

EURIPIDES'
Herakles

(aka "Heracles Mainomenos" and "Hercules Furens")

Translated by
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Dramatis Personae:

Herakles

(Hero, son of Zeus)

Amphitryon

(Alcmena's husband, Herakles' mortal father)

Megara

(Herakles' wife)

Lykos ('Wolf' in Greek)

(Usurper of the throne of Thebes)

Theseus

(King of Athens)

Iris

(Hera's servant)

Lyssa

(Goddess of Madness)

Chorus

(Of older men of Thebes)

Two armed guards

(to Lykos – silent)

Messenger

Herakles' three young sons

(Silent)

Before Herakles' palace at Thebes

To its left stands the altar of Zeus.

At its steps are seated as suppliants, Megara, Amphitryon and Herakles' three sons.

Amphitryon stands and addresses the audience

Amphitryon:

What mortal has not heard of Amphitryon, the man who has shared his wife with Zeus? Amphitryon of Argos. Son of Alcaeus, grandson of Perseus, father of Herakles!

I am that man, Amphitryon!

This place here, Thebes, is my new home.

This is the place where Ares sowed the dragon's teeth from which sprung up a crop of earth-born giants. Of them all, Ares spared only a few but these few spawned the people who made up Cadmus' city. And it was from that lot that Creon, son of Menoekeos, had sprung. Creon then became this lady's father. Megara.

10

Megara was escorted to my palace by all the people of Thebes, singing her wedding song and playing the lutes. It was Herakles, that glorious hero, my son, who had led her to my house as his bride.

Now Herakles has left my Thebes, left his wife and all his family behind and rushed off to make his

new home in Argos, that city that was built by the Cyclopes, that city from which I was exiled because I had killed my uncle Electryon.

Now, Herakles, wanting to ease my misery and take us back to our home, in Argos, offered King Eurystheus a huge deal: in exchange for our return back there, he, Herakles, would tame the earth. Perhaps this was Hera's idea or it might have been Herakles' own Fate.

21

After he had completed all his other labours, Herakles has begun his last one by going, through the mouth of Taenarum, down to Hades, so as to bring back up here, to the earth's light, that three-bodied monster, the dog called Cerberus.

He has yet to return from that labour.

Now, there's an old story told among the Cadmians of Thebes that, in the olden days, this seven gated city, here, was ruled by a certain Lykos, Dirce's husband.

30

This is before Amphion and Zethus, Zeus' sons, and lords of the white horses, ruled the city.

Lykos' son, then, who was also called Lykos, and who was not a Theban himself but a mere foreigner, a Euboean, in fact, murdered Creon and, when the city was going through a civil strife, took the opportunity to seize its throne and rule it. So now, this connection we have with Creon has proven to be a curse because, while Herakles is away, down deep below in the bowels of the underworld, this new king, this Lykos, is intent upon quenching one murder with another and killing all of us: Herakles' wife here and his sons and me, too, if you can count me, a useless, old man as a living being. He's afraid, you see that these boys will one day grow up and seek to avenge the murder of their uncle's family members.

So here I am now, left behind by my son to look after his sons while he's below, in the gloomy darkness of the world below. I've asked them all, mother and sons, to stand here, by this altar of Zeus the Saviour, as the god's suppliants.

Herakles himself, my own brave son, set up this monument to commemorate his great victory over the Minyans.

50

And while we stand here, we have nothing: no food nor drink, no clothes nor anything but the bare earth to sit on. We are locked out of the house and there's no one who can save us.

And friends? Some of them, I now find, are not the true friends I once thought they were, while others, though true, are powerless to help us.

Such are the burdens misfortune brings to the mortals!

May the gods not deliver them to anyone who has the slightest goodwill towards us, as the most unflinching test of friendship!

60

Megara:

Old man, it was you who once led the Cadmeian troops into glory against the Taphians and took their city. What's there for the mortals to remember now about what the gods had granted you then?

And I was not forsaken by Fortune, so far as my father was concerned. He was rich and he was a king and, for that, people called him blessed but because of this blessedness, his wealth and his throne, long spears were hurled against him. That is what men jealous of prosperity do to those who are blessed with it.

And he was blessed with children, too. Me, for example, who he had given to your son, Herakles, as a lawful and happy bride.

All that good fortune, though, is now gone. Flew away!

70

And you and I, will also be killed. These children here, too, Herakles' sons! Look at them! They are huddled under my wings, like chicks protected by their mother! These children too, will be killed!

Poor things!

They keep asking me, "mummy, where has daddy gone?" or "what's he doing?" or "when is he coming back?"

They are so young and so confused and so they ask for their father... and so I tell them all sorts of stories! They are stories but the slightest creak of the door and they all jump to their feet! They think it is him and so they rush about hoping to grab at their beloved father's knees.

80

So, what now, old man? What hope can you give us? What solution can you think of, old man? You're my only hope now.

Soldiers, too powerful and too many for us, are guarding every path out of this city, so we can't even

run away from here! And we have no friends who can save us from all this.
Tell me your thoughts clearly. Straight out. We might as well be prepared for our imminent death!

Amphitryon:

It's not easy, my daughter!

One needs time to examine such questions thoroughly before giving any advice on them.

90

Megara:

Are you after more misery, or do you love life that much?

Amphitryon:

Yes, I love life... and I love hope!

Megara:

I love hope too but one should not hope for things that are hopeless!

Amphitryon:

Yet, there's some remedy in postponing misery!

Megara:

But the time before its arrival bites fiercely!

Amphitryon:

Time! In time, my daughter, good pathways might emerge which might lead us away from our misery.

My son, your husband, Herakles, might return, in time!

100

So keep calm and use your sweet words to stop the tears flowing from your sons' eyes. It might be a pitiful trick, daughter, weaving tales for them but it is a trick you must nevertheless, carry through. Winds vary in force from moment to moment and so do the winds of human misery. Eventually their force, too, subsides. Things separate. They change from one extreme to the other, so the brave trust hope. The cowards despair.

Chorus:

I have come!

I have come to this high-roofed palace...

Chorus:

...and to its ancient beds, hanging onto this walking stick...

Chorus:

A singer!

A singer of sad dirges and laments...

110

Chorus:

...like some grey old bird!

Chorus:

I am nothing but a voice!

Chorus:

Nothing but a ghost, a dark ghost in the darkness of dark dreams!

Chorus:

Aged dreams, aged words, aged legs but eager to help, nonetheless!

Chorus:

Ah! Poor, poor boys!

Fatherless boys!

Chorus:

And you, you poor, poor, old man!

Chorus:

And you, poor, poor, mother who weeps for her husband who is in the halls of Hades!

120

Chorus:

Don't let your feet, nor thighs tire, like an overburdened horse, climbing a rocky hill...

Chorus:

...trying to pull along some heavy cart.

Chorus:

If any of you feels his feet faltering, grab the hand, or the cloak of the man next to you!

Chorus:

Let the old, though old, help the old!

Chorus:

Once you were young and carried spears and arms next to each other!

Chorus:
Fought and won wars together, for your glorious country.

Chorus:
Look, look! His eyes!

Chorus:
Same flashing eyes like his father's!

Chorus:
Poor boys! You can see their father's misfortunes in them!

Chorus:
His greatness is not missing either.

Chorus:
Oh, my Greece!
What allies you will lose if you lose these boys!

Chorus:
Look there, king Lykos is coming this way.

Enter Lykos with his two armed guards

140

Lykos:
I have but a single question for you two, if I may!
Father and wife of Herakles, I am your king and so I may ask you whatever question I wish so here it is:

How much longer do you want to prolong your lives?
What hope do you see? What do you think will save you from your death? Is these kids' father? He's dead! He lies dead in the halls of Hades. Dead. Do you think he'll come back to you from down there?
All this moaning and groaning about your death!

Indicating Amphitryon One of you going about the whole of Greece telling everyone that you shared your wife with Zeus and that your son is his son as well!

And the other, *Indicating Megara* calling herself the wife of the greatest hero on earth!

151

Why is that? What was the big deal about killing some snake in the marshes? Or that other one, that lion creature, from Nemea. Your hero son caught it in a snare and then claimed he killed it with his bare hands! Is this it? Is this what you hope will save you from your death? Is it these little deeds that you will use as excuses to keep your sons from being put to death?

Sure, Herakles killed beasts! That took some courage, I grant him that much but in all other things, he's a coward. Has he ever strapped a shield to his arm? Has he ever seen eye-to-eye with a spear?

160

No! He just had a bow! A coward's weapon and even then, he took to his feet at the slightest danger! A bow! What courage does one need when he has a bow in his hands? A man shows his courage by standing his ground and dealing with the vast gap his enemy's spears have cut into his own ranks. That's courage! That's bravery!

My intention, old man, is not cruel. It's wise. I am fully aware that I am in possession of a throne because I have killed Creon, this woman's *Indicating Megara* father, so I am not going to allow these boys to grow up and punish me for it!

170

Amphitryon: Lifting his eyes to the heavens

Herakles, Zeus can mount his own defense for the part he took in your birth.

I shall mount my own, myself and I shall show, by careful argument, just how ignorant this man is about you. I won't allow anyone to throw insults at you, my son!

First, my son, let me clear your name from the most despicable slander that has been made about you: Cowardice! Is there a better description for such an accusation than "despicable slander?" And let the gods be my witness as I speak against this accusation.

My appeal is to Zeus' thunder and to the chariot he was riding from which he shot the faultless arrows that killed the earth-sprouted giants; and then rejoiced in his victory with the rest of the gods.

