

AESCHYLUS'  
"PERSIANS"

Produced in 472BCE at the City Dionysia

TRANSLATED BY  
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**Dramatis Personae**

Xerxes  
(King of Persia)  
Chorus of Persian Elders  
Atossa  
(Queen Mother)  
Herald  
Ghost of Darius

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*At the Persian Royal Palace, in Susa.*

*At SL, the tomb of Darius.*

*Enter solemnly the Chorus of Elders, dressed in the ostentatious clothes of Persian dignitaries.*

Chorus:

We are the trusted dignitaries who have stayed behind when the Persian soldiers went off to fight the Greeks.

Chorus:

We have stayed behind to guard the royal halls of our Prince, Xerxes, the son of King Darius.

Chorus:

We guard the glittering riches and the stores of gold, abundant in his Palace.

Chorus:

The Prince himself has chosen each and every one of us, according to our rank and age, to supervise the affairs of his kingdom.

**10**

Chorus:

But my soul trembles with fear and with dire premonition when I think about our King's return and the return of his army, dazzling in its golden gear.

Chorus:

The whole of Asia's might has gone away.

All our young men have gone to Greece and not a word about them since!

No messenger nor horseman has come to us with any information.

Not here, in the Persian capital.

Chorus:

They left behind Susa and Ecbatana and Kissa, with their ancient towers and went off to Greece.

Some on horses, others on ships, more on foot, a formidable force for battle.

**20**

Chorus:

Gone are Armistres and Artaphrenes.

And Megabates and Astaspes, great leaders of the Persians, kings themselves.

They obeyed our Great king, and became generals in his huge army.

They, too, are gone.

Chorus:

Bowmen and cavalry, all of them, an awesome sight to look upon, a frightening force in battle, their hearts overflowing with the passion for glory.

All left with Xerxes.

**30**

Chorus:

Artembares with his mighty steed and Masistres, and the god-like bowman Imaeus and Pharandaces and Sosthanes, who drives his horses hard into the battle.

Chorus:

And all the men that the ever-nourishing Nile has sent us:

Chorus:

Susiscanes and the Egyptian Pegastagon...

Chorus:

...and the great Arsames that rules sacred Memphis...

Chorus:

...and Ariomardus, whose kingdom is the ever-ancient Thebes...

Chorus:

...and all those folks whose sturdy oars slice the waters of the marshes in their huge numbers...

**40**

Chorus:

...followed by the soldiers from Lydia, men who live in luxury...

Chorus:

...and all those who Metragathes and noble Arceus rule...

Chorus:

...royal leaders, leaders of people who live in the forests of the land, far from the sea shores...

Chorus:

...and Sardis, dazzling in gold, sent a huge number of chariots pulled by double and triple yokes, a spectacle to frighten the eye.

**50**

Chorus:

...and all those who live around Tmolous and want to shed their Greek yoke –

Chorus:

-the twins, Mardon and Tharybis, spear throwers, unsurpassable in skill, ...

Chorus:

...the Mysians, experts with the lance.

Chorus:

Babylon, too, wealthy beyond all imagination has sent an army, a rushing river of it, ships well armed and bowmen precise at their shooting.

Sword wielding armies led by their kings.

Chorus:

The flower of our land has left us and Asia, who has nurtured and nourished them, now groans at their absence.

And their parents too, groan, and their wives, as well, as they anxiously count the days of their absence.

**65**

Chorus:

Our royal army, leveler of cities, has already come and gone across to the lands of the opposite shore, yoking the neck of Helle's sea, Athama's daughter, with a bridge of rope-harnessed boats.

**71**

Chorus:

Our war-loving king, the king of all of Asia's men, spreads his divine battle flock of soldiers across the face of the whole earth, both by foot and by ship, trusting his mighty commanders. A child who, like Perseus, was born in the house of gold. A man equal to the gods.

**81**

Chorus:

With eyes spewing the black flame of a bloodthirsty dragon he drives angrily his army of many hands and many oars as fast as he drives his own Syrian chariot.

Chorus:

Drives them against an enemy whose glory is made by the spear, war-loving men, skilled in the bow and arrow.

Chorus:

Who can stand against this tide?

A human tide.

A flood of soldiers.

No barriers are sturdy enough to withstand this unconquerable ocean of men.

There's no one strong enough to stand and fight against the brave hearts of Persia's men!

