

CHORUS

ORESTES!

PHOEBE

NOW WE KNOW THAT FOR SIXTEEN YEARS PEDAGOGUS HAS TRAINED YOU TO BECOME A MAN AMONG MEN,

PEDAGOGUS

That's true.

CHLOE

BUT NOW WE THINK IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO RETURN,

AND HELP ALL THOSE WHO KNEW YOU WHEN,

PEDAGOGUS

Return?

LAVERNE

AND YOU MUST HAVE HEARD HOW VERY BLEAK THINGS ARE IN MYCENAE,

PEDAGOGUS

Bleak?

LAVERNE

AND HOW WE NEED A STAR TO LIGHT THE WAY,

ORESTES

A star?

PHOEBE

SO IF YOU AGREE WITH US..

ORESTES

A star?

CHLOE

SO IF YOU AGREE WITH US..

ORESTES

A star?

LAVERNE

WELL, DO YOU AGREE WITH US?

ORESTES

Yes!

CHORUS

THEN, YOU MUST COME HOME AGAIN.

(ORESTES has a faraway look in his eyes. PEDAGOGUS babbles.)

PEDAGOGUS

Well, this is certainly an interesting turn of events. Do you ladies have any proof of who you are, I mean, you don't look like the Fates and I mean that in the nicest way and after all the Oracles I've been to I'm sure that this is not the way that Orestes was supposed to go back..

(LAVERNE claps her hand over PEDAGOGUS's mouth.)

LAVERNE

Forget it, Pops. We're taking the kid.

(PEDAGOGUS frees himself.)

PEDAGOGUS

Well, I'll pack.

PHOEBE

But not you.

PEDAGOGUS

What?

CHLOE

Your services are no longer required.

PEDAGOGUS

Orestes! Did you hear what they just said?

ORESTES

Of course.

I'M GONNA BE A STAR.

PEDAGOGUS

What?

ORESTES

I'M GONNA BE A STAR.

THE KING OF COMETS FLASHING THROUGH THE NIGHT.

PEDAGOGUS

I never should have answered that door.

ORESTES

THIS IS MY CHANCE TO SHINE, WITHIN THE GRAND DESIGN;
I ALWAYS KNEW I'D CLIMB TO SUCH A HEIGHT.

PEDAGOGUS

Why do you believe them and not me?

ORESTES

A SPOT ON MOUNT OLYMPUS WILL CLAIMED FOR ME,
AND THEN A CONSTELLATION WILL BE NAMED FOR ME!

PEDAGOGUS

The big dip.

ORESTES

I'M GONNA BE, I'M GONNA BE A STAR,
AND I THINK THE WORLD DESERVES TO KNOW;
LET'S GO!

PEDAGOGUS

They won't let me come with you.

ORESTES

No?

CHORUS

No!

ORESTES

Sorry.

I'M GONNA BE A STAR, I'M GONNA BE A STAR,

PEDAGOGUS

I know, I know.

ORESTES

AND IF YOU MISS ME, PLEASE DO NOT DESPAIR.

PEDAGOGUS

Me? Never.

ORESTES

FOR SOON YOU'LL SEE MY FACE SOMEWHERE IN OUTER SPACE.

PEDAGOGUS

I'LL SEE YOUR BODY THERE AND THERE AND THERE.

ORESTES

What do you mean?

PEDAGOGUS

I DON'T BELIEVE YOU REALLY COULD SURVIVE RIGHT NOW.

ORESTES

BUT DON'T YOU SEE, I REALLY FEEL ALIVE RIGHT NOW!
I'M GONNA BE, I'M GONNA BE A STAR,
WON'T YOU LOVE TO SEE ME SHINE TONIGHT?

PEDAGOGUS

NOT QUITE.

THIS ISN'T IT, ORESTES,
THIS ISN'T WHAT YOUR FUTURE WAS TO BE.
SO LOOK AT THE BOOK, ORESTES,
AND IF YOU READ AHEAD YOU'RE SURE TO SEE
THAT THIS ISN'T IT, ORESTES,
YOU'RE MEANT TO GO TO MYCENAE WITH ME.

ORESTES

Let me see that.

CHORUS

SO SORRY, PEDAGOGUS,

PEDAGOGUS

What?

PHOEBE

SO SORRY THAT WE CAN'T TAKE YOU ALONG.

CHORUS

SO SORRY, PEDAGOGUS,

CHLOE

AND SAD TO SAY YOU'RE BOOK'S COMPLETELY WRONG.

PEDAGOGUS

Oh, you don't think he'll stay?

LAVERNE

LOOK AT HIM, PEDAGOGUS,

CHORUS

JUST LOOK INTO HIS EYES AND HEAR HIS SONG!

PEDAGOGUS

Very well. Orestes? Orestes?

(ORESTES closes the book, hands it to PEDAGOGUS, pats his head.)

What do you think?

ORESTES

I'M GONNA BE A STAR, I'M GONNA BE A STAR,
AND YOUR OLD HIST'RY BOOK WON'T MAKE ME STOP.

PEDAGOGUS

I HAVE TO WARN YOU HERE, THAT IN A STAR'S CAREER,
ONE ALWAYS FINDS GREAT DANGERS AT THE TOP!

ORESTES

Great dangers?

PHOEBE

IT'S TRUE THAT YOU MAY FIND THE SKIES PRECARIOUS.
BUT HOW ELSE WILL YOU GET TO MEET AQUARIUS —

CHORUS

AQUARIUS?!

PEDAGOGUS

I've heard that song before.

ORESTES

I'M GONNA BE A STAR, I'M GONNA BE A STAR,

PEDAGOGUS

BUT...

PHOEBE

ORESTES, BUNDLE UP YOUR STUFF!

ORESTES

ALL RIGHT!

PEDAGOGUS

SO FAST?

CHLOE

IT'S TIME ENOUGH.

PEDAGOGUS

THIS ISN'T HOW IT SHOULD BE DONE.

LAVERNE

WE SAY IT IS.

PHOEBE and CHLOE
THAT'S THREE TO ONE.

PEDAGOGUS

THERE'S SO MUCH MORE YOU NEED TO KNOW.

LAVERNE

YOU GOT TEN SECONDS. READY? GO!