180

Then, go and ask Pholoe, you, Lykos, the most cowardly of all kings, ask Pholoe and ask also the Centaurs, those wild four-legged creatures! Ask them who they think is the bravest of all men. Would they talk about anyone other than my son? My son whom you call "a pretend hero?"

Then go and ask your lot: Go to Diphrys, in Euboa, your country and ask there about you. Ask them to sing your praises. What will they find to praise, I wonder? What brave deed have you ever executed in your own country?

Then you go on insulting the cleverest of inventions, the bow and arrow, the archer's weapon! Come closer then and listen carefully. Come and listen to my words and learn!

190

A soldier on the battlefield is nothing more than a slave to the heavy weight of his weapons and to the soldier fighting next to him because if that other soldier lacks courage, then he dies there and then, on the battlefield, not because he himself lacks courage but because his battle mates do.

And what if his spear breaks? He has no other weapon with which to fend off his death. The man with a bow and arrows, however, a man who knows how to use them well, has this one great advantage over all the other soldiers, which is that even after having shot countless arrows at his enemy, he still has plenty more of them to help him avert death!

200

He stands back from them and, whereas they can't see him, he can see them and can shoot at them arrows that they can't see. Wound them, kill them, keep them back with no danger to himself, since he is hidden from their view.

By far, the wisest tactic in a battle is to kill the enemy but not allow him to kill you.

Quite the opposite view to your old fashioned one!

Now tell me, why is it you want to kill these boys? What have they ever done to you?

What logic is there for that? I'll tell you: it is one single thing: that you are too frightened to face a hero's children!

211

Logic which will put us to death because you are coward! Very hard to accept this logic and if Zeus were to be fair towards us, we, who are by far your betters, should have delivered this fate to you instead!

But still, if you are determined to take over the throne of this land, then let us go away. Send us into exile! Avoid violence, lest the winds of fortune veer round and send the same violence in your direction.

Oh, you land of Cadmus!

220

I'm accusing you, as well! Is this how you take care of Herakles' children? Herakles, the man who, all by himself, faced the whole Minyan army saved Thebes from destruction and allowed her people to see the light of freedom?

And how can I praise Hellas, or stay silent any more about the fact that Greece has betrayed my son. Look at these boys, there! The whole of Greece should have provided them with the protection of fire and spears and shields, as recompense for their father's hard toil in cleaning up of this country's land and ocean! That's the protection that neither Thebes nor Greece is willing to afford you.

Poor boys!

You can only see me as a weak old man. A friend, yes, one who loves you but, one who is nothing more than a noisy tongue!

230

What vigour I once had, I no longer have! What strength my knees once had, they no longer have. Age has made them quake. What strength I once had, is barely noticeable now.

O, how I wish I were a young man again, with the strong body of a young man! I would have grabbed a spear and soaked this man's golden curls with his own red blood! His cowardice would make him flee beyond the pillars of Atlas!

Chorus:

Is it not possible for good mortals to find good things to say, even if tardily said?

Lykos:

Go ahead! Speak your towering words! Insult me all you like!

I, however, will repay those harsh words of yours with harsh deeds of my own!

240

To his guards

You, go over to Helicon and you, go to the valleys of Parnassus and get people to cut down some logs of oak! Then bring them all here, to this altar right here. Put them all around it and set fire to them. And burn these people! Burn them all alive!

That should teach them that it is not the dead who rule this kingdom but I, who is alive!

The two men obey and exit.

Lykos turns to Amphitryon

250

And you old man! You want to go against my decision? Fine! Then you'll not only grieve for

Herakles' sons but for your whole palace when it gets hit by one disaster after another!
And that will remind you that you lot are the slaves and that I am the king!

Chorus: *To the audience, as if it consists of Thebans*

You, men! Children of the earth upon which Ares, the god of War, has sown teeth that he had drawn out of the jaws of a ferocious dragon!

Chorus:

Why don't you use your walking sticks that hold you up and beat this man's godless skull to a bloody pulp?

Chorus:

He's not a Theban!

Chorus:

He's a foreigner!

Chorus:

And a foreigner who rules our citizens most brutally, at that!

Chorus: *To Lykos defiantly*

But not me!

You're not going to order me around! Take everything I've worked for from my hands!

260

Chorus:

Get out of here!

Go back to wherever you came from! Order them around, if you want!

Chorus:

And you're not going to murder Herakles' boys either! Not while I'm alive!

Chorus:

Herakles is not buried that deep under the ground that he'll leave his children behind!

Chorus:

You have destroyed this land and became its king, yet the man who has saved it has missed out on his reward!

Chorus:

And no, I'm not a meddler! I am doing something to help those I love, even though they are dead because that's the time when they most need a friend up here!

270

Chorus:

Ah, this right hand of mine! How it longs to clasp a spear once again!

It longs but it can't. Too weak now. Too old!

Otherwise, it would stop you from calling me your slave!

Chorus:

And I would have done a glorious deed for Thebes, where you puff yourself up!

Chorus:

Thebes is sick with civil strife.

Chorus:

Makes bad decisions!

Chorus:

It can't think straight or else she wouldn't have you as her king!

Megara:

Thank you, old gentlemen and my praises to you!

It is important that close friends show their anger against injustices done to their friends but do be careful you don't get into trouble by showing your anger against this tyrant, for our sakes.

And you, Amphitryon, listen to my words and see if I am not talking sense.

280

I love my children!

Of course I do! I have given birth to them and I have worked hard for them.

To see them put to death is something too horrible for me. Yet, it is also foolish to fight against one's Fate. And since we have to die, then we should not allow our enemies to torture us with fire and laugh at us as we burn! That would be worse than death!

We owe much more virtue to this palace!

You, Amphitryon, have gained much glory in the battlefield. You cannot possibly a coward's death now!

290

And everyone knows my husband's reputation as a brave and virtuous man. He would not want to save

his children's lives if it meant that they'll get a coward's reputation! Noble parents suffer if their children are disgraced in any way and so I, too, must act in the same way that my husband would have acted.

And so, Amphitryon, let me tell you what I think about these hopes of yours.

Do you really think that your son will ever come back from the world of the dead below? Who has ever come back from Hades' halls?

And do you also believe that we can placate this tyrant here with mere words?

Not in the least!

300

One must turn away from an enemy who is too stupid and he must make concessions only to the wise and the noble because, it is from them that you might be able to get what you want by appealing to their sense of decency.

I had thought to ask for the children to be exiled but what would be the point of saving their lives so that they may live in abject poverty? It's a fate just as miserable as death. They say that to the exiled, the faces of hosts smile but for a single day!

Come then, Amphitryon!

Come, be brave and prepare yourself for the death that, whether we like it or not, is our lot. Bravery is in your blood, old man.

310

To struggle against the will of the gods is to show a keen spirit but it is a foolish keenness.

No one can undo what Fate have done.

Chorus:

Had someone injured you, Amphitryon, back in the days when my arm still had its strength, I would have stopped him without delay. But no! Now, I am useless.

Chorus:

From now on, Amphitryon, it's up to you to think through what Fate delivers you.

Amphitryon:

No, it's neither cowardice nor love for life that stops me from dying but my wish to save my grand children, even though this might well be a vain hope.

Approaches Lykos defiantly

318

Here! Here's my neck and there's the unfortunate mother of these children. You can do what you like with us: Use your sword on us. Cut us up into pieces. Murder us, throw us off a high cliff!

But, Lord, Lord, grant us this one single favour!

Kill us, her and me, before you kill the children!

Save us from witnessing the appalling sight of these children gasping out their lives and calling for their mother and their grandfather!

Other than that, you can do whatever else you want with us. We have no defence against our death.

Megara:

And I beg you for a second favour, my Lord! You are one man but you can do us both a double kindness: Let us go inside.

330

Unlock those doors for us so that I can go and dress these children in funeral robes. It's the least they should be able to get from their own father's house.

Lykos:

Fine, that much I shall allow you.

One of the members of the chorus opens the door

By all means, go inside and put on your funeral robes. I won't begrudge funeral robes but when you are dressed I shall return to send you to the world below.

Exit Lykos

Megara:

Come, children, follow your poor mother's footsteps into your father's house.

Others now own his goods but we still own his name.

Megara and the children enter the palace

Amphitryon:

What was the point, Zeus?

340

What was the point of letting you share my wife? What was the point of telling the world that you are my son's half father? I thought you'd turn out to be a better friend than this!

There you are, a great god and here I am, a mere mortal yet, it seems, I am more virtuous than you. I

have not betrayed my son's children but you! You, though! You're an expert at secretly sliding uninvited into other men's bed and taking their wives but you're totally ignorant about how to save the lives of your dearest friends!

Zeus, either you are a mindless god or you have no sense of justice!

Amphitryon goes into the palace

Chorus:*

Now Apollo plucks his sweet-voiced lyre with a golden plectrum and a sad song follows his song of joy.

350

Chorus:

And I will do the same for that man who's gone to the gloom of the earth—

Chorus:

Should I call him the son of Amphitryon or that of Zeus?

Chorus:

I wish to praise Herakles, to sing a song that crowns all his labours.

Chorus:

It is a glory for the dead to praise their noble deeds!

360

Chorus:

His first noble deed was to rid the grove of Zeus of the fierce lion!

Chorus:

And threw the beast's fiery skin, ferocious, gaping jaws over his auburn head.

Chorus:

Then he laid low the mountain race of wild Centaurs with his murderous arrows.