**90**

Chorus:

Still, where is the mortal who can foresee the gods' every deception?

What mortal has feet, agile and fast enough, to outrun it?

Chorus:

Fate will fawn on him, use flattering words on him and lure him into her traps of troubles. No hope for him then. He can't escape.

Chorus:

It's an ancient way. It's the will of the gods and the doing of Fate to have the Persian men always engaged in battle, in destroying castles, in pursuing cavalries and in demolishing cities.

**100**

Chorus:

But our soldiers have now learnt the ways of the frothing wide sea, the white waters swelling with the might of the frenzied winds. They now know them and they can trust their well-made tackles and clever machines to carry them across the salty deep.

Chorus:

And that is why my heart is cloaked with gloom and my soul shakes with fear!

I fear that the groan shout of the words, "Oh my Persian men, they are gone!" will attack my ears one day.

Chorus:

I fear that the sound of the words, "Souza, our great city is now empty of men!" will spread across our great land!

**120**

Chorus:

And I fear, that the gathered women of the Kissian citadel will join in the miserable song by raising their own groan, "Kissa, our great city is now empty of men!"

Chorus:

They'd wail and lament and with pain and anger tear their precious clothes to shreds.

Chorus:

Because our whole army –horsemen and footmen- all of them, like a swarm of bees, has disappeared. They've left us here, alone and defenceless!

Their following their General across the ocean, putting a yoke over the two opposite shores.

**133**

Chorus:

And I fear that the beds will be soaked with the tears of women longing for their men.

Persian girls who, with pain and sorrow said farewell to their war-loving and eager-hearted husbands and now cry tenderly alone.

**140**

Chorus:

But come! Persians, we now must get together and think deep and hard about the fortunes of our King, Xerxes, son of Darius, member of the same ancient race as us. Let us seat ourselves on the steps of this ancient palace here.

*They sit at the steps*

Chorus:

Which of the two is holding sway in a war, the tip of the arrow or the cutting point of the spear?

**150**

Chorus: *Sees Atossa in the wings*

But wait! A divine light approaches! It is the great King's mother!

My Queen!

O, I fall upon my knees in reverence!

Come, men, it is our duty to greet our Queen with kind words.

*Enter Atossa*

*The chorus falls to its knees before her, in reverence*

Chorus:

Beloved Queen! Atossa, most splendid Queen of the slender Persian women! Aged mother of Xerxes!  
Greetings, wife of Darius!

Chorus:

You were the wife of a god and now the mother of a god, that is, if our ancient Fate has not abandoned our army.

**159**

Atossa:

This is the very reason why I have just left my chambers -chambers that I once shared with Darius- and my glittering palace to come here. I won't hide this from you, my friends but my own soul is also trembling with worry and it's not a worry that simply springs out of my imagination.

I am afraid that all this enormous wealth of ours, in its great rush to grow, does not trip with its own feet and lose all the good fortune that Darius, with the help of some god, has built.

It's a double torture for my mind. An unspeakable torture.

Should the city honour such wealth when it lacks men?

And then the other thought:

That men who have no wealth will never see their Fortune smile at them, not in proportion to their strength.

So far as wealth is concerned, here we have plenty of it. What terrifies my eyes, though, is the absence of our Lord because the eye of a house is its master and Xerxes is the eye of this palace.

So, come then, old friends! Come, my trusty Persians and give me your thoughts on the matter. Only you can give me good advice.

**173**

Chorus:

Atossa, Queen of our land, be certain of this:

There will never be a need for you to ask us twice about performing some deed or word for you. It shall be performed to the best of our ability. In all cases we shall be your most trusted guides. You have asked for the council of those who love you.

Atossa:

From the day that my son raised an army and went off to lie waste and conquer the land of the Ionians I have spent not a single night without dreaming many ominous dreams but last night's dream was the most vivid yet.

**180**

Let me tell it to you.

Two women appeared in my dream. Both dressed in gorgeous clothes, one in Persian, the other, in Greek. Their splendid beauty and stature was like none we see among us these days.

In the dream, both were from the same race but Fate allotted Greece to be the fatherland of one of them and for the other, she was given the land of barbarians.

And it appeared to me that these two women were fighting with each other about something, when, suddenly, my son appears and tries to bring peace between them.

**190**

Finally, in his attempt to do so, he places their heads through the yoke of his chariot, the one next to the other, with the yoke straps over their necks.