PEDAGOGUS

THESE WORDS ARE MEANT TO MAKE YOU WISE,
ACCEPT THEM AND DON'T ANALYZE:
THE RACE GOES ONLY TO THE SWIFT.
BEWARE THE GREEK THAT BEARS A GIFT.
YOU CANNOT BE TOO RICH OR THIN.
REMEMBER WHEN THOSE FOOLS RUSH IN.
SO WATCH YOUR STEP BEFORE YOU LEAP
AND ALWAYS GET EIGHT HOURS SLEEP.
JUST STAY AWAKE, DON'T BORROW, LEND,
AND NEVER MAKE A SNAKE YOUR FRIEND.
THE ONLY THING TO FEAR IS FEAR,
AND DON'T BELIEVE A WORD YOU HEAR.
AND ONE MORE FACT I KNOW IS TRUE:
YOUR PAST DETERMINES ALL YOU DO.

ORESTES

Will there be a test on this?

CHORUS

THAT'S QUITE A LIST, BUT THERE'S ONE WORD YOU MISSED,
WHICH YOU COULD SAY IF YOU WOULD ONLY TRY:

PEDAGOGUS

What?

CHORUS and ORESTES

GOOD-BYE.

(ORESTES ties a rope around his stuff, he hugs PEDAGOGUS
goodbye, and the CHORUS pushes and pulls him out the door.)

PEDAGOGUS

I can't believe you're leaving after all I've done for you
and you leave me here by myself in the room where we've
been together for over sixteen years and what will everyone
think and what will everyone say and all those wasted trips
to the Oracles they're going to take away my historian's
license oh dear oh dear oh dear do you know what this
means?

I'M GONNA BE ALONE.

(Blackout. Lights up at the city gate; the VICTIMS OF
HISTORY are being thrown out of town and verbally abused.)

OFF-STAGE MYCENAEANS

Leave us alone! Go away! Some of us are trying to dream here!

CASSANDRA

Dream? What do they mean by dream?

(PANDORA bumps into ACHILLES.)

PANDORA

Ow! Now move it along, you Styx-dipped dipstick.

ACHILLES

I go as quickly as I can.

PANDORA

Can you not remove that instrument of your demise?

ACHILLES

No one would then recognize me, oh Slut of the Aegean.

PANDORA

What?

OEDIPUS

Children, please, if we fight amongst ourselves, what then? The time has come to take Tragedy in hand, And thrust it in the visages of these newly happy folk.

CASSANDRA

We have tried that, you Mother-Lover, and it worked not.

ACHILLES

If we find a victim from within this town, These dreamers would be forced to see the Tragedy of life.

PANDORA

Electra's tale was sorry enough. But now we are outside the gates, discarded, ignored, Like so many olive pits in a barroom ashtray.

CASSANDRA

And only a native Mycenaean can bring us back in.

OEDIPUS

Orestes and his tutor Pedagogus, hiding in a nearby hovel, Might lead us back into their home town for some small fee,

PANDORA

Perhaps my box?

CASSANDRA

Not small enough, I think.

PANDORA

What?!

ACHILLES

To Phocis, then, oh Orbless King,
As quickly as our histories allow.

(They trudge across the stage.)

(Lights up on the courtyard, set for an al fresco
breakfast, including a vase of long-dead flowers.
AEGISTHUS and CLYTEMNESTRA are served by a rude ELECTRA and
an obsequious CHRYSOTHEMIS.)

CLYTEMNESTRA

Do you remember what day it is, sweetheart?

AEGISTHUS

Of course, dear. That's why I ordered the flowers.

CLYTEMNESTRA

They are lovely, darlingest. Aren't they lovely, Electra?

ELECTRA

It's the same pile of straw we set out every anniversary.

AEGISTHUS

Well, sweetums, I'm ready for my gift.

CLYTEMNESTRA

No no, lambkins, you have to wait for tonight.

AEGISTHUS

(kneeling)

Please, honeycomb, please please please please please.

CLYTEMNESTRA

(breathlessly)

oh, stop, sugar. You know how I could never resist you on
your knees.

ELECTRA

Oh, is that his secret?

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Shhh.

CLYTEMNESTRA

What did my girl say?

CHRYSOTHEMIS

She said she thought the present was a secret.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Well, yes, but I don't think it's too early for one little giftie. Chrysothemis, bring over the one we worked on.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Mama, I don't think it's ready...

(CLYTEMNESTRA slams her ax into the table.)

Of course, Mama, what a good idea.

(CHRYSOTHEMIS brings out a covered birdcage; CLYTEMNESTRA

reveals the skeleton of a songbird on a swing.)

CLYTEMNESTRA

Ta-dah.

AEGISTHUS

Oh, light of my life, it's perfect.

ELECTRA

It's dead.

(The lovers ignore her and embrace. CLYTEMNESTRA signals to CHRYSOTHEMIS, who sneaks behind the cage and begins to whistle. ELECTRA is appalled.)

Holy Zeus.

AEGISTHUS

And my treasure taught it "our song." I am truly touched.

ELECTRA

I think the whole family is.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

(stopping her whistling to hush ELECTRA)

Shhhh.

CLYTEMNESTRA

What's the matter, little bird? Do you need me to sing with you?

(CHRYSOTHEMIS whistles something that sounds like a yes.)

All righty.

FAMILY: START YOUR GRINNING NOW, I'M BEGINNING TO PRAISE
THE FAMILY: SUCH DELECTABLE AND RESPECTABLE DAYS.
HOW WE STAY TOGETHER AND PRAY TOGETHER AND

EVERYONE IS HAPPY.
UNCOMPETITIVE,
'CAUSE IT'S LIVE AND LET LIVE.

FAMILY: WHILE I'M PRAISING A CRITIC'S RAISING HIS VOICE
AGAINST THE FAMILY: HE'LL IMPUGN IT 'THOUGH IT'S THE UNIT
OF CHOICE.
HE GETS OVERZEALOUS 'CAUSE HE'S SO JEALOUS 'CAUSE
EVERYONE IS HAPPY,
IN OUR LITTLE NEST,
WHERE IT'S "MOTHER KNOWS BEST."

MYCENAEANS ASK ME FOR SOME GOOD ADVICE, TEN TIMES A DAY:
WANT TO KNOW JUST HOW I KEEP THE HOME SO NICE, WHAT CAN I
SAY? (speaks) Aegisthus?

AEGISTHUS

EVERYTHING'S DANDY, EVERYTHING'S FINE,
EVERYTHING'S FANTASTIC WITH THIS FAMILY OF MINE.
NOTHING WE SAY COULD MAKE THEM SEE WHY
NOTHING EVERY GOES AWRY.