370

Chorus:

The river Peneus, Peneus of the lovely eddies, can vouch for this and so can all the distant barren lands and all the farms of Mount Pelion and all deep glens of Homole next to it.

Chorus:

That's where the Centaurs used to live.

Chorus:

They used to arm themselves with the trunks of pine trees and rule over the whole of Thessaly with their horsemanship!

Chorus:

Then he killed that dappled hind with the golden horns that pillaged the farms and brought joy to Artemis, the huntress, goddess of Oenoe.

380

Chorus:

And then he climbed upon his four-horse chariot and with the bit Diomedes' horses.

Chorus:

These were the gruesome horses that with unbridled appetite plunged their maws into the gory troughs and fed voraciously on human flesh. Savage beasts dining savagely.

Chorus:

Then he crossed the silver waters of the Hebrus river and performed his labour for the king of Mycenae.

390

Chorus:

Then it was the turn of Cynos, who lived on the shore next to Mount Pelion, near the waters of Anaurus and who, wanting to build a temple made of human skulls, he used to kill all the travelers that went by.

Chorus:

Herakles killed this wild dweller of Amphanae, with his unerring arrows and immediately his father, Ares had turned him into a swan.

Chorus:

Then to the garden of the sweet-voiced divine women of the Hesperides he went and from the leafy branches of the apple trees that grew there, he plucked the golden fruit, killing the murderous dragon-guard with its coils twisted all around it and whose back was the colour of flames.

400

Chorus:

Then, passing through the straits of Gadir, he entered the watery caves of the far flung ocean and made it calm for the mortal sailors.

Chorus:

Then he went to Atlas' house and lend his mighty hand to him, stretching it up to hold the heavens high, the star-filled home of all the gods.

410

Chorus:

Then he gathered friends from all over Greece and fought the mounted army of the Amazons who lived round the lake Maeotis, a lake fed by many rivers, beyond the Euxeine Sea.

Chorus:

They took from their barbarian queen, Hippolyta, the golden girdle –a deadly labour!- and this glorious spoil of war they brought back to Greece, where it is safe in Mycenae.

420

Chorus:

Then, with fire he killed the murderous hound of Lerna, the Hydra, with its myriad heads and smeared its poison on his arrows and it was with these arrows that he had killed Geryon, a monster with three bodies and the shepherd on the island of Erytheia.

Chorus:

Then he brought to a happy conclusion many other travels before he sailed to Hades, the tear soaked land, for the last of his labours and the last of his life, and from there the poor man has not returned yet.

430

Chorus:

His house is now bereft of friends and the oar of Charon the underworld's ferryman waits to take his children on a journey away from life, a journey of no return, a journey against the laws' of god and of man's justice.

Chorus:

Your house, Herakles, looks to your strong arms for protection but you are not here!

Chorus:

If only!

If only I still had the youth, and had I all those Theban friends of mine –we of the same age- had I the strength to raise a war spear, I stand by your sons, Herakles, I would have shielded them.

440

Chorus:

But now, now, Herakles my blessed youth is gone.

Megara, Amphitryon and the three boys enter from the palace, dressed for their burials which include wreaths on their heads.

Chorus:

Ah, look there!

Chorus:

The sons of once mighty Herakles, dressed in the clothes of the dead!

Chorus:

And his dear wife! Look how her children are clinging onto her legs!

Chorus:

She's pulling them along beside her!

Chorus:

And his old father!

Chorus:

Ah!

How can I hold back the tears flowing from these old eyes!

451

Megara:

Come then, where is the priest?

Where is the man who'll sacrifice these unfortunate children?

Where is the murderer of my wretched life?

Come, these sacrificial victims are now ready to be led to Hades' halls!

Poor, poor children!

What an odd parade of living dead we are made to join! Old men, young children, mothers! All of us, together!

A shocking fate for me and just as shocking a fate for you, my darlings! This is the last time, my darlings! The last time my eyes can fall upon you.

I gave birth to you, my darlings. I gave you life but only so that others, my enemies, can insult you and torment you – kill you, all for their own enjoyment!

460

All those hopes that your father has given me! All those words of hope he has told me! How they have betrayed me!

Addressing each of her sons individually

You my son! To you, your dead father used to grant you the throne of Argos! You would be living in the halls of king Eurystheus, ruling over the great fertile land of the Pelasgians. He'd throw his great lion skin over your head. That lion skin was his armour, darling!

468

And you, my son, he'd make you the ruler of Thebes, where the men love their chariots and you'd persuade him to also grant you all of my own lands! Then he'd put into your right hand that finely carved wooden club of his, a strong defence against all evil. A hoax gift that Zeus once gave Hera. And to you, my son, he would promise to hand you Oechalia, a country he had conquered with his far-shooting arrows.

And so, your father, so proud of your manliness, buttressed you with the thrones of three countries!

And I, too, have done my part, by choosing the best of brides for you, brides that would make you allies of Athens, of Sparta and of Thebes, anchoring your life's cables, fast onto a happy voyage.

480

But all these hopes are now gone, my sons. The winds of your fortune have turned and now, for brides, they have brought you the spirits of Death and me... to me, the unfortunate wretch, they have taken away my rights to give you your bridal bath and replaced them with tears. Your grandfather now must celebrate being Hades' father-in-law. Such a dreadful marriage!

Ah, poor mother! Which one of you should I hug first, which one last? Which one should I kiss, which one should I cling to?

Ah, how I wish I were a bee with its golden wings! I'd fly about and gather all your sighs and squeezing them all together, release them in one big tear!

490

Oh, my darling Herakles! If words of mortals can be heard in the halls of Hades, then hear what I am saying now. Your father, your children and are being killed! I, who once was called "blessed" because I was married to you! Come, Herakles, come and save us! Come to me even as a mere shadow because your very presence would be enough for these child-killing cowards!

Amphitryon:

Daughter, you go on with the funeral rites while I...

Zeus, I raise my hands to the heavens, to you, in prayer!

500

Zeus, if you have any intentions in helping these children at all, then do so now because soon, your help will be of no use. We have prayed to you often, Zeus, all to no avail and it seems death will be forced upon us.

Turning to the chorus

Well, old friends, life is far too short, try and live it as best you can. Keep your days and nights free of sadness.

Time, old friends, does not care about saving any of our hopes. It concerns itself only about its own affairs and then, it quickly passes on.

Take me, for example. A man who once achieved had achieved great fame among the mortals for doing great deeds! Look how fortune has now robbed me of all of this fame.

510

Just like a feather, in one single day, fortune has lifted me up into the wind!

I know of no one who can be certain that his wealth or his fame will stay with him always.

Farewell, my friends! Friends of my own age. This is the last time you look upon your friend!

Megara sees Herakles approaching

Megara:

What?

Old sir, am I seeing my beloved husband or... What am I to say about this?

Amphitryon:

Daughter, I don't know! I too am struck speechless!

Megara:

Is that the man we were told was beneath the earth?

Amphitryon:

Unless we are mocked by some dream in the middle of the day!

Megara:

But... what am I saying? What dreams are that these confounded eyes seeing?

Sir, this is none other than your son!

520

Children come, look, quickly! Go and grab your father's robe! Hurry! Go and grab his robe and don't let go! This is the man who will save you, as certainly as Zeus, the god of this altar here!

The children obey

Enter Herakles with the children tightly holding onto his robe.

Herakles:

Ah!

Hello my home! Hello my doors! Hello my hearth!

What joy it is to come back to the light and see you!

Ah!

What is this I see? My sons, in front of my house, with the garlands of death on their heads! My wife, standing deep in a crowd of men, my father in tears! What misfortune has struck him?

I better go closer and ask them what new misfortune has hit my house!

531

Amphitryon:

Oh, the dearest man on earth! Light of rescue for your father!

Is it really you? Have you really come here, alive and well?

You have come just in time to save your family, my son!

Herakles:

What do you mean, father? What is all this confusion here?

Megara:

They are about to kill us, Herakles!

To Amphitryon

Oh, forgive me, old friend! I have snatched the words out of your mouth! Words that you have more right to say to him than I did but, we, women, are more prone to anguish than men are and they want to kill my children as well me!

Herakles:

Oh, Apollo! What a sad beginning to your tale!

Megara:

My brothers, Herakles and my old father, Creon, are all dead!

540

Herakles:

What? Who killed him? What did he do?

Megara:

Lykos killed him. The new ruler here!

Herakles:

But how? Was it in some battle or other? Was the country suffering from some affliction?

Megara:

Civil war. Now he's the ruler of Thebes, Cadmus' city of seven gates.

Herakles:

But what was it that terrified you?

Megara:

Herakles, he was going to kill your father, me and our sons!

Herakles:

But why? What made him so afraid of orphaned kids?

Megara:

He was afraid that when they grow up they would make him pay for killing Creon.

Herakles:

Why are they dressed as if they're heading for their own funeral?

Megara:

They're the clothes of the dead. We've prepared them for their funeral.

550

Herakles:

And were you going to die like this, violently? How terrible!

Megara:

We have no friends, Herakles and we were old you were dead!

Herakles:

What put that bleak thought about me in your heads?

Megara:

Eurystheus' messengers told us this.

Herakles:

And then you've abandoned my home and hearth, why?

Megara:

We were forced to do so, husband. Your father was tossed out of his bed!

Herakles:

Has he no shame? How could he treat an old man like this?

Megara:

Shame? No, Lykos keeps himself well away from that goddess!

Herakles:

But what about my friends? Were they so rare in my absence?

Megara:

What man has any friends when misfortune hits him?

560

Herakles:

Have they completely forgotten my battles with the Minyans?