The first seemed to enjoy this and held the straps in her mouth obediently. The other woman, though, struggled hard with the straps and tore them to shreds and then destroyed the yoke itself with her own hands. My son, Xerxes fell off the chariot. Darius, his father was standing next to him giving him courage and feeling sorry for him. But then Xerxes turns towards Darius and, at the sight of his father, tears his own clothes in a frenzy.

**200**

That was the dream I saw.

When I woke up, I went to the clear-running stream and washed my hands for purification. After that I went to the altar to make offerings to the gods and to pray for their help and protection, to avert some future misfortune. Such offerings and prayers that are appropriate to them.

But suddenly I saw an eagle, my friends, rushing into Apollo's shrine, looking for protection. The sight was so terrifying, I stood there speechless. A falcon then rushes into the shrine and with its sharp talons extended, attacks the eagle's head viciously, while the poor bird stood there silently accepting its fate, submitting its torn body to its enemy.

**210**

A terrible vision for my eyes and a horrible story for your ears. Terrible for you indeed, because, you know well, my friends that if my son succeeds in this war he will become famous throughout the land

but, if he is not, even though he will not have to answer to the State for his deeds it will suffice that he survives the war and he will still be, as he always was, the Lord of this country.

Chorus:

Queen, mother of our land, we want our words to neither alarm you nor give you unwarranted courage but if your thoughts are that the dream is ominous then seek refuge in the will of the gods and pray to them that for our own good and the good of your son, they turn all evil away and let all your good wishes for us, for your kingdom and for all things you love, be fulfilled.

**220**

Chorus:

Then, it would be a proper thing for you to pour libations, both to the earth as well as to the departed.

Chorus:

And to make a solemn prayer that your husband, who you say appeared in your dream, send up to us, up to the light of day from down below the dark underworld, things that are good for you and for your son and to keep all things that are evil in the black darkness, down below.

Chorus:

That is our advice, my Queen, which we offer you in kindness and as our minds read these signs.

Chorus:

And all these signs are propitious and will emerge as good things from all angles.

Atossa:

Yes, you are the first interpreter of my dreams and your explanation of them shows that they bode well for my son and my household. May the gods provide us this joy!

The moment I return to the palace I shall do as you say, in respect of the proper sacrifices to the gods and to the dead.

**231**

But tell me friends, what part of earth does Athens occupy?

Chorus:

Towards the West, my Queen. There, where our god, Helios, goes down.

Atossa:

Why such a strong desire for my son to take this city?

Chorus:

Because by getting this city he will get the rest of Greece as well.

Atossa:

Is their army so huge?

Chorus:

It's an army, my Queen, which so far has caused much destruction to the Persians.

Atossa:

And apart from the army? Is it a nation of great wealth?

Chorus:

Wealth of the soil, my Lady. They have a source of silver.

Atossa:

And do they know of the bow and arrow?

**240**

Chorus:

No, not at all my Lady. They carry short lances and shields for close combat.

Atossa:

And who's at the head of their army? Who leads them into battle?

Chorus:

They follow no one, my Lady. They don't think themselves as slaves, belonging to someone.

Atossa:

And when an enemy approaches them, how can they manage to stand before him?

Chorus:

How, my Lady? In the same way they stood before your husband, Darius. In the same way they destroyed your husband's brilliant army.

Atossa:

Dreadful stuff for the parents of the new army to think about! Dreadful!

Chorus: *Sees the Herald in the distance*

Ah! I can see a Herald running towards us and I think he must be a Persian.

Good or bad, he has news for us. You will soon know the full details of the matter, my Lady.

*Enter the Herald*

**249**

Herald:

Devastation! Ruined! All with one swift stroke!

Our cities, our kingdom, our huge river of wealth, all are gone now! All are ashes now! The flower of Persia is dead!

Oh, what a horrible job it is to be the first herald to deliver such painful news!

But news needs to be told in full, my Persian friends!

Our whole army, the whole of our barbarian army is lost!

Chorus:

Oh, such bitter, bitter news!

Chorus:

Such appalling calamities!

Chorus:

Unimaginable!

Chorus:

Cry, Persians! Cry bitter tears!

Chorus:

Cry our hideous fortune!

**260**

Herald:

Yes, cry the loss of our army! Cry its full destruction!

And I, too cry because I have managed to return, a hope not hoped for before!

Chorus:

We lived too long!

Chorus:

Too long, too old in age to see the force of such calamity!