BOTH

NO ONE'S COMPLAINING, NO ONE'S MISTREATED OR ABUSED,

CLYTEMNESTRA

AND THE AX IS HARDLY EVER USED
ON MY FAMILY: LOOKING BEAUTIFUL AND SO DUTIFUL TOO.
MY FAMILY: IF YOU'RE DOUBTING IT, I'LL BE SHOUTING "IT'S
TRUE!"
AND IF IT IS SEEMING THAT WE ARE DREAMING THAT
EVERYONE IS HAPPY.
YOU WILL SEE WE'LL RIGHT
AT THE PARTY TONIGHT.

(CLYTEMNESTRA and AEGISTHUS do a soft-shoe; CHRYSOTHEMIS
keeps whistling.)

ELECTRA

A party? What do you know about a party?

(CHRYSOTHEMIS still whistling; tries to speak.)

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Something Mama dreamed up last night.

CLYTEMNESTRA

(sweet and threatening)

Hey, songbird, one more verse. Electra, clean up!

(CHRYSOTHEMIS whistles "yes," ELECTRA pulls tablecloth
together, exits into palace.)

CLYTEMNESTRA and AEGISTHUS

FAMILY: ONCE THEY'VE MET ONE, THEY'LL WANT TO GET ONE LIKE OURS;

FAMILY: LOVING WORDS AND THE SINGING BIRDS AND THE FLOWERS. AND IF YOU'RE IMPLYING THAT WE ARE LYING THAT EVERYONE IS HAPPY.

WE SWEAR WITH EV'RY BREATH,
THAT WE LOVE THEM TO DEATH! TO DEATH! TO DEATH!

(Blackout. Lights up on a road between Mycenae and Phocis.
The VICTIMS OF HISTORY trudge along.)

OEDIPUS

Are we there yet? Are we there yet?

ACHILLES

We will be sure to let you know when.

CASSANDRA

Would that the sightless one were soundless as well.

OEDIPUS

How much longer?

PANDORA

That we cannot tell.
The crystal of the princess is clouded and cracked.

CASSANDRA

Were it not for you, Pandora, there would be no wars,
No injuries, no suffering, no lousy poetry, no Hope.

VOH

HOOOOOOOPE!

(They nearly exit.)

PANDORA

Should we have looked at those road signs?

(The others glare.)

Sorry again. Sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry...

(The Victims exit. PHOEBE and CHLOE stick their heads out.)

PHOEBE

It's all right.

CHLOE

The coast is clear.

(LAVERNE appears with ORESTES, her hand over his mouth.)

Laverne, you may let go now.

ORESTES

Who were they?

LAVERNE

Just some people into major kvetching.

ORESTES

I could have helped them. Why did you stop me?

PHOEBE

It would have taken you, like, off course.

ORESTES

How can a star go off course?

LAVERNE

That again.

CHLOE

One cannot help everybody.

ORESTES

Why not?

CHLOE

It's too big a job.

ORESTES

Too big a job for a st...

LAVERNE (shushing him)

Stop! Phoebe, Chloe, we gotta talk. Orestes, you stand guard.

(He stands by the tree looking fierce. They walk a bit so that he can't hear.)

CHLOE

Something wrong?

LAVERNE

We gotta cut this guy down to size.

PHOEBE

It think it's cute.

LAVERNE

But it's the same problem. He's still trapped thinking he's gotta be a hero.

CHLOE

Then let's tell him of someone who met with an unfortunate end while following similar behavioral idiosyncracies.

PHOEBE

His dad really got clobbered by the destiny thing.

LAVERNE

Yeah. But telling won't work. We gotta show him.

CHLOE

Dear, Agamemenon is no longer with us.

LAVERNE

The cemetery.

CHLOE

Laverne, you are unwell. I could never do something like that.

PHOEBE

'Til now.

CHLOE

Ah yes. New age comin'.

LAVERNE

All right, Orestes, we're going to Mycenae. By way of that second hill. You'll get a view like you've never seen before.

PHOEBE and CHLOE

"Til now.

(ORESTES runs off.)

PHOEBE

I'll catch up with him. You follow when you can.

(She runs after him. LAVERNE and CHLOE follow more slowly.)

CHLOE

This new age business is a bitch on the buskins.

LAVERNE

You got that right.

(Blackout. Lights up on CYHRYSOTHEMIS, with packages, and ELECTRA in front of the palace.)

ELECTRA
(screaming)

You're going to do what???

CHRYSOTHEMIS
Mother gave me these libations...

ELECTRA
To desecrate Father's grave?

CHRYSOTHEMIS
Then I have to pick up things for tonight's party...

ELECTRA
Don't you have any moral fiber?

CHRYSOTHEMIS
Do you get that at the health food store?

ELECTRA
You must join me in resisting their orders.

CHRYSOTHEMIS
Oooh, no, I don't think so. She was so excited about this dream last night...

ELECTRA
Her too?

CHRYSOTHEMIS
You had a dream?

ELECTRA
No, I was up all night.

CHRYSOTHEMIS
Electra! Really? Tell me all about him!

ELECTRA
Not because of that!

CHRYSOTHEMIS
Too bad. Maybe you'd be happier...

ELECTRA
You and I are not meant to be happy.

CHRYSOTHEMIS
Oh, yeah, I keep forgetting.

ELECTRA

Here we are, leading wretched lives...

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Yes...

ELECTRA

...indentured slaves to cold-blooded murderers...

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Uh-huh...

ELECTRA

...and you go off and blithely do their shopping! How do you do it?

CHRYSOTHEMIS

How do I do it?

DO, DO-DO-DO-DO-DO. DO-DO-DO-DO-DO-DO-DO!
 DO-DO-DO-DO-DO. DO-DO-DO-DO-DO-DO-DO!
 I GUESS I GO WITH THE FLOW, MOVE IN THE GROOVE,
 I GUESS I FALL IN WITH PUBLIC OPINION.
 AND SO I ACT OUT MY PART, ACT MY AGE, ACT MY CLASS,
 IN CARTHAGE, I'D ACT CARTHAGINIAN.
 I KEEP OFF THE GRASS WITHOUT ASKING WHY,
 AND YOU KNOW THAT I ALWAYS LET SLEEPING DOGS SLEEP.

ELECTRA

Lie!

CHRYSOTHEMIS

It is not!

I GO WITH THE FLOW, GO WITH THE FLOW,
 AND DO WHAT THEY TELL ME TO DO,
 DO-DO-DO-DO-DO. DO-DO-DO-DO-DO-DO-DO!