Megara:

Husband, let me tell you again: Misfortune does not have many friends.

Herakles:

Now get these horrible wreaths of death off your heads and throw them away! Look upon the sun's light once more and forget the gloom of the underworld!

In the meantime, I shall let my hand will do its work. First I shall go and tear down the palace of these new upstart kings! Then I shall cut off their shameless heads and throw them to the dogs to gnaw at.

Then I shall seek out all those Thebans who think little of the good that I've done to them and give them a taste of this glorious club of mine.

570

As for the rest, their mangled corpses will fill the river Ismenus and make red the Spring of Dirce with their blood, once my flying arrows get them!

Who else, if not my wife, my children and my old father, should I defend? After all, what was the point of all my labours? Far better to have attended to the needs here. I should die defending these boys since they were about to die for their father.

580

How virtuous a deed is it to obey Eurystheus and kill the hydra, compared with that of protecting my children from slaughter?

Why then go on being called "Herakles of the Virtuous Victory?"

Chorus:

Yes, it is only proper that fathers should help their children and their own fathers; their wives.

Amphitryon:

My son, it is in your nature to love your friends and hate your enemies but don't be so hasty!

Herakles:

What do you mean, father? Where am I being too hasty?

Amphitryon:

The new king has many friends, my son. Men who are in fact poor but who go around boasting about their wealth.

590

They have formed a group and together they've broken up the city so that they can steal everyone else's possessions because they've wasted those of the palace through sheer laziness.

They saw you when you've entered the city and so, since they know you are here, take care, son that you don't unite them against you and have them kill you when you're least expecting it.

Herakles:

Father, I don't care in the slightest if everyone in the city saw me!

However, just before I entered it, I saw a bird, perched on a branch of ill omen and so I realised that my house was in some sort of trouble. That's why I made my way here secretly.

599

Amphitryon:

Ah, good! Well then, go inside and give thanks to the goddess of your hearth. Let your house see you. Go now, because the king will be here soon to drag us all away and slaughter us, your children, your

wife and me with them.

But for now, stay here where it's safe and you will achieve all you wish. Don't go into the city and get it all stirred up, my son, until you have everything well prepared!

Herakles:

Yes, your advice is good, father so I shall do as you say. I'll go into the house and since I have finally came back up here from the sunless caves of Hades and Persephone, I will be happy to give my respects and greetings to the gods beneath its roofs.

610

Amphitryon:

Is it true, my son that you actually went down to the house of Hades?

Herakles:

I did, yes, and I brought Cerberus, the three-headed beast, up here, to the light of the sun.

Amphitryon:

Did you catch it by fighting it or did the goddess present it to you?

Herakles:

No, I beat it in a fair fight. I was blessed because I was initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries before I went down to Hades.

Amphitryon:

So, is this beast now kept in the halls of Eurystheus?

Herakles:

He is kept at the grove of Demeter, the goddess of the Underworld and at the city of Hermione.

Amphitryon:

Does Eurystheus know you've returned to the world of the light?

Herakles:

No, not yet. I've made my way here first to see how things were with you.

Amphitryon:

What kept you in the underworld for so long?

Herakles:

Theseus. I had to bring him back up here and that's what's taken me such a long time.

620

Amphitryon:

So, where is Theseus now? Gone to his homeland?

Herakles:

Yes, poor man. Went back to Athens. He was certainly glad he escaped from under there.

Right, now, boys, come with me! Let's go into the house together!

Better going into it then coming out of it, right, boys?

Come, come, courage now! Dry your tears, my sons.

And you, wife! Come now, pull yourself together and stop trembling like this.

Let go of my cape, boys. I'm no feathered bird to go flying off from my family!

630

Ha! These kids... they won't let go of my clothes! They're pulling harder at them!

Where you all in such a great danger, really?

Right, well, I'll be the big ship and you'll be the little boats and I'll tow you inside the harbour after me. I won't neglect my children.

That's what the whole of mankind is like: rich or poor, they all love their children. Wealth and poverty might be two different things but the love of children is the same throughout the race of mortals.

All but the chorus exit into the house.

Chorus:

I love youth!

Old age is an interminable burden! Heavy. Heavier than the boulders on Mt Aetna!

640

Chorus:

It's a pall of gloom, all over my head, my eyes!

Give me youth and you can keep all the wealth of Asia's kings, houses full of gold!

Compare youth with wealth or poverty, and youth is the better by far.

650

Chorus:

Old age, though! I hate old age! Gloomy thing! Deadly thing! Let it sink and vanish beneath the ocean's waves!

Chorus:

How I wish old age never managed to find its way into the homes and cities of mortals!

Chorus:

It should have stayed up there! Drifting about through the winds of the upper air.

Chorus:

If the gods understood mortals at all, they'd grant them youth twice – as a sign that these mortals were virtuous.

Chorus:

The good mortals would die, but then they'd straight away, race back, into the light of day, to start their life again.

Chorus:

But those of ill birth would have only one, single run at life, which means that people could tell who among them is virtuous and who is not, just like the sailor can discern the number of stars through the clouds.

670

Chorus:

But now, the way things are, the gods have placed no boundary between the good and the bad and the only thing that happens as the years go by, is that the wealth of each increases.

Chorus:

The Graces and the Muses! The sweetest union! They will always be one, in my mind!

Chorus:

I hope I'll never be without songs, without garlands!

Chorus:

I am an old singer and so, I sing to praise Mnemosyne, the mother of all the Muses!

680

Chorus:

And, whether I am drunk on Bacchus' wine, or accompanied by the seven-stringed lyre and the Libyan flute, I sing to praise the glorious victories of Herakles!

Chorus:

I shall never stop loving the Muses who have brought me to the dance.

690

Chorus:

The nymphs of Delos, sing a song of joy around the temple's gates, in honour of Apollo, Leto's beautiful son, the graceful dancer.

Chorus:

And so will I, too, like an aged swan about to die, will sing with my aged lips, songs of glory around your palace doors.

Chorus:

And there's plenty to sing about!

Chorus:

Herakles is son of Zeus but more than that, more than his high birth, stand his deeds of bravery, deeds of labour which have made man's lives peaceful by killing all the gruesome beasts.

Amphitryon comes out from the palace just as Lykos and his attendants from the opposite direction.

701

Lykos:

About time you came out of the house, Amphitryon! You've spent far too much time putting on your funereal clothes! Now, do as you've promised and tell the boys and Herakles' wife to come out here and prepare to die.

Amphitryon:

My lord, you persecute me too much for my misery and you insult me too much for my grieving of my dead son. Lord, or not, sir, you should temper your zeal somewhat!

710

But, yes, since you press us to the needs of death, we must put up with your wishes.

Lykos:

Where the is Megara and where are the sons of Herakles, Alcmene's son?

Amphitryon: *Walks over to the gate and looks through*

Well, so far as I can make out looking through this gate...

Lykos:

Yes, what is it? What is she doing? What's going on? What do you see?

Amphitryon:

I see that she is sitting by the steps of Hestia's altar as a suppliant.

Lykos:

Yes. Obviously praying her useless prayers to save her life!

Amphitryon:

Yes and to pray in vain for her husband to come back to life!

Lykos:

A husband who is nowhere to be seen and will certainly never be seen!

Amphitryon:

Not unless some god or other resurrect him!

720

Lykos:

Go inside and bring her out here!

Amphitryon:

But, if I do that, I'll become complicit in her murder!

Lykos:

Well, if you're bothered by such a thing, I'll bring mother and children out here myself. I'm not afraid!

Men, come with me and let's put a painless ending to this troublesome affair!

Lykos and his men enter the house.

Amphitryon:

Well, go then! Go and meet your own Fate! Let others take care of the rest and expect to pay the just price for your evil deeds.

730

Old friends, Lykos is going inside at precisely the right time. This murderer is going in there hoping to kill but a snare of swords is waiting for him.

I am going inside to watch him die!

It is a pleasant thing to watch one's enemy being killed and pay the full price for his evil deeds.

Exit Amphitryon into the palace

Chorus:

The evil fortunes have turned and gone!

Our once great leader has returned from Hades alive!

Chorus:

Justice! Justice, and the ever-turning will of the gods floods down from the Heavens!

740

Chorus:

Amphitryon!

You have come late but you have come!

Chorus:

Amphitryon! You have come to the place of your death; a punishment for the insolence you have shown against your betters!

Chorus:

Joy, joy floods my eyes!

Chorus:

He has returned!

Chorus:

The true king of this land has returned!

Chorus:

A thing beyond my hopes!

A thing beyond my expectations!

Chorus: *Moves towards the partly open gate*

Come, friends. Let's see what's happening inside the palace.

Chorus:

Yes, let's see if a certain man is doing what I'm hoping he's doing.

Lykos: *Within*

Ah! Help!

750

Chorus:

Ah!

I can hear them!

Chorus:

I can hear from in there, the first notes of the sweet song of his looming death!

Lykos: *Within*

Ah! Help me!

Chorus:

Not long now!

Chorus:

The sweet groans of a tyrant's death!

Lykos: *Within*

Thebans! Sons of Cadmus!

I'm being murdered!

Treachery!

Chorus:

Yes! Treachery for treachery, Lykos!

Chorus:

Prepare yourself for the penalty of your own deeds!

Chorus:

Who was it, Lykos, who was the weak mortal who said that the gods in the Heavens are nothing but weaklings?

Chorus:

Such a stupid thing to say!

Chorus:

Such blasphemy!

760

Chorus: *Listening at the gate*

Old friends, not a sound!