Chorus:

Who could have foreseen such a thing?

Herald:

I was there, my Persian friends! I was there and saw it all with my own eyes. It wasn't simply reported to me. I saw and can relate to you every detail of this disaster!

Chorus:

What was the use? What good could have come out of sending all our might away from Asia and on to that land, the land of the hostile Greeks?

**271**

Herald:

The beaches of Salamis and all the shores around about it are clogged with the bodies of dead men.

Chorus:

Our men, you say, the bodies of our beloved men, in their splendid clothes are tossed and battered by the salty waters, lifeless, now driven above, now driven beneath the ocean surface? Oh!

Herald:

Our bows and arrows were of no use at all.

Our whole army was destroyed, crushed between the pointy prows of the battle ships.

**280**

Chorus:

Cry, oh cry, Persians!

Chorus:

Mourn and groan for the miserable loss of all of our men!

Chorus:

Oh, Persians! Sing now a heart rending dirge for the appalling Fate of our men!

Herald:

How hateful the name of Salamis!

How painful the memory of Athens!

Chorus:

How detestable is Athens to us!

Chorus:

We must never forget the number of Persian women Athens turned into widows!

Chorus:

How many sons and husbands she has killed!

Chorus:

And all in vain!

**290**

Atossa:

This dreadful news have confounded me!

All this time I could not speak nor even ask a question, so great is the catastrophe we've suffered.

But, mortals must endure whatever disasters the gods send to them.

Come, then Herald, courage! Harden your heart and tell us the full story, even though the story might be full of misery.

Tell us, which of our captains are still alive and for whom should we mourn?

Which of those who hold the sceptre of chief have died in battle and left their army desolate, bereft of a leader?

Herald:

The king himself, Xerxes, is still alive.

**300**

Atossa:

Ah! Your words shine a bright light inside my palace.

A bright day has followed a black-shrouded night.

Herald:

But not for Artemabares. This man, who led ten thousand horse, is now being dashed against Silenia's rugged shores.

And, with a light thud, Dadakes, who led one thousand men, was thrown overboard by an enemy spear.

Tenagon, the chief and bravest amongst his Bactrian native tribe, now wanders the seas around Ajax's island. Lileus, Arsames and Argestes, all three killed by the enemy, are now thrashing about the harsh shores of the island that nurtures doves.

**311**

Arkteus, who lived by the mouth of the Egyptian Nile, as well as Adeues and Pharnuchus of the mighty shield, all these three were thrown overboard from the same ship.

And Matalus from Chrysa, leader of myriads of men, chief of the Black Cavalry –some thirty thousand in number- he, too fell and as he fell, his glorious long and bushy auburn beard changed colour and took the purple colour of blood.

Arabus, the priest and Artames from Bactria, their corpses, too, have settled for ever at that cruel place.

**320**

Amistris, too, as well as Amphistreaus, owner of the hard-working spear and famous Ariomardus whose death the folk from Sardis mourned, and Seisames, the Mysian, Tharybdis, the handsome and noble Lyrnaian, chief of two hundred and fifty ships, all of them met their end in battle and there their twisted bodies lie.

Syennesis, too, the bravest among them, Governor of Cilicia, a soldier who single-handedly caused much trouble to the enemy, he, too has fallen to his death in glory.

I have made mention of only a few of our dreadful losses; such leaders whom my memory recalls.

**331**

Atossa:

Oh! The shame! My ears cannot cope with the words they are hearing!

Such a disgrace to the Persians! It will raise high the shrills of their lament.

But come, my man, go back a little in your tale and tell me clearly, how many ships did the Greeks have to make them so confident that they could engage our Persian army in battle? What made them turn their prows against our ships?

Herald:

How many, my Lady? Far fewer than ours, my Lady. Rest assured of that. Far fewer. The barbarian ships outnumbered them by far. The whole lot would only be ten squadrons of thirty and, as well, there was also this other special squadron of ten ships.

**341**

Xerxes though, I know this for a fact, had over a thousand ships which he himself led in battle and he also had the two hundred and seven of them, that was the lot of the extra fast ships. That's what the report says. Does this sound like we were beaten by the numbers, my Lady?

No, my Lady! It was some divinity that tilted the balance in their favour, giving them the better luck in the battle and letting them destroy our army.

The gods themselves protect Athena's city, my Lady.

Atossa:

So, the city of the goddess is still unconquered?