Maybe you should try it.

ELECTRA

Impossible! My entire soul is consumed by rage.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

The way I hear it, soon your entire bod will be consumed by worms.

ELECTRA

What?

CHRYSOTHEMIS

YOU OUGHT TO GO WITH THE FLOW, TRY TO COMPLY,
 YOU OUGHTA FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS PRECISELY.

'CAUSE AEGISTHUS' PLOT IS THAT, STEP-DAUGHTER OR NOT,
THEY'RE PLANNING TO TREAT YOU NOT-SO-NICELY.

ELECTRA

Like how?

CHRYSOTHEMIS

THEY'LL HOLD YOU FACE DOWN IN A TUB THAT IS FULL.

ELECTRA

Of what?

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Don't ask!

OR LOCK YOU IN A LABYRINTH WITH AN ANGRY COW.

ELECTRA

Bull!

CHRYSOTHEMIS

The truth!

YOU OUGHTA GO WITH THE FLOW, GO WITH THE FLOW
AND DO WHAT THEY TELL YOU TO DO,
DO-DO-DO-DO-DO. DO-DO-DO-DO-DO-DO-DO!

ELECTRA

TORTURE IS REALLY NOTHING NEW TO ME.
IT WOULD BE A RELIEF AND AN HONOR TO DIE,
AND SINCE I COULDN'T CARE LESS WHAT THEY DO TO ME,
YOU'D BETTER COME UP WITH A BETTER REASON WHY
I GOTTA GO WITH THE FLOW.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

BUT YOU GOTTA GO WITH THE FLOW;
I'M GONNA HAUL OUT THE BIG AMMUNITION:
HAVE YOU EVER HAD SEX?

(ELECTRA slaps her face.)

I GUESS YOU NEVER HAD SEX.
DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S A SERIOUS OMISSION?
TO DIE AS A VIRGIN IS A SAD PIECE OF LUCK,
AND YOUR TOMB SAYS, 'ELECTRA, SHE NEVER GOT TO — LIVE.'

ELECTRA

TO FUH...

(CHRYSOTHEMIS clasps her hand over ELECTRA's mouth.)

CHRYSOTHEMIS

TO FUNCTION AT THE TOP OF HER POTENTIAL AS A FULLY
ACTUALIZED HUMAN BEING!

ELECTRA
(mimicking CHRYSOTHEMIS)

Uh-huh.

BOTH
I (YOU) GOTTA GO WITH THE FLOW, GO WITH THE FLOW
AND DO WHAT THEY TELL ME (YOU) TO DO,
DO-DO-DO-DO-DO. DO-DO-DO-DO-DO-DO-DO!

(Blackout. Lights up on the VOH inside PEGAGOGUS' hovel.
He enters with a pile of ashes.)

PEDAGOGUS
Hey, Oedipus, howsa folks?

PANDORA
You know us?

(PEDAGOGUS removes an urn from the shelf.)

PEDAGOGUS
What historian would not know the great Victims of History?
I mean ex-historian.

ACHILLES
We have come to ask of you a favor.

(PEDAGOGUS hands him the urn.)

PEDAGOGUS
Hold this urn, would you, while I bury the future? The
Agamemnon family history is officially ashes. Purely a
symbolic gesture, of course, since after six thousand eight
hundred forty-four days of teaching a rather slow student
from a single volume one can be expected to commit a great
portion of it to memory...but there you have it. Now I am
free, but...useless. Thanks.

(Caps the urn and takes it back)

What are you specters doing here, anyway? Am I not forlorn
enough? Go find some happy people to depress. If there
are any.

CASSANDRA
Are you kidding? Gladsome folk are everywhere,
Breaking the tradition of victimization,
Driving their own lives as smoothly as a hot discus through
cold moussaka.

OEDIPUS

We need a person with your knowledge and expertise and
birthplace
To enable us to bear witness to a great tragedy.

PEDAGOGUS

What a great opportunity! Too bad I gave up writing
histories.

PANDORA

We don't want you to write.

PEDAGOGUS

Oh yeah, why not? And who says I would, anyway? Get out
of here. Care for some babaganough?

FORGIVE ME IF I'M ACTING STRANGE;
IT'S JUST THAT THE UNIVERSE WENT THROUGHT THIS CHANGE,
SO I'VE SPENT ALL MORNING DECIDING WHAT I NEED TO DO:

CASSANDRA

But we...

PEDAGOGUS

PLEASE DON'T INTERRUPT ME UNTIL I AM THROUGH!

CASSANDRA

Sorry!

PEDAGOGUS

LAST NIGHT I WAS CLEAR AS TO WHAT I'D ASPIRE.
THIS MORNING MY PLANS DISSAPPEARED IN A FLASH.
WHO'D GUESS I'D BE SETTING MY FUTURE ON FIRE?
NOW AIN'T THAT A WONDERFUL KICK IN THE ASH?
LIFE WAS A GRIND, BUT I SOMEHOW ADJUSTED,
BUT NOW I HAVE REALLY BEEN PUT THROUGH THE MILL;
I NOT ONLY FIND THAT THE FATES CAN'T BE TRUSTED,
BUT THEN I GET SLAMMED BY THIS THING CALLED FREE WILL.

ACHILLES

What's free will?

PEDAGOGUS

DON'T ASK ME;
I REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND IT.
PLANNED IT ALL OUT BUT NOW EVERYTHING THAT I SEE
ALL LOOKS LIKE GREEK TO ME.

MY FUTURE EMPLOYMENT WILL NOT BE FORTHCOMING,
IT'S ONE OF LIFE'S LITTLE INSIDIOUS TRICKS;

I THINK IT'S A PITY I NEVER LEARNED PLUMBING,
'CAUSE MY LAST SIXTEEN YEARS HAVE BEEN FLUSHED DOWN THE
STYX.

I FEEL LIKE AN ACTOR LET GO AT THE ENTR'ACTE,
AN ATHLETE TURNED DOWN BY A HALF-DOZEN TEAMS;
NOW NO ONE WILL GIVE ME AN IRON-CLAD CONTRACT,
AND JUST 'CASUE I'M RUSTY INTERPRETING DREAMS.

OEDIPUS

Dreams? What are dreams?

PEDAGOGUS

DON'T ASK ME;
NEVER HAVE WANTED TO TRY ONE.
MY ONE REGRET IS THE STORY I KNOW SO WELL
I'LL NEVER GET TO TELL.