The blasphemer is no more!

Chorus:

Begin the dancing! Our friends are rejoicing!

Chorus:

Dancing and feasting, my friends!

The holy city of Thebes shall celebrate!

Chorus:

The tears have changed paths!

The fortunes have changed paths!

Chorus:

And the changes gave birth to new songs!

770

Chorus:

The new King has gone and the old one reigns again!

Chorus:

Lykos has already left behind him the banks of Acheron!

Chorus:

A hope beyond hope has happened!

Chorus:

The gods!

The gods take note of evil and of the good!

Chorus:

Gold and good fortune drag the minds of mortals away from logic and into the realms of unjust power.

Chorus:

Because while they're committing their criminal deeds and rejoicing in their disdain for the law, they cannot think just how much Time can reverse fortunes!

780

Chorus:

And so, he smashes wealth's dark chariot.

Chorus:

Put garlands on your head, River Ismenos!

Chorus:

Dance, you foot-smoothed streets of the seven-gated city, Thebes!

Chorus:

And you, too Dirce, river of the lovely waters, dance!

Chorus:

Daughters of Asopos, nymphs, come, leave your father's waters and sing with me this victory of Herakles!

790

Chorus:

You, too Parnassus, of the many woods! Apollo's holy cliff and home of Helicon's Muses! Come and with voices of joy, crowd out my city and my city's walls, the city where a generation of men were sown and sprung forth, a Company, with war-shields of bronze.

Chorus:

A sacred light to Thebes, that is passed from their children to the children of their children.

800

Chorus:

And you, Alceme's marriage bed!

You were shared by a mortal and by Zeus himself, a god who had come to you to join with Perseus' granddaughter!

Chorus:

This ancient tale was once hard to believe, Zeus but now its truth was made clear to me, a hope beyond all hope!

Chorus:

Time has shown me your might most brightly, Herakles, when you left behind you Pluto's home and sprung up from the caverns of the earth below!

810

Chorus:

So much more the king is Herakles than is that crass tyrant, Lykos whose Fate will be made clear by the clashing of your swords. Now we will see if the gods still love the just deed!

Lyssa, the goddess of Madness and Iris the messenger of the gods appear through the heavens and land onto the roof of the palace. The chorus panics.

Chorus:

Look!

Look up there, old friends!

Chorus:

What an ominous apparition!

Chorus:

Have we come back to the same old fear and panic?

Chorus:

Run!

Run away friends!

Chorus:

Rush your feet and run!

Chorus:

Hide, men, hide!

820

Chorus:

Lord Apollo!

Lord, save us from this terror!

The chorus rushes about as if to flee or hide until Iris addresses them

Iris:

Come, come old gentlemen! Don't be afraid!

This here is Lyssa, daughter of Night and I am Iris, messenger of the gods. We have not come to harm this city but are marshalling against one single house, one single man, that man who has been called the son of Zeus and Alceme.

Until Herakles had finished all his bitter labours, neither Fate nor Zeus himself would allow us or Hera to cause him any harm.

830

However, he has now completed all those chores that Eurystheus has ordered him to do and so Hera wants to stain him with the guilt of blood spilling, the blood of his very own children.

And I am with her on that!

So, come now, unmarried virgin, daughter of black Night, use your ruthless heart and send your child-

murdering frenzy upon Herakles. Stir up his mind, make his feet twitch and shudder, wind him up, set up his sails to their full and, when his murderous hand has sent his own precious sons to Acheron's ferry in the world below, he will understand the raging anger that Hera and I hold against him!

841

Or else, if this man is not punished, the gods will amount to nothing and the mortals to everything!

Lyssa:

My birth is noble. The very blood of Night and Ouranos and it is they who have granted me these honours, honours which I don't enjoy and nor do I enjoy visiting the homes of mortal friends.

So I wish to give Hera some advice before she makes a grave error and to you, too, Iris, if you will accept it.

You are sending me to the house of a man who is held in high regard among both, mortals as well as gods.

850

He has tamed the impassable land and the wild seas and all on his own he has restored the honour due to the gods at the time when godless men were destroying it.

I, personally would rather be his friend than his enemy and I advise you not to plot evil against him.

Iris:

Neither Hera nor I need your advice!

Lyssa:

I am trying to make you see the right way, not the wrong way.

Iris:

Zeus' wife did not send you here to talk wisdom.

Lyssa:

I call the sun-god to witness the fact that I am acting against my will!

I shall perform yours and Hera's wishes and follow you, running, like a hunting dog follows the hunter because I am forced to do so.

860

Neither the ocean with its groaning waves, nor the earth's quaking, nor the pain the air feels by the jab of lightning, will be as furious as my rush into Herakles' breast!

I shall crash the roof and all the rooms of his house by killing his children first; and the killer himself will not know that he has killed his own sons until I have released him from my madness.

Pause as she turns down towards the inside of the palace to symbolically perform her task. Indicating inside the palace.

Look!

Can you see him?

See how he's tossing his head about wildly, not a word out of his mouth, his frenzied eyes are rolling about, his breathing is fast, like the panting of a bull about to charge.

Hear how fearfully he bellows!

870

Look! He is now calling on the death spirits of Tartarus!

Ah, Herakles!

Soon I will have you dancing an even wilder dance!

Soon I will have your ears hear the notes from the flute of terror!

Turning to Iris

Well now, Iris! Pick up your noble feet and fly back to Mount Olympus. I'll sneak down there, into the halls of Herakles' palace!

Iris "flies off" and Lyssa goes down into the palace

Chorus:

Thebans cry!

Groan and sigh at the loss of the city's flower!

Zeus' son!

Chorus:

Greece, you are doomed!

You will lose your great benefactor!

Chorus:

You will destroy him with wild dance!

With the frenzied sounds of a flute!

880

Chorus:

Lyssa, the Gorgon of the Night, the goddess of the many sighs, has already mounted her chariot and prods her horses to destruction!

Chorus:

One hundred heads of snakes hiss about her stony eyes!

Chorus:

Quickly Fate has turned against the fortunate!

Soon the sons will be murdered by their father!

Amphitryon: *Within*

Ah!

Misery!

Chorus:

Zeus!

Oh, Zeus!

Soon, your only son will be destroyed by the bloodthirsty spirits of vengeance!

Chorus:

A punishment most unjust!

Amphitryon: *Within*

Ah, roofs of my poor house!

Chorus:

And so the dance begins!

No drums!

Nor the pleasant wave of Bacchus' thyrsus!

890

Amphitryon: *Within*

Ah, halls of my house!

Chorus:

It is a dance that ends in the spilling of blood not in the pouring of libations made by Bacchus' grapes!

Amphitryon: *Within*

Run, children, run! Run away quick!

Chorus:

Listen!

FX: Sounds of the flute

Chorus:

The flute of death!

Chorus:

She's playing the music of murder!

Chorus:

Herakles is chasing his sons!

Chorus:

He's hunting them down!

Chorus:

It's not for nothing that Lyssa's frenzy rages in the palace!

Amphitryon: *Within*

Ah! The worst of all miseries!

900

Chorus:

Ah!

Groan for his old father, friends!

Chorus:

Groan, too for the mother who bore and raised in vain!

FX: A tempest is bringing the roof of the house down

Chorus:

Look, look! Look there!

A tempest is quaking the building!

Chorus:

The roof is crashing down!

Chorus:

Ah! Ah!

Herakles, what are you doing?

Chorus:
What are you doing, in there, son of Zeus?
Chorus:
Herakles! You are sending a hellish confusion upon your house!
Chorus:
Just like the one the goddess Athena had once sent upon the giant Enceladus!
Enter a messenger from the palace

910

Messenger: *Shouting*
Old men!
Chorus:
What is it?
Chorus:
Why the shouting?
Messenger:
Old men, there's disaster in the palace!
Chorus:
I need no prophet to tell me this!
Messenger:
The children are dead!
Chorus:
Ah! What a miserable thing!
Messenger:
This terror calls for loud weeping!
Chorus:
Murder!
Chorus:
Murder of the children!
Chorus:
Murderous hands the hands of their father!
Messenger:
No words can describe our suffering!
Chorus:
Yet you must use them to tell us clearly the path of Herakles' destruction!
Chorus:
A destruction that raises our loudest sighs!

920

Chorus:
Tell us how this destruction came crashing down from the Heavens, upon this house and upon the poor lives of his sons!
Messenger:
Around Zeus' altar stood the sacrificial victims for the purification of the palace after Herakles had killed the new king and threw his corpse outside. His children, his wife Megara and his old father, Amphitryon stood around the altar like a lovely chorus and the sacred basket of offerings was given its holy course of a circle around the altar.
All of us were keeping the silence of reverence.

930

But then, when it was time for Herakles to dip the torch he was holding in his right hand, into the holy water, he stopped and just stood there in dumb founded silence.
His sons turned their faces towards him wondering why their father was taking so long.
Herakles' face had completely changed. He looked distressed. His eyes were bloodshot and they rolled wildly about inside their sockets and his beard was covered by a rolling foam.
Eventually he spoke and, at the same time, laughed in a frenzied way.
"Father," he said, "No, I shouldn't perform this sacrifice until I have also killed Eurystheus. Why perform this purification twice? Why kindle this flame twice? Why do this work twice? Why not fix both problems with a single move?"

940

I will kill Eurystheus, bring his head here and then purify my hands for all those I've killed. Throw the water away and get rid of the basket. Somebody pass me my bow and arrows and my club!
I shall take some crow bars and some pick axes and head off to the famous Mycenae where I will tear

down from their iron foundations those walls which the Cyclopes had built so neatly with mason's hammers and Phoenician plumb-lines!"