Herald:

That's right, my Lady. So long as their men live, the city's towers will be secure.

**350**

Atossa:

And how did the naval battle begin? Who made the first move?

Was it the Greeks or was it my son, overconfident in the number of his ships?

Herald:

Neither, my Lady. Rather some evil spirit or other, some destructive curse that suddenly appeared from I don't know where, that sparked off the whole dreadful thing. You see, some Greek soldier came to us from their camp and told your son, Xerxes, that when the black darkness of the night falls, the Greeks will no longer be there. He told your son that the Greeks would jump aboard their ships, sit at the rowing benches and secretly row away to save their lives as quickly as they could. That's what he told Xerxes.

**361**

When Xerxes heard this, instead of seeing the trap the Greeks set on him, or even the hatred the Gods had against him, ordered his captains to get their ships ready. And then, he told them that the very moment the sun withdrew his rays from the earth and darkness covered the sky, they should line up all their ships in three ranks and guard the whispering waters of the passes and, as well, to also surround Ajax's island, so that if the Greek ships escaped their death by some secret passage or other, then, they should all be caught and beheaded.

**372**

Xerxes gave these orders with such confidence, my Lady, because he had no idea what the gods had in store for him.

And so, our captains, orderly and obediently, prepared their evening meal while our sailors quietly went about getting their oars ready, tying them at their well crafted rowlocks.

Then, when the light of the day receded and the night had arrived, every oarsman and every armed man went aboard his ship and each long line of them called out to the line behind it to follow them.

**382**

They all sailed on in an orderly fashion, just as they had been ordered and the whole night through the captains of the ships kept the fleet sailing back and forth across the pass.

But as the night went on we saw that the Greeks had made no secret attempt to escape in any direction. Then Day arrived on her chariot, pulled by her white steeds, and she flooded the whole earth with her bright beauty; and at that very moment a shrieking war cry rang out from the Greeks!

**390**

A song that echoed all about us from every rock and crag on the island. A song of terror that engulfed us all. Fear shook everyone of the barbarians. Their hopes of victory was proven false.

This was no solemn song the Greeks were singing. This was no song of grief and of defeat. This was a song sprung from deep their war-clogged hearts. They were charging into the battle with fearless zeal and, right through their whole line, the trumpet's voice fired them up into brave action.

And suddenly, their flat oars obeyed some command and they sliced the salty waters of the deep.

Almost immediately after that, they were there, in front of us!

**400**

First came their right wing: orderly, calmly and then, close behind it, came the rest of their fleet. They rushed hard at us with a great shout:

"Charge! Greek men, set your country free! Save your children, your wives, the holy temples of your fathers' gods, the sacred tombs of your ancestors! Now is the time to fight for all these things!"

The Persians answered that shout with a frightened murmur... but there was no time to do anything.

Ship crashed her bronze beak upon a ship, the first being a Greek one that sheared off the figure head of a Phoenician ship.

**411**

Captains from both sides drove their ships against each other.

At first, all was well with the Persian fleet. Their enormous mass held strong against the Greek onslaught. But then they all entered the narrow straights.

Hundreds of them! Pressed hard up against each other!

Our own ships crashed against our own ships, none of them able to assist the other!

Our own ships smashed our own oars!

Our own prows smashed our own figureheads!

Then the Greeks seized that moment and, all together and with great precision, surrounded us and rushed at us from all angles and tipped our ships over.

**420**

You could not see the water from all the wreckage and the slaughtered men!  
You could not see the shores and the crags from all the bodies of our men!  
The rest of the barbarian ships took to the oars and sped away in disarray.  
But the Greeks followed us and even with broken oars and with floating wreckage, kept at us, beating us hard, like fishermen beat tunnies or some sort of other netted fish.  
Groans and wails spread all across the wide sea right up until the black darkness of the night came and covered it from sight.

**429**

But the disasters we suffered, my Lady!  
The disasters are so many that if you were to ask me to tell them all I would not reach their end for ten whole days my Lady, because, my Lady, be certain of this: no other single day saw the deaths of so many men.

Atossa:

Ah!

An ocean of calamities broke upon the Persians and upon the whole race of the barbarians.

Herald:

And my Lady, be certain of yet one thing more: The suffering of the Persians is yet to end. What you have heard from me so far is but less than half of what's still to come.

Atossa:

Could there be a greater calamity than this?