IT ISN'T FOR ME THAT I STAND HERE COMPLAINING;
IT'S ALL OF THOSE PLAYWRIGHTS FOR WHOM I'M CONCERNED.
WITHOUT ME, THE FUTURE IS LESS ENTERTAINING;
WITH MY BOOK IN ASHES, THE THEATRE GETS BURNED.
OLD SOPHOCLES' VERSION WILL NOT PACK THE HOUSES,
O'NEILL WILL BE STUCK WITH A FIX AND A COUGH,
POOR BIRGIT WON'T BELT OUT THAT OPERA OF STRAUSS'S.
AND MUCKLE AND EISNER WILL NEVER TAKE OFF.

CASSANDRA

Who?

PEDAGOGUS

UH-UH-UH,
I DON'T KNOW BETTER THAN YOU DO;
WHO DO YOU TURN TO WHEN ORACLES DISAPPEAR?
WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE?

OH! THE DOOR TO THE FUTURE WAS NEVER A PROBLEM,
UNTIL THEY DECIDED ON CHANGING THE KEY!

IT'S SUCH AN ANNOYANCE TO LOSE ONE'S CLAIRVOYANCE;
WHEN EVERY PREDICTION IS TURNED INTO FICTION,
EACH PROGNOSTICATION ENDS UP IN FRUSTRATION,
SO FACE THE UNKNOWN NOW AND LEAVE ME ALONE NOW;
AND IF YOU ARE GOING,
PLEASE DON'T ASK ME, ASK ME, ASK ME!

OEDIPUS

You want to go to Mycenae?

PEDAGOGUS

I thought you'd never ask.

(Blackout. Lights up on ORESTES at Agamemnon's grave, oblivious to the bleak surroundings; a forest of stumps in the background. PHOEBE enters, breathless.)

PHOEBE

You run fast.

ORESTES

I was eager to get here. Where are the others?

PHOEBE

Still halfway down.

ORESTES

This is the hilltop where my sisters and I used to play. I remember everything like it was yesterday.

PHOEBE

Really?

ORESTES

Don't you believe me? Here, stand on this rock. To your right is a meadow, filled with flowers. Isn't it beautiful?

PHOEBE

If you like brown.

ORESTES

And behind you is a forest where we used to play hide and seek.

PHOEBE

You must have been very, very short.

ORESTES

And this is the same rock where we used to come and listen to the...

PHOEBE

What?

ORESTES

Where are the birds?

PHOEBE

No more birds in Mycenae.

ORESTES

And the forest?

PHOEBE

Cut down for making funeral pyres.

ORESTES

And the...

PHOEBE

The flowers were gathered by mourners to be put on graves.
I guess they decided not to bother growing back.

ORESTES

At least the rock is the same.

PHOEBE

Look again.

ORESTES

Father's grave?

PHOEBE

Yes.

ORESTES

IT SHOULDN'T BE LIKE THIS, THERE MUST BE SOME MISTAKE,
IT'S NOT THE PLACE I KNEW THAT I WOULD FIND.

PHOEBE

Sixteen years is a long time.

ORESTES

IT'S ABSOLUTELY WRONG, IT CAN'T BE REALLY TRUE,
IT'S NOT THE HOME I PICTURED IN MY MIND.

HOME AGAIN, ALL MY MEMORIES RUNNING BACK, I'M
HOME AGAIN, ALL MY FEELINGS WAKING UP, I'M
HOME AGAIN, ALWAYS HAPPY BACK WHERE I BELONG.

HOME AGAIN, SO MANY TIMES I'D CLIMB THOSE BRANCHES,
HOME AGAIN, SO MANY TIMES I'D BREATHE THOSE ROSES,
HOME AGAIN, SO MANY LARKS WOULD FILL THE AIR WITH SONG.

NOW MY EARS BURN WITH THE SILENT. HARSH SURPRISE,
AND THE UTTER DESOLATION STINGS MY EYES,
AND EVERYTHING OF BEAUTY THAT I DEPENDED ON, IS DEAD AND
GONE.

DEAR FATHER, PLEASE TELL ME
WHAT YOU WOULD DO IF YOU WERE ME?

SHOULD I LEAVE?
OR SHOULD I GO AND TAKE COMMAND
TO MAKE THIS LAND

OUR HOME AGAIN.

(ORESTES runs off. PHOEBE makes no attempt to stop him.
LAVERNE and CHLOE enter.)

LAVERNE

Where is he?

CHLOE

Where did he go?

(PHOEBE shrugs silently.)

LAVERNE

We lost him, huh?

CHLOE

We might find him again.

PHOEBE

I don't want to. This dream business is for the birds.

LAVERNE

And the flowers.

CHLOE

And the people.

PHOEBE

These people, please – they know that they're messing up
their lives, but they're just too stubborn to change.

CHLOE

Maybe they don't know it.

(CHRYSOTHEMIS enters with libations, from the same
direction ORESTES exited, looking behind her.)

Who could be that naïve?

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Excuse me, but do you women know who that was at Father's
grave? He looked so familiar.

CHLOE

I shall handle this one.

(Blackout. Lights up outside the courtyard. The VICTIMS
OF HISTORY trudge across, each holding a rope, carrying
PEDAGOGUS and his urn. They drop him abruptly.)

PEDAGOGUS

This is it? You get me into Mycenae and then you dump me?

ACHILLES

We could tie you to a rock until an eagle comes down to tear out your liver.

PEDAGOGUS

This is fine. Thanks anyway.

OEDIPUS

Now we must go to find those who will witness
The executions of mother and step-father by Orestes.

VOH

Orestes!

PEDAGOGUS

Uh, there is something I think you need to know.

CASSANDRA

Not now.

PEDAGOGUS

But I think...

PANDORA

Liver?!

PEDAGOGUS

Right.

OEDIPUS

Ready, all?

VOH

Yes!

(They begin they noontime lamentations.)

The sun burns.

OEDIPUS

And the scorching, searing, stinging Chariot of Apollo
Leads us nowhere, and there we shall remain.
Our lives stay as dark as the inside of a cow at midnight,
And still...

VOH

The sun burns.

tCASSANDRA

As it did the weeks I was tied to the mast of the black-sailed ship,
And taunted, teased, tormented, until sores of Greeks tore off my clothing and...

(They exit.)

PEDAGOGUS

I always miss the good parts.

(Looks about.)

I have to get my bearings. Let's see. This time of day the sun is in the south, and my shadow...