Then, in his mind he headed off to a chariot that didn't exist, sat on a seat that didn't exist and struck at the horses with a whip that didn't exist.

950

The others around the altar didn't know whether to laugh or cry and they asked themselves if their master had gone mad or if he was joking with them all.

Then Herakles ran around from one room to the other throughout the palace until finally he stopped in the centre of the men's quarters and announced that he had arrived at Megara, Nisus' city. Then he fell on the floor, just as he was and began to prepare a feast. Then he started marching around the house once again and this time he said he had arrived near the wooded valleys of the Isthmus.

960

Then, thinking he was taking part in the Isthmian games, he stripped himself naked and began wrestling with an opponent who didn't exist. Finally, taking the role of a herald, proclaimed himself the winner of the bout and asked the throng of spectators, which didn't exist, to be silent.

Then his sick mind made him think he was in Mycenae itself and so he began shouting terrible threats against Eurystheus but then his father grabbed him by his sturdy arm and said to him, "son, what is wrong with you? What strange behaviour is this? Your mind hasn't been affected by the blood you've spilled just now?"

970

But Herakles thought that his father's hand was that of Eurystheus' father begging him not to kill Eurystheus and his own children to be Eurystheus' children so he pushed him away and brought arrows to his bow to kill them.

Frightened, the poor boys rushed about, one scuttling to his poor mother's garments, the other behind a column and the third, cowered like a little bird at the altar.

Megara, their mother screamed at Herakles. "What are you doing, Herakles? You are their father, do you want to kill your own children?"

Old Amphitryon and all the servants also yelled at him but he made a dismal circle around the column and, when he stood face to face with his son, he shot him through the heart.

980

The poor boy fell on his back and splashed his blood upon the stone column as he breathed out the last breath of his life.

But Herakles gave out a loud shout of triumph and boasted, "Ha! Here's one of Eurystheus' sons, dead at my feet, paying for his father's hatred towards me!"

Then Herakles turned towards his second son, the one who was crouched at the altar's base, hoping to escape the slaughter. Herakles aimed his arrow at the boy but before he let go, the boy threw himself at his father's knees and stretched out his hands to reach his father's beard and neck, pleading with him. "Dear father," he said, "please do not kill me. I am your own son! Your son, father, not the son of Eurystheus! It is not his son are going to kill!"

990

But, Herakles merely turned his wild, monstrous gaze at him and, since the boy was too close for him to use the bow and arrow, he raised his huge club above his head and, like a blacksmith hammers his hot iron, brought the club down hard upon the boy's blond head and smashed his skull.

And so, after he killed his second boy, he went hunting for his third victim but the boy's mother quickly grabbed him and ran off inside the rooms and shut all the doors behind her.

Herakles though, thinking that he was in front of the Cyclopean walls, dug under the door and with crow bars, removes the doors and the door posts and then with a single arrow kills both, his wife and his son.

1001

Then he races off looking for his old father but this time the goddess, Pallas Athena, brandishing a sharp spear in her hand, and wearing a plumed helmet, appears as a phantom. She grabs a huge stone and hurls it at Herakles' chest, which got him out of his madness and sent him to sleep. He fell down on the ground and hit his back on one of the pillars that had fallen on the ground and smashed in two when the roof had fallen in.

1010

This gave us cause to regain our courage and we all helped his father to grab some thick ropes and tie him to that pillar so he won't do any more harm when he wakes up.

So, that's where he is now, poor man. Sleeping on that spot, not the most blest of sleeping, the murderer of his own children and wife.

I know no mortal more unfortunate than that man in there, Herakles.

Exit the messenger into the palace

Chorus:

The most unbelievable and most famous murder ever committed in Greece was that which was committed by Danaus' fifty daughters, upon the rocks of Argos but these horrors that this day, fell upon Herakles, the son of Zeus, surpass even those!

1020

Chorus:

And I could mention the murder of Itys, also the son of Zeus.

Procne, the boy's mother had murdered him, her only son as a blood sacrifice for the Muses.

Chorus:

But you, Herakles!

You, killer!

You've murdered all of your three sons! Killed them all in a frenzy sent to you by Fate.

Chorus:

What sighs, what groans, what wails and dirges, what songs of Hades shall I now raise?

The doors of the palace are swung wide open and a rolling platform brings the bodies of Megara and her three sons out onto the stage.

Herakles is asleep and tied to the pillar.

1030

Chorus:

Ah, look!

Chorus:

Look there!

Chorus:

The gates of this mighty palace are swung open!

A rolling platform brings the bodies of Megara and her three sons out onto the stage.

Next to them lies Herakles, asleep and tied to the two broken pillars.

Chorus:

Look there!

Look how the poor children are lying there dead!

Chorus:

Murdered by their own unfortunate father!

Chorus:

Look!

Look how he lies there, asleep!

Chorus:

Look!

Look, what dreadful sleep after this dreadful murder!

Chorus:

Look!

Look at all the ropes that he's tied with!

Chorus:

Look!

Look at the thick ropes!

Chorus:

Look!

Look at how fast Herakles is tied to those stone pillars of his house!

Enter Amphitryon from the palace.

Chorus:

And look there now!

Chorus:

Our old friend!

Chorus:

Amphitryon!

1040

Chorus:

He wails!

He wails like a mother bird grieving for the featherless chicks she has just given birth to.

Chorus:

Look how bitter his steps are!

Chorus:
How slowly his feet move towards us!
Amphitryon:
Quiet, old Theban friends!
By quiet and let him go on sleeping. Let him forget his misery!
Chorus:
I cry for you, old friend!
Chorus:
For you and for the children and for the man, your son, glorious in victory!

1049

Amphitryon:
Go back, friends, go back and don't make any noise! Speak quietly!
Don't wake the poor man from his peaceful sleep.

Chorus:
Look!
Look at all that slaughter!

Amphitryon:
Ah! Stop! Quiet!
You will be my ruin!

Chorus:
Look!
Look how the slaughter is rising up!

Amphitryon:
Cry softly, old friends, quietly!
Or else he'll wake up, break his bonds and destroy the city!
He'll kill his father and then smash down the whole palace!

Chorus:
I can not! I can not!
Ah!

1060

Amphitryon:
Hush, old friend!
Let me see if he's breathing.
Let me listen.

Chorus:
Is he asleep?

Amphitryon:
Yes, he's sleeping now.

Ah, what a sleep he is having! After murdering his wife and children with that twanging bow of his!

Chorus:
Grieve, then, Amphitryon!

Amphitryon:
I am grieving!

Chorus:
Grieve, old man, the death of the poor children!

Amphitryon:
Ah! My grandchildren!

Chorus:
Grieve also for your son, old friend!

Amphitryon:
Ah, My son!

Chorus:
Ah, my poor, old friend!

Amphitryon:
Hush!

Hush!
He is turning! He is waking up!
I better go and hide inside!

1071

Chorus:

Courage, old friend. Night still holds your son's eyes shut!

Amphitryon:

No, no, look!

It's not dying that I am afraid of. It's not leaving the light of day that worries me but that, if he wakes up and kills me, his own father, adding one evil upon another, then the Furies will add the spilling of kindred blood to their curse!

Chorus:

You should have died back then, when you had returned triumphant from the city of the Taphians, circled by the sea!

1080

Chorus:

After you had sacked that city to avenge the murder of your wife's brothers.

Amphitryon:

Ah!

Run, old friends! Run away from here!

This maddened man is waking up! Escape his fury!

Escape, or else he'll add more murders to his old and send the whole city of Cadmus into a frenzy!

Chorus:

Zeus!

Zeus, why do you hate your own son so much?

Chorus:

Zeus, why have you plunged him into such a huge sea of troubles?

1089

Herakles: *Waking up*

Ah!

I am breathing, yes and I can see everything that I should be seeing: the sky, the earth and the sun's brilliant shafts. But it's as if I have fallen into a tempest and my mind is in a dreadful turbulence.

Ha! My breath is hot and flows out of my lungs in spasms!

What?

What am I doing here? What are all these ropes around me? Why am I lying here like this?

My youthful arms and chest tied like this, like a ship, to this half smashed stone?

Why these corpses around me?

And look there! My bow and arrows!

Ah, my poor arrows! Worthy companions to these arms of mine!

1100

These arrows have protected my flanks and I have protected them! Look how they are scattered everywhere!

Have I gone back down to Hades again? Have I made the journey to Eurystheus twice?

No. I cannot see the rock of Sisyphos... or Pluto... or even the scepter of Demeter's child, queen Persephone.

I am confused. I cannot remember where I am.

You there!

Can one you, friends over there, help me understand?

I can't understand a thing of what is going on.

Amphitryon:

What do you say, old friends, should I approach my own destruction?

1110

Chorus:

Yes, do and I'll come with you! I won't abandon you in your hour of trouble.

Herakles:

Father, what's wrong? Why the tears? Why hide your eyes from me?

Why stand so far from me? I am your son! The son you love so dearly!

Amphitryon:

My son, indeed!

Yes, you are my son, even after causing us such a disaster!

Herakles:

Calamity?

What disaster have I caused, father, to make you cry?

Amphitryon:

A disaster, my son which would make even a god cry, if he found out about it.

Herakles:

Father!

That is a terrible thing to say but you still haven't told me what disaster I have caused you.

Amphitryon:

No, my son, because you see it for yourself, if you've recovered your senses.

