

Scene 1: Early morning, pre-dawn.

A rocky plain of majestic Corinth, outside a grand castle.

Foreground: YOUNG MEN in sport.

Behind: The double doors of POLYBUS' palace open to reveal KING POLYBUS, MEROPE, and GUARDS

*YOUNG MEN stop to genuflect to POLYBUS and MEROPE, then resume play.
All except OEDIPUS, who comes forth to his parents and genuflects as well*

POLYBUS

Child, this reverence is appreciated, yet unnecessary. You are my one, true son. Why do you perform such formality? You are not meant for such duties. Arise, Oedipus. Rise, my son.

OEDIPUS

Lord-father Polybus, greatest of power, is it folly for me to act as others do? I am your son, yes, but your servant as well, and I know well where honor is deserved. Duty becomes pleasure when one reveres his loved ones. If respect is folly let me revel in its temple.

MEROPE

Do you hear him, husband? Our boy speaks to us as if he were on trial. Do as your lord-father says, dear one. Rise up. Rise up and embrace your mother.

OEDIPUS

I happily oblige, my queen.

OEDIPUS rises and embraces both MEROPE and POLYBUS. ELPENOR comes from the games, genuflects.

ELPENOR

Lord Polybus and his most fair wife, Merope, allow me to speak with ease. Your noble son is doing his brethren a great disservice. Without his aid in the struggle at hand, our cause is surely lost. I ask for only a few moments more of his time and presence. Will you grant me this favor? You are most kind and just rulers! Come my, royal friend. Quickly or all is lost!

OEDIPUS and ELPENOR run back to the games.

MEROPE

It is a wonder how children grow. Is it not? Our Oedipus is a man now, no longer a thing to coddle and hold. My king and husband, do you know what morning brings?

POLYBUS

Light. If memory serves, my queen.

MEROPE

For our child, I mean. Oedipus' adult life begins as morning breaks.

POLYBUS

How do you mean, dearest?

MEROPE

Tomorrow Oedipus and his companion here, Elpenor, make their way to Delphi. A pilgrimage to the Oracle.

POLYBUS

This cannot be, my love. So soon? He is far too young for his pilgrimage day!

MEROPE

Yet I speak truth, my king. Sadly, I am correct. I overheard Oedipus and Elpenor discussing the marvels that await them on their journey. Worry not, my love, they will be well prepared. I have seen to it that all provisions shall be made ready. Without their knowledge, of course. They wish us not to know of their plans. Boys! I implore you not to show a glimmer of this or talk of Delphi if you are asked. Also, my lord, this presents the perfect opportunity to give Oedipus the Speech of Passage.

POLYBUS

He is far too young, I tell you.

MEROPE

No, my love, you think we are. He is of the age to see the world and seek out his destiny.

POLYBUS

Yet why? Why can he not be content to stay within my walls? Our care?

MEROPE

I fear that he has been sparked by that incident at the banquet last night. He seeks to be reassured that he is our son.

POLYBUS

Fool banquetor! I should have killed him there for uttering such blasphemy. What man tells another he is not what he believes himself to be? That he is an impostor to himself? That man's banishment was far too kind a judgment.

MEROPE

Thank-you for taking my advice.

POLYBUS

We're all in the Healer's hands now.

MEROPE

Worry not, dear. All will be made well. He was brought to us by the Gods, he was meant for us by the Gods. The Gods will make all right. And as for the journey, I believe you made it at his age as well.

POLYBUS

Yet it was far different in my youth, it was a different time.

MEROPE

Yes...

POLYBUS

I will ready myself for the Speech of Passage.

MEROPE

Good, my king. Good. It seems only yesterday that he came to us. Covered in none but sheep's hide, injured. How his eyes blazed like Apollo's chariot! Many thanks to the shepherd who brought him to us. I will always believe him to be Hermes in disguise. But whomever, and wherever from, I sing his praises still for the gift he bore.

POLYBUS

The most worthy of men our child has become. Zeus be praised. It is a wonder how children grow, is it not?

END Sc1

Scene 2: Morning, post-dawn

The road to DELPHI and the ORACLE of Apollo.
OEDIPUS and ELPENOR climb a jagged crag toward the summit.

ELENOR stumbles on a rock and is caught by OEDIPUS. They decide to rest beneath a shady outcrop

ELPENOR

Much thanks, my prince. I believe my legs have made the decision to rest without consulting the rest of me. Awful limbs, how you fail me so!

OEDIPUS

All is well, Elpenor. It seems that your legs are more knowledgeable than we are. Rest is much called for.

OEDIPUS finds his water sack. Shares it with ELPENOR

Dear friend, answer me something?

ELPENOR

What, my prince?

OEDIPUS

"My friend"! You have known me far too long and too well for such trivialities.

ELPENOR

My friend. What do you ask of me?

OEDIPUS

Do you believe I am of noble birth?

ELPENOR

You know that I do. Why do you ask such a foolish thing of me? No test I suppose?

OEDIPUS

No, Elpenor, no test is this. I just need to be for certain. Another question, if I may?

ELPENOR

From the manner in which you ask me, people may believe me to be the Oracle! Yes. Ask what you will of me.

OEDIPUS

Would you leave my side if the Oracle spoke otherwise? That I am of common class birth? Would you leave?

ELPENOR

May I sooner couple with a Gorgon! You are my friend, princely or otherwise. I love you as a brother and no Oracle can change me from that course.

OEDIPUS

Dearest of men, you have set my mind at ease and my humor alight. Much thanks.
Clasp my arm.

OEDIPUS cuts his hand and offers it to ELPENOR

Brothers until Hades. Now you say so.

ELPENOR in return cuts his own hand and they embrace arms

ELPENOR

Brothers until Hades, my friend. Now, cease this foolish chatter and allow us to focus on topics of more importance, such as what we will see at Delphi. Did your kingly father dispense any knowledge of his journey of the past?

OEDIPUS

I asked yet he remarked, "Such things are not to be spoken of". He believes them to be too sacred a thing.