(CLYTEMNESTRA bursts thru the palace gate in a rage, followed by AEGISTHUS, both of whom ignore PEDAGOGUS.)

CLYTEMNESTRA

Mad! Mad I tell you! Electra is driving me mad!

PEDAGOGUS

I know that voice. Oooh, she has not aged well.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Mad, mad, mad!

PEDAGOGUS

At all.

AEGISTHUS

My little lentil, I don't understand.

CLYTEMNESTRA

For sixteen years, Electra has had a bad attitude.

AEGISTHUS

A very bad attitude.

CLYTEMNESTRA

We pretended to ignore her, and life was fine. But just now I found her, scrubbing the grand staircase and...humming.

AEGISTHUS

Humming?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Uptempo.

AEGISTHUS

Oooh, that is bad.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I shall never be able to preside at tonight's festivities when I am so unnerved.

AEGISTHUS

Have her stop.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Stop?

AEGISTHUS

You are queen, are you not? Command her to stop.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Stop. Brilliant, my fava bean.

(calling)

Electra!

ELECTRA

(from within)

Yes Mama?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Stop what you are doing and come out here.

(ELECTRA appears at the door holding a scrub brush. Her clothes and attitude are an imitation of CHRYSOTHEMIS.)

ELECTRA

I have not quite finished, Mama.

CLYTEMNESTRA

(sweetly)

That's okay. Take a break.

ELECTRA

But there's still some soap on the staircase and I have to...

CLYTEMNESTRA

(through clenched teeth)

Rest now. Rinse later.

ELECTRA

Whatever you say, Mama.

AEGISTHUS

Your mother and I want to be alone for a while.

ELECTRA

Very well, your majesties. Let me know when I may resume my happy task.

(ELECTRA begins to hum "Go With the Flow". CLYTEMNESTRA

freezes at that, but AEGISTHUS pushes her into the palace.)

(sings)

I GUESS YOU NEVER HAD SEX...

(in her normal voice)

Sex better be worth it.

PEDAGOGUS

Electra!

(She looks him up and down, shakes her head resignedly.)

ELECTRA

Well, let's get it over with.

(She knocks him on his back, kicks his toga above his waist, straddles his body and starts to squat on him.)

PEDAGOGUS

Electra, wait!

ELECTRA

What do you want, beggar?

PEDAGOGUS

I am no beggar. I am your tutor Pedagogus.

ELECTRA

Just my luck – the first guy I land likes it kinky. Okay, you play Pedagogus, and I'll be the homecoming queen from Hellespont High.

(She starts to squat again.)

PEDAGOGUS

But I really am.

ELECTRA

So where's Orestes?

PEDAGOGUS

Gone.

ELECTRA

Just what my mother and her lover would like to have me think. Come on, this will only take a second.

(She starts to squat again.)

PEDAGOGUS

Here. The urn that you gave us for our escape. Filled with pistachios.

ELECTRA

Pistachios! It is you! No one else could know that. Ugh, what I almost did.

(She gets up and helps him up; tried to recover by playing hostess.)

Care for a nut?

PEDAGOGUS

Fresh out.

(ELECTRA opens the urn and looks inside.)

ELECTRA

Orestes is...

PEDAGOGUS

Gone. All we have left is...

ELECTRA

..ashes. Tell me something.

PEDAGOGUS

If I can.

ELECTRA

On the great ocean of life, are we flotsam or jetsam?

PEDAGOGUS

It's been a lousy day.

ELECTRA

I imitate my idiot sister, I smile at my father's murderers, I try to copulate with my old professor. It's like a bad dream.

PEDAGOGUS

Please don't use that word.

ELECTRA

Life has no meaning. Well, if the Fates have given up, so can I.

PEDAGOGUS

Me, too. Years spent on the Agamemnon family saga, and it's lies, lies, lies. And the novel hasn't even been invented yet. I don't see how we can go on.

ELECTRA

We can't, Pedagogus. We're dead in the water.

PEDAGOGUS

Flotsam, I think.

ELECTRA

That was my guess.

(sings)

WAITING FOR HIM
DIDN'T WORK OUT.
I EVEN TRIED TO GO WITH THE FLOW FOR A WHILE
BUT IT DIDN'T WORK OUT.

ELECTRA and PEDAGOGUS

NO, IT DIDN'T WORK OUT.

PEDAGOGUS

HOW DID OUR TALE
EVER TURN OUT LIKE THIS?
I'VE LOOKED AND I'VE LOOKED AT THE LIVES WE'RE SUPPOSED TO
HAVE HAD,
BUT THEY WEREN'T LIKE THIS,

ELECTRA and PEDAGOGUS

NO, NOTHING LIKE THIS.

ELECTRA

HOW COULD I HAVE GOTTEN MY LIFE SO WRONG,
I HAD IT MAPPED OUT TO THE VERY LAST MILE.
FOR SIXTEEN YEARS I WAS CRUISING ALONG,
BECAUSE I KNEW THE TRIP WOULD TAKE ME AWHILE.

BUT THEN THE IMPOSSIBLE HAPPENED.
DESTROYING MY PLAN THAT I HAD SWORN TO PURSUE,
AND YOU WILL NEVER GUESS WHAT HAPPENED:
A BIG RED OCTAGON CAME RIGHT INTO VIEW.

OO-OO-OO

MY LIFE JUST HIT A STOP SIGN,
NOT A MERGE TO THE LEFT, NOT A CURVE UP AHEAD,
IT HIT A STOP SIGN;
YOU KNOW I FEEL AS IF I'M ALREADY DEAD.

PEDAGOGUS

HOW COULD I HAVE GOTTEN MY LIFE SO WRONG,
I'M MORE THAN JUST A LITTLE PERPLEXED.
FOR SIXTEEN YEARS I WAS CRUISING ALONG,
AND WROTE DOWN EXACTLY WHERE I WOULD GO NEXT.

BUT THEN THE IMPOSSIBLE HAPPENED,
AND YOU BETTER TAKE NOTES 'CAUSE THIS COULD HAPPEN TO YOU;
AND YOU WILL NEVER GUESS WHAT HAPPENED:
A FOUR-LETTER WORD APPEARED FROM OUT OF THE BLUE.

OO-OO-OO
 MY LIFE JUST HIT A STOP SIGN,
 NOT A QUIET – SCHOOL ZONE, NOT A WALK OR DON'T WALK,
 IT HIT A STOP SIGN;
 YOU BETTER DRAW A LINE AROUND ME WITH CHALK.