1120

Herakles:

Father, don't give me yet another riddle!

Amphitryon:

I'm trying to make sure that your mind has fully recovered.

Herakles:

If you're suggesting that I'm to face some new disaster in my life, then just tell me!

Amphitryon:

I will but only if you are no longer in the grips of Hades' madness!

Herakles:

I don't remember ever being mad!

Amphitryon:

Friends, shall I undo my son's ropes?

Tell me, what should I do?

Herakles:

Yes, undo them and tell me who tied me up with them.

This is shameful!

Amphitryon:

This is as much as you should know about your troubles. Forget the rest.

Herakles:

Will my silence alone give me the answer?

Tell me what happened to me!

Amphitryon:

Zeus!

Can you see all this from your throne up there, next to Hera?

Herakles:

Is that where I was attacked from? Is it Hera?

Amphitryon:

Come now, leave the goddess alone and take care of your own troubles!

1130

Herakles:

Ah! So I am destroyed!

You're about to tell me about some disaster I must endure.

Amphitryon:

Look there, Herakles, look there and see the bodies of those children!

Herakles:

Ah!

What hideous sight is this?

What sorrow is this?

Amphitryon:

You have waged a war that was no war against your own sons!

Herakles:

What war are you talking about? Who killed these children?

Amphitryon:

You and your arrows, my son, along with whatever god it was who brought it all about.

Herakles:

But what are you saying, father? What have I done?

You're a messenger of evil news, father!

Amphitryon:

I am saying, my son, that you have killed your sons in a fit of madness.

Your questions are full of sad answers.

Herakles:

And my wife? Have I also murdered her?

Amphitryon:

Yes. All this, Herakles, is the work of your own hand.

1140

Herakles:

Ah!

A cloud of sighs, of groans surrounds me!

Amphitryon:

And I, too, groan for your suffering, my son!

Herakles:

And my house? Was it me who smashed it to pieces?

Amphitryon:

I know nothing else other than your life is ruined!

Herakles:

How? Where did this madness hit me?

How? Where was I when it came and destroyed my life?

Amphitryon:

You were standing by the altar, purifying your hands with the fire when it seized you.

Herakles:

Ah!

Why then did I not murder myself as well? Why murder my darling sons and spare my own life?

Should I not go and hurl myself off a huge cliff or dig my sword into my entrails, to bring justice to them for murdering them?

1151

Should I not throw this flesh of mine onto a pyre and burn it to escape the hatred that awaits me now?

In the distance he sees Theseus coming towards him

Ah but here's a hurdle I must jump before I put to practice my plans to die.

I see my friend and relative, Theseus coming this way.

He will see me and the sight of a murderer, one who has murdered his own children will pollute his eyes. The eyes of my dearest friend!

What must I do now? Where can I go to escape this grief? Should I soar to the heavens or sink down, beneath the earth?

I'll bury my head in the darkness of my cloak.

1160

The shame of the evil I have done to my children is too great and I don't want to harm an innocent man by letting his eyes fall upon a man who has committed the sin of spilling blood.

Herakles covers his face with his cloak

Enter Theseus with armed men

Theseus: *To Amphitryon*

I have come, old friend, with many young Athenian men, armed and waiting by the banks of Asopos to help Herakles, your son.

We have received a report from Erecheis that Lykos has taken over this city and has waged war against you. I have come to see if Herakles needs any help and to repay the kind deed he did for me when he saved me from the underworld.

Suddenly sees the bodies of the dead children and their mother

1172

But – oh!

What is all this?

The ground is covered in corpses!

Am I too late? Have I come too late to stop these new disasters?

Who murdered these children? Whose wife is this here?

No... boys are not sent to war... this must be some other type of disaster I am seeing here!

Amphitryon:

Lord Theseus, who lives on the land of olive trees!

Theseus:

Such a sad greeting Amphitryon!

1180

Amphitryon:

The heavens have delivered us great suffering, lord!

Theseus:

Whose children are these that you are grieving?

Amphitryon:

Their father, Theseus was my unfortunate son. He was their father and their murderer. He it was who had spilled the blood of murder.

Theseus:

What? What are you saying, Amphitryon? How did this happen?

Amphitryon:

In a fit of madness, Theseus. He shot arrows dipped in the hundred-headed Hydra's blood.

Theseus:

Stop, Amphitryon! Use propitious words only!

Amphitryon:

Oh, how I wish I could do that, Theseus!

Theseus:

What dreadful things you say!

Amphitryon:

We are gone!

We are now ruined!

This is our end!

Theseus:

This is Hera's carnage.

Who is this man here among the corpses, old friend?

1190

Amphitryon:

My son!

My warrior son!

A son of many miseries!

A son, who on the plains of Phlegra, fought on the side of the gods against the giants and killed them.

Theseus:

Ah!

What mortal was ever born to suffer so much?

Amphitryon:

You'll never find another mortal who has suffered so much, who was tortured so much as he has!

Theseus:

But why has he covered his head with his cloak?

1200

Amphitryon:

The shame of murdering his sons and of facing you, a dear relative, is too great!

Theseus:

But I have come here to share in his grief, old friend!

Uncover his head!

Amphitryon: *To Herakles*

Son, pull away that cover from your eyes.

Let the sun see your face. It is a hard task to stand up against one's tears.

He kneels beside Herakles

I beg you, my son!

By your beard and by your knees and by your hands!

1210

My aged eyes shed tears, as I beg you, my son.

Control this wild lion's temper of yours! It is taking you through a path of unholy bloodshed, my child, adding one evil deed upon another!

Herakles does not stir

Theseus: *To Herakles*

You down there! Lying there, in the depths of misery!

Come, show your face to your friends. There is no darkness that is so dark to hide the pains of this catastrophe!

Herakles motions him to look at the corpses and to go away

What? What are you trying to tell me with your hands?

Are you afraid that if you utter words to me, I will become polluted by your sins?

1220

No, Herakles. It does not matter to me if I suffer the same ill fate as you do now.

No, what good fortune I ever had goes back to the day when you have taken me from the underworld

and brought me up here, to the light of day!

There's nothing so terrible as when a friend's gratitude grows old; nothing so terrible as a man who shares in a friend's happy moments but will not share the ship of troubles with him.

Come, come, Herakles! Uncover your poor face and look at me!

The noble man accepts the deaths sent to him by the gods!

He uncovers Herakles' face.

Herakles stands up.

Herakles:

Theseus, can you see the torture my children have suffered?

1230

Theseus:

Yes, I have heard of them and now see the sight.

Herakles:

Why then did you let the sun see my face?

Theseus:

Why?

Because you, Herakles, are a mortal and mortals cannot pollute things that belong to the gods.

Herakles:

Leave, my poor friend! Leave this place! I have blemished it with my sins!

Theseus:

No, Herakles. The spirit of Vengeance does not travel from friend to friend.

Herakles:

That's true, Theseus. And I have no regret for having done you a good deed.

Theseus:

And, in thanks, I give you my sympathy.

Herakles:

Sympathy? Do I deserve sympathy for having killed my sons?

Theseus:

Yes, Herakles. I weep for your new misfortunes.

Herakles:

Could you find anyone else who has suffered greater misfortunes than mine?

1240

Theseus:

Your misfortunes, Herakles stretch out from the earth all the way to the sky!

Herakles:

And that's way I've prepared myself to die.

Theseus:

How would that help you? Do you think the gods care about such things?

Herakles:

The gods are arrogant and so I shall be arrogant back to them.

Theseus:

Hold your tongue, Herakles!

Such big words could bring you even worse pains!

Herakles:

I am bloated with pains. I have no more space for them!

Theseus:

So what are you going to do?

How far will this anger of yours take you, Herakles?

Herakles:

I will die again and go back to where I have come from: the Underworld!

Theseus:

Herakles, you're talking like some common, everyday person!

Herakles:

Ah! You speak without knowing my grief, Theseus!

1250

Theseus:

Are these the words of mighty Herakles? The man who has endured so much?

Herakles:

I have endured much, yes but this! This is too much!

Endurance, too, must come in moderation!

Theseus:

And is this the mighty benefactor and ally of mortals?

Herakles:

The mortals are of no help here. Hera controls all this.

Theseus:

Greece will never allow you to die such a mindless death, Herakles.

Herakles:

Well then, listen to my reasoning. Listen to why my death will not be mindless.

Listen to the reasons why I think my life, now and in the past, was an impossible one!

Let me start with my birth.

1260

My father had killed his old father-in-law. My mother's father and so by the time my father married my mother, Alcmene, he had already stained himself with the guilt of bloodshed. Well, then, when the very foundations of a race are not laid properly all its descendants will be fated to live a miserable life.

Then Zeus –whoever this Zeus might be- begot me so that I would be the focus of Hera's hatred.

Theseus visibly objects to this. No, no, don't let this upset you, old friend because I regard you as my true father and not Zeus.

Then, when I was still a baby, still breastfeeding, Hera sent fierce snakes into my cradle to kill me.

1270

Now, once the firm flesh had covered my young body, I had to perform a whole lot of labours; but what is the point of talking about them all now? Why talk about the lions or the three-bodied Typhons, or the giants that I killed? Or about the battle I fought and won against an army of four legged Centaurs? Or about how I killed the hydra, that beast with the many heads that kept growing back again the moment I cut them off?

And then, I performed countless other tasks before I ended up in the Underworld where, obeying Eurystheus' command, I brought up to the light of the sun, the three-headed dog, Hades' gate keeper.

