

# OEDIPUS REX (430 B.C.)

by Sophocles (496 B.C. – 406 A.D.)

## SCENE 2

(1) **Kreon:** Men of Thebes: I am told that heavy accusations have been brought against me by King Oedipus.

(13) **Choragos:** He may have spoken in anger, not from his mind.

(17) **Kreon:** But you were watching him! Were his eyes steady? Did he look like a man in his right mind?

**Choragos:** I do not know. I cannot judge the behavior of great men. But here is the king himself.

(20) **Oedipus:** So you dared come back. Why? How brazen of you to come to my house, you murderer! Do you think I do not know that you plotted to kill me, plotted to steal my throne?

(41) **Kreon:** But tell me: what have I done to you?

Oedipus accuses him of treason

(66-) **Kreon:** Think of this first: would any sane man prefer power, with all a king's anxieties, to that same power and the grace of sleep? Certainly not I. I have never longed for the king's power – only his rights.

(89) As for this other thing: if I am found guilty of treason with Teiresias, then sentence me to death. You have my word it is a sentence I should cast my vote for – but not without evidence!

(106) **Oedipus:** It is your death I want, so that all the world may see what treason means.

**(118) Iokaste enters:** Poor foolish men, what wicked din is this? With Thebes sick to death, is it not shameful that you should rake some private quarrel up?

**(page 53, left column) Iokaste to Oedipus:** Set your mind at rest. If it is a question of soothsayers, I tell you that you will find no man whose craft gives knowledge of the unknowable.

**(Narrates the story of the oracle and concludes)** Laios was killed by marauding strangers where **three highways meet**; But his child had not been three days in this world before the king had pierced the baby's ankles and left him to die on a lonely mountainside.

Wow, that rings a bell...

(214) **Oedipus:** Tell me how Laios looked, and tell me how old he was.

**Iokaste:** He was tall, his hair just touched with white; his form was not unlike your own.

(227) **Oedipus:** But who told you how it happened?

**Iokaste:** A household servant, the only one to escape. [...] when he came back at last and found you enthroned in the place of the dead king, he came to me, touched my hand with his, and begged that I should send him away to the frontier district where only the shepherds go.

(page 54) **Oedipus:** Can he be called back quickly?

**Iokaste:** Easily. But why?

**Oedipus tells his story and concludes (296):** Think of it: I have touched you with these hands, these hands that killed your husband. What defilement! Am I all evil then?

**(308) Choragos:** But there is hope: you have to hear the shepherd.

**(315) Oedipus to Iokaste:** Why, “marauders,” you said, killed the king, according to this man’s story. If he maintains that still, if there were several, clearly the guilt is not mine: I was alone. But if he says one man, singlehanded, did it, then the evidence all points to me.

**(page 56)** A messenger from Corinth arrives. Good news: King Polybos is dead and Oedipus is asked to be the king of Corinth.

**(63) Oedipus:** And yet - must I not fear my mother's bed?

**Iokaste:** Why should anyone in this world be afraid, since Fate rules us and nothing can be foreseen? A man should live only for the present day. Have no fear of sleeping with your mother: How many men, in dreams, have lain with their mothers! No reasonable man is troubled by such things.

**Oedipus:** That is true; only – if only my mother were not still alive! But she is alive. I can not help my dread.

**Iokaste:** Yet this news of your father's death is wonderful. (!!!)