ELECTRA and PEDAGOGUS
 NOT A WATCH FOR DEER (NO, NO),
 NOT A CAUTION: WIDE LOAD (UH-UH),
 I'M GONNA LIE RIGHT HERE,
 IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD.

(CHRYSOTHEMIS enters, followed by the CHORUS.)

CHRYSOTHEMIS
 You imbecilic underachievers! Of course it was an act!
 Nobody could be that stupid and survive this den of
 degeneracy! And now you inform me the act no longer works?
 And you expect me to be happy about it?!

HOW COULD I HAVE GOTTEN MY LIFE SO WRONG,
 TO CRASH INTO THIS CATASTROPHE;
 FOR SIXTEEN YEARS I WAS CRUISING ALONG
 AND SHIFTING GEARS AUTOMATICALLY.

BUT THEN THE IMPOSSIBLE HAPPENED,
 AS I ATTEMPTED TO DRIVE THROUGH THIS MISERABLE DAY;
 AND YOU WILL NEVER GUESS WHAT HAPPENED:
 THIS SHINE EIGHT-SIDED THING HAD SOMETHING TO SAY.

HEY-HEY-HEY.
 MY LIFE JUST HIT A STOP SIGN,
 NOT A SLIPPERY WHEN WET, NOT A LEFT LANE TO PASS,
 IT HIT A STOP SIGN;
 AND NOW IT LOOKS LIKE I HAVE RUN OUT OF GAS.

CHRYSOTHEMIS, ELECTRA and PEDAGOGUS
 NOT A WATCH FOR DEER (NO, NO),
 NOT A CAUTION: WIDE LOAD (UH-UH),
 MAKE SOME ROOM FOR ME HERE,
 IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD.

(She joins PEDAGOGUS and ELECTRA in the road. ORESTES
 enters with a rope around his neck.)

ORESTES
 What's all this?

LAVERNE
 History's first gridlock for depressives.

ORESTES

Then I'm in the right place.

HOW COULD I HAVE GOTTEN MY LIFE SO WRONG,
I REHEARSED EVERY DAY WITH THE UTMOST OF CARE.
FOR SIXTEEN YEARS I WAS CRUISING ALONG,
AWAITING THE TIME I WOULD TAKE TO THE AIR.

BUT THEN THE IMPOSSIBLE HAPPENED,
AS ALL SYSTEMS ARE GO, AS I'M READY TO FLY;
AND YOU WILL NEVER GUESS WHAT HAPPENED:
AT THE END OF THE RUNWAY, SOMETHING CAPTURED MY EYE.

AY AY AY
MY LIFE JUST HIT A STOP SIGN,
NOT A PRIVATE — KEEP OFF, NOT A NO VACANCY,
IT HIT A STOP SIGN;
I GOT A ROPE, NOW ALL I NEED IS A TREE.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Sorry, fella.

ELECTRA

No trees in Mycenae.

ORESTES

Oh, yeah.

WELL THERE'S ANOTHER STOP SIGN,
NOT A FALLING ROCK ZONE, NOT A YIELD- RIGHT OF WAY,
ANOTHER STOP SIGN;
IF THERE WERE TRAFFIC I WOULD RUN OUT AND PLAY.

PEDAGOGUS

If we wait here long enough traffic will develop.

(ORESTES joins them. LAVERNE, PHOEBE and CHLOE do a slower
verse.)

CHORUS

HOW EASY TO HAVE GOTTEN YOUR LIFE SO WRONG,
TO CARRY A LOAD TO THE BITTER EXTREME;
NO QUESTION ONE IS WEARY, THE ROAD'S BEEN LONG,
WE'RE ALL YEARNING FOR A MOMENT TO DREAM...

(A lone bird flies overhead; on the CHORUS sees it.)

CHORUS

Oh my...

BIRDS OF THE AIR SOAR TO THE HEAVENS,
LIVING THEIR LIVES SO HIGH, SO FAR,

THEY LEAVE THE EARTH AND START THEIR SOARING;
THEY DON'T LOOK BACK FROM WHERE THEY ARE.

BIRDS DO NOT CARE WHERE THEY HAVE COME FROM,
WHAT SORT OF NEST, WHAT KIND OF TREE,
THEY SIMPLY FLY, THEY HAVE NO LIMITS;
HOW CAN WE LEARN TO BE SO FREE?

FOR THE FEAR OF A NEW LIFE IS HOLDING US FAST,
AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE IS KILLED BY THE PAST.
OUR LIVES NEVER CHANGE BUT WE NEVER ASK WHY,
SO WE NEVER LEARN WHAT IT MEANS TO FLY.

BIRDS OF THE AIR CONTINUE SOARING, LEAVING US ALL SO FAR
BELOW,
AND IF WE WATCH, WE LEARN THEIR SECRET,
WE LEARN THE KEY TO WHAT THEY KNOW:

THEY SIMPLY FLY.

THEY SIMPLY FLY.

(The VICTIMS OF HISTORY enter.)

ACHILLES

We have come to collect the craven souls of the wretched.

(The four on the floor raise their hands.)

PANDORA

Sorry, you have to be dead first.

CASSANDRA

Killed, preferably, like Clytemnestra and Aegisthus.

VOH

Clytemnesssstra and Aegisssssthus.

PHOEBE

You'll find them inside.

CHLOE

Preparing for their party.

LAVERNE

Still very much alive.

OEDIPUS

Aaah, the living. They do amuse me.

(The VICTIMS enter the palace. From inside we hear the beginnings of the performance at the party. PEDAGOGUS gets

up from the road and climbs the wall to see what is happening.)

CLYTEMNESTRA and AEGISTHUS

PEDAGOGUS

FAMILY:
 START YOUR GRINNING NOW,
 I'M BEGINNING TO PRAISE
 THE FAMILY: SUCH DELECTABLE
 AND RESPECTABLE DAYS.
 HOW WE STAY TOGETHER AND
 PRAY TOGETHER AND
 EVERYONE IS HAPPY -
 UNCOMPETITIVE,
 'CAUSE IT'S LIVE AND LET...
 (scream off-stage)
 AARGH.

Hey, I love that tune.
 Let's go in. No, I guess
 not. I mean, am I the
 only one here with any
 curiosity left at all.
 Okay fine. Don't bother
 giving me a leg up or
 anything. Hey, they're
 not bad. (ad lib until
 end of number)

(Small crash. PEDAGOGUS, from his perch, watches them bounce down the stairs and land with a large crash. The CHORUS and now-orphans look up at him.)