1279

Indicating the corpses

And this –ah, this! This here is my last labour! This bloody deed I performed and crowned the miseries of my house with the death of my own sons!

And so, here I am! I have now arrived at this sorry state!

Piety forbids me from living here, in Thebes, the city I love because if I do stay here, to which temple or to what friends could I turn? The horror of my curse will not allow for friendly greetings.

So, shall I go to Argos then?

How can I? I'm an exile from my own country!

Another city, perhaps? Which one? And even if there were some city I could flee to, how could I endure all the sneers thrown at men with a bad name? How could I put up with the painful jabs of their bitter tongues?

1290

I can hear them all say, "Oh, look, that man is Zeus' son, isn't he? The one who killed his wife and sons? Why doesn't he get the hell out of our land?"

For a man like me, Theseus, one who was always known for being blessed, such change is unbearable. The man, though who had to always endure a miserable life, such a change would not bother him because misery has always been a part of him.

I think, Theseus that there will come a time when my misfortune will deliver me to the point where the very earth will roar out to me not to touch her soil; and the sea and the streams of all the rivers will forbid me from crossing them and I shall become like Ixion, the first of men who shed kin blood: chained to a spinning wheel in the Underworld for all eternity!

It would be best then that I never again be seen by the Greeks with whom I once shared a joyful fortune.

1300

So, why should I go on living?

What is the good of living such a useless, such a damned life?

No! Let gorgeous Hera dance in bliss! Let Zeus' wife strike the sparkling floors of Olympus with her divine slipper! She has achieved her goal! She has toppled the best of mortals right down to his foundations.

What man would offer prayers to such a goddess?

Her jealousy over her husband's visit to the bed of a mortal woman, drives her to destroy a man who has done good to all humanity; a totally innocent man!

1311

Theseus:

All this is the work of no other god than Hera, Zeus' wife. In that you are certainly correct but you must think carefully if this should cause you to die.

Now if it was the case that the gods have given everyone else a life free of troubles but you a cursed one, then, yes, rather than go on suffering, I would advise you to go ahead and die immediately.

But then, there's no mortal who hasn't been touched by misery; no god, either, if what the poets say is true. Because, have these gods not gone to each other's bed, committing sinful unions? Have they not fettered their fathers with shameful chains, just to become king? Yet there they are, still continue to accept their sinful life, on Mount Olympus!

1320

What will your excuse be then? You're a mortal who thinks so harshly of his own sins while the gods themselves see no wrong in their sin at all!

Well, obey the law, Herakles and leave Thebes. Come with me to the city of Pallas Athena! Come and I will cleanse your hands of all blemishes and give you a home and a portion of my wealth.

And I will give you all those gifts the citizens of Athens have given me when I saved their children, seven boys and seven girls, by killing the Minotaur of Knossos.

1330

They have given me plots of land all over the countryside and while you live, people will know them as being yours. Then, when you die and go to the Underworld, the whole of Athens will worship you as their hero with sacrifices and huge monuments.

It will be nothing short of a garland of achievement for them, in the eyes of all the Greeks, to be spoken well of for performing a good deed to a noble hero such as Herakles.

This will also be my repayment for saving my life because now I see that you are in need of friends.

When the gods honour us with good fortune, Herakles, we do not need friends. A god's help, if and when he chooses to give it, is enough.

1340

Herakles:

Dear friend, all these things you said are side issues. Nothing to do with my present troubles. In any case, I don't believe any of it. I don't believe that the gods engage in such unholy relationships, nor have I ever believed this story about gods tying up their parents in chains and I won't believe it now. Nor can I ever believe that one god is the lord of another.

A god, if he is a real god, is in need of nothing. These are just miserable tales made up by poets.

Still, though I'm in this point of misery, I have just had the thought that perhaps, if I die of my own accord, people might think I am a coward. Because the man who cannot stand against misfortune will not be able to stand against an enemy's arrow either.

1351

So, I'll hold on to life and come with you to your city and will thank you profusely.

Herakles wipes a tear from his eye

I have tasted pain many times and have rejected none of them. I have shed no tears over any of them or even thought that I would ever come to the point where I would do so. But now, now it seems that I must be Fate's slave.

So be it.

To Amphitryon

Old father, I am now an exile as well as the murderer of my own children.

1360

Give them a proper burial, father, put their burial clothes back on and shed a tear in their honour. The law forbids me to do this. Then let lie against their mother's breast, in her arms, a communion of misery! Poor woman! Poor mother which I have killed unwittingly.

Poor man I!

After the burial, stay here, father. Stay in this city. It will not be easy for you but strengthen your heart to share in my misery.

Turning to the children

Ah, my sons!

Your very own father has murdered you!

You have been deprived of the great fame, a father's honourable inheritance, that my glorious labour would have bestowed upon you had you lived!

1371

And you, my poor wife! I have killed you too, most unjustly!

And how unjustly I have repaid you for the loyalty you have shown to our marriage bed and for

watching over our household during my long absence!
Ah, my poor wife! My poor sons!
And poor me and my misery! My miserable separation from my wife, from my boys!
He bends over the bodies and kisses their foreheads
Sweet kisses! Pitiful kisses!
Pitiful my company with these weapons!
Should I keep them or should I throw them away?

1380

They will be dangling about my sides, calling out at me, "It is with us that you have killed your wife and children. We are their murderers and you are still holding on to us!"
Should I carry them about on my arms? How could I justify that?
Should I strip myself of these weapons which helped me perform the glorious deeds throughout Greece and leave myself vulnerable to my enemies to die a death of shame? No, I must keep them. Keep them and keep the misery that comes with them.
Theseus, do me this favour. Come with me to Argos to help me collect the reward I earned for bringing back that savage dog, Cerberus, or else, who knows, if I am on my own, my sadness for my sons might cause me to do some harm to myself.
Thebes! Land of Cadmus and you, all of you Thebans!

1390

Cut off your hair and join me in my mourning! Attend the burial of my sons and shed tears for all of us, for the dead and for me because we have all been destroyed by a single cruel blow from Hera!

Theseus:

Come, you poor man! You have shed enough tears!

Herakles:

I can't! My limbs are frozen. I cannot leave this place.

Theseus:

Yes, Herakles. Misfortune overpowers even the mighty.

Herakles:

How I wish I could turn into a rock upon this very spot right now, with no memory of all my troubles.

Theseus:

Come, enough!

Give your hand to a helping friend!

Herakles:

But take care! I mustn't let any of this murder blood touch your clothes.

1400

Theseus:

Let it, Herakles! Don't worry, I am not concerned.

Herakles:

Now that I have lost my sons, I shall regard you as a son!

Theseus:

Come, put your arm around my neck and I'll lead the way.

Herakles: *Does as Theseus said*

A pair of friends, one of which is wretched in his misery.

To Amphitryon

This is the sort of friend one ought to make, old father!

Amphitryon:

The land that gave birth to him is a land that gives birth to good children!

Herakles:

Theseus, turn me around again. I want to see my sons once more.

Theseus:

Why, do you think it will work like some soothing drug?

Herakles:

I need to see them again!

And I need to put my arms around my father!

Amphitryon: *Embracing Herakles*

Here you are, son! We both wish the same thing.

1410

Theseus: *Impatient with the emotion shown by Herakles*

Herakles? Are you the same man who has performed all those glorious deeds?
Or have you forgotten them now?

Herakles:
 Those deeds caused me less grief than do all these!

Theseus:
 Such womanish behaviour! You won't be praised by anyone who sees you act like this.

Herakles:
 Does my life look to you so lacking in nobility, now?
 I daresay, it wasn't so before.

Theseus:
 Of course!
 Where is that glorious Herakles of the olden days now?

Herakles:
 Ah, yes! And your behaviour when you were in the Underworld? What was it like then?

Theseus:
 Even worse! Worse than all men so far as courage was concerned.

Herakles:
 How can you say then that my misfortune has taken away my nobility?

Theseus:
 Go on! Let's go!

Herakles: *To Amphitryon*
 Farewell, old father!

Amphitryon:
 And to you too, my son!

Herakles:
 Bury my sons as I asked, father.

Amphitryon:
 And me? Who will bury me, my son?

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Herakles:
 I will, father.

Amphitryon:
 When will you come back?

Herakles:
 After your death, father.

Amphitryon:
 But how?

Herakles:
 I will bring you to Athens.
 But now carry my sons inside, father. A sad burden to carry, I know.
 And I, I the shameful destroyer of my own house, shall follow Theseus, like a boat in tow.
 People who think wealth or power is better good friends think wrong.
All except the Chorus leave

Chorus:
 Let us go then, full of tears and sadness, since we have lost our best friends!

Exit all
**The End of
 Euripides'
 Herakles**

* This is an ode in praise of Herakles' labours. It is the earliest list and it mentions twelve of them and, whilst this number has taken the currency of a cannon, the labours themselves vary from author to author. Here, Euripides mentions the following:

1. The Lion of Nemea (359-363)
2. The Battle of the Centaurs (364-374)
3. The Hind of Artemis (375-379)
4. The Mares of Diomedes (380-388)
5. Cycnos (389-393)
6. The Apples of the Hesperides (394-400)
7. The Clearing of the Sea (400-402)
8. Atlas (403-407)
9. The Girdle of the Amazon, Hippolyta (408-418)

10. The Lenean Hydra (419-422)
11. The Cattle of Geryon (423-424)
12. The bringing back to earth of Cerberus

Note: Readers might wish to also read Seneca's "Heracles Oetaeus" Translated by F.J. Miller [here](#)

AND

"Herackles Furens" [here](#)