PEDAGOGUS

I got some good news and some bad news.

(ELECTRA, CHRYSOTHEMIS, ORESTES and PEDAGOGUS adopt the VICTIMS' style.)

ELECTRA

Woe is me! This is all my fault.
 They slipped on stairs I neglected to rinse.
 Instead I hummed.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

No, my fault, mine, dear sister, for you hummed at my bidding.
 And had I returned from the grave more fleetly..

ORESTES

No, no, me, me, me.
 The libations I left delayed you, thereby..

PEDAGOGUS

No, no, children, it is my fault.
 I can't imagine why, but I'm sure it is my fault.

ELECTRA, CHRYSOTHEMIS, ORESTES and PEDAGOGUS
 Woe is me. All my fault. No, no, my fault.

LAVERNE

Hey guys, wake up, it was an accident.

ELECTRA

Accidents do not just happen.

PHOEBE

Yes they do.

CHLOE

That's what accidents are.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

You three must leave us now.

ORESTES

That they cannot do.

PEDAGOGUS

Ah, yes. They must punish by following us
All the rest of our days ensuring our respective miseries.
For they are...

ELECTRA, CHRYSOTHEMIS, ORESTES and PEDAGOGUS
The Three Furies.

LAVERNE

I'll show you fury.

(PHOEBE and CHLOE each grab one of LAVERNE's arms.)

PHOEBE and CHLOE

Laverne!

CHLOE

YOU MUST EXCUSE MY FRIEND HERE, BUT SHE'S A LITTLE BIT
TIRED FROM TRYING TO DELIVER OUR MESSAGE, WHEN YOU PEOPLE
REFUSE TO GET IT.

PHOEBE

BUT SHE KNOWS AS WELL AS WE DO, IF WE DON'T COMPLETE OUR
ASSIGNMENT, WE AND THE REST OF HUMANITY MIGHT VERY WELL
LIVE TO REGRET IT.

LAVERNE

SO, ONE MORE TRY: THE FATES HAVE GIVEN UP, YOUR FUTURE'S UP
TO YOU, AND YOUR PAST CONTROLS YOUR LIFE ONLY AS LONG AS
YOU LET IT.

PEDAGOGUS

Nothing you do or say can convince us of that.

(CHORUS gives up and turns to leave. A bird flies
overhead.)

Aw, jeez, a bird just shit on me. Oh my gods.

(CHORUS looks heavenward.)

PHOEBE

THANK YOU!

CHLOE

THANK YOU!

LAVERNE

THANK YOU!

(Flowers pop up everywhere.)

PEDAGOGUS

What, no trees?

PHOEBE

Maybe tomorrow, Pops.

CHLOE

Today, give your toga a rinse.

LAVERNE

And tonight, you can recite the Agamemnon family history.

PEDAGOGUS

But the ending I wrote is all wrong.

LAVERNE

Right. But if people see how ludicrous it is to put your life on hold, maybe they will start living to the fullest.

PEDAGOGUS

And ignore the tragedies that surround us?

PHOEBE

Not ignore them...

CHLOE

...but not spend sixteen years consumed by them either.

IN YOUR VIEW, IT IS TRUE THAT SORROW HAS PERSISTANCE:

PHOEBE

THERE IS EVERLASTING CRYING AND COMPLAINT.

PHOEBE and CHLOE

WE BELIEVE THAT TO GRIEVE IS A PART OF OUR EXISTENCE,

LAVERNE

BUT THE BE-ALL AND END-ALL IT AIN'T.

YOU'LL START TO QUESTION THE WORTH
 OF SPENDING TIME ON THIS EARTH
 IN THE SCRUBBING OF ASSORTED SORTS OF SCUMS, ONCE YOU SEE
 THAT MOURNING BECOMES
 RIDICULOUS!

PHOEBE

IN RESPONSE TO DESPAIR,
 YOU CAN TEAR OUT YOUR HAIR
 OR DISPLAY YOUR NOSES AT YOUR THUMBS
 AND REPEAT THAT MOURNING BECOMES
 RIDICULOUS!

ELECTRA

MAYBE WE'VE BEEN WASTING OUR TIME...

ORESTES

MAYBE WE'VE BEEN SILLY...

PEDOGOGUS and CHRYSOTHEMIS

MAYBE WE'VE BEEN A LITTLE ABSURD...

CHORUS

MAYBE WE CAN THINK OF A MUCH BETTER WORD.

CHLOE

TO CRAWL OUT OF THE TRAP,
 AND GIVE UP THE BLACK-CREPE CRAP,
 FOR A CROP OF BRIGHT CHRYSANTHEMUMS,
 SOON YOU'LL SEE THAT MOURNING BECOMES...

(The VICTIMS OF HISTORY, with the ghosts of CLYTEMNESTRA
 and AEGISTHUS, interrupt with their evening lamentations.)

OEDIPUS

The night falls.
 How does a blind man know this?
 Well you might ask;
 The long scratching fingernails of death
 Scrape along the slate of my soul,
 And then, I know.

VOH

The night falls.

PANDORA

As I fell from grace,

ACHILLES

AS I fell from vicious battle,

CASSANDRA

As I fell before regiments of victorious Greeks, with no
Trojans nearby to save me.

VOH

The night falls.

CLYTEMNESTRA and AEGISTHUS

As we fell down soapy slippery steps,
To split our skulls on the marble floor of the vestibule,
And watch our selves ebb into bright bloody bubbles
Of lye and lard and life.
The music continues,
But as no one is there to sing and dance,
The curtain falls,
Just as

VOH

The night falls.

(The VICTIMS fade from the stage.)

PEDAGOGUS

You know, I think that Clytemnestra and Aegisthus did very
well for beginners, don't you?

ALL

AAS OUR STORY SUGGESTS,
YOU SHOULD STOP BEATING YOUR BREASTS,
AND START IN THE FLAPPING OF YOUR GUMS,
AND REPEAT THAT MOURNING BECOMES
NOT JUST A WASTE OF TIME,
NOT JUST SILLY,
NOT JUST A LITTLE ABSURD,
BUT MOURNING BECOMES

VOH

The night falls.

ALL

MOURNING BECOMES,

VOH

The night falls.

ALL

MOURNING BECOMES
RIDICULOUS!
RIDICULOUS!
RIDICULOUS!

(Birds fly overhead; the sisters and their brother
embrace.)