Tell us, then, what other misfortune, worse than those you've told us so far, has hit our men

**441**

Herald:

The best, my Lady, the best and bravest of our men, the men who were at the prime of their life, those men most loyal to our King and the most noble, all of those men, met a death most shameful!

Atossa:

Ah! How can I cope with this misfortune?

What miserable Fate haunts us, my friends!

Tell us, Herald, what was this death that took all those brave men?

**447**

Herald:

There is an island, my Lady, called Psytalea. Stands just in front of Salamis. A tiny island, with an unwelcoming harbour for the sailors. Pan, they say, loves to dance on its sands.

Xerxes sent these brave men there, on that island, so that when those Greeks whose ships were sunk, swam there for safety, our men could easily capture them and kill them. From there, too, they could rescue their battle mates, those who had fallen into the sea.

But the King had read the future wrong. Because the moment the God had awarded the triumphant victory to the Greeks, that very same day, they put on their full bronze armour, jumped out of their ships and onto the island and surrounded it so that no Persian could escape.

**460**

With their very hands the Greeks hurled stones at our men and with their bows they shot arrows in huge number and so, their stones and arrows brought about the devastation of our men.

Finally, with a loud shout, the Greeks charged at our men and cut them down, hacking off the limbs of the poor wretches until no man was left alive.

Xerxes groaned at the sight of the disaster. The enormous depth of it. He had his throne set up high on a mountain, near the shore, so he could observe the whole battle.

He groaned and tore his royal robes and shouted wildly at his commanders to have the Persian fleet leave the place. He, too, left in great disarray.

This is the disaster that you must add to the first one you've heard, my Queen.

Add tears upon tears.

**472**

Atossa:

Black Fate!

O Black Fate!

You have deceived the wits of the Persians!

You have punished my son bitterly!

Punished him for seeking, there, in famous Athens, revenge for the losses the barbarians suffered at Marathon.

God, were those men not enough for you?

It was for those men that my son had sought Justice; for them that he suffered all that grief!

But tell me, my good man. What of the rest of our ships, those that have escaped destruction. Where did you leave them? Do have any reliable news about them?

**480**

Herald:

My Lady, the commanders of the ships that had survived that onslaught left, like a gust of hurling wind, in a great hurry and disorder but as for the men, they had perished in Boetia and all around the broad springs. There they fell from mortal thirst.

The rest of us, exhausted and out of breath, found our way to the land of the Phokians, or at Doris, or the Melian gulf, where the kind waters of the river Sperheios quench the valley.

From there we entered the cities around the Achaian valley and then into Thessaly and by then, we were at the point of starvation.

**490**

Many of our men died there from hunger and thirst because these two evils fell upon us at the same time.

Then we left those places and went on to Magnesia and to Macedonia, to the ford of Axius and to the reedy marshes of Bolbe and from there to Mount Pangaeus, in Edonidia.

But during that night, the god delivered an unseasonal winter and, from shore to shore, froze all the rushing waters of the sacred river Strymon. Then, men who had never believed in gods before, began praying with all his heart. Kneeled down, they did and prayed to the heavens and to the earth.

**500**

And when all the army had finished praying, we walked across the frozen waters of the river.

Those of us who managed to get across before the rays of the Sun-god spread across the earth, survived death because the hot circle of the sun's brilliant rays, penetrated the centre of the stream and melted the frozen waters. Then the men began falling on top of one another and drowned.

We thought that the men who gave their last breath quickly were the blessed ones.

Those few of us who had survived, made our way through Thrace and, with a great deal of suffering, finally reached the safety of our home and country.

**511**

Now, this Persian city may mourn deep and hard the death of their beloved youth.

What I have said is the truth but much is yet to be told about the horrors God has hurled upon the Persians.

Chorus:

Ruthless god! How heavy the foot with which you crushed our entire Persian people!

Atossa:

Misery!

Grief! Fathomless grief! Our army is destroyed!

How true the dream I saw last night! That dream was such a clear, ominous sign!

**520**

*To the chorus*

But you, men, how terribly wrong was the interpretation you gave me of it!

How light you made of it!

But I will fall upon my knees and pray to the gods as you have advised me.

First I shall go into the palace and bring here offerings to the dead and to Earth.

I know such things are far too late to help with what has happened but, perhaps, they'll help with what will come in the future.

Think well about our misfortune councillors, discuss it well amongst yourselves and if, by any chance my son arrives before I get back, stand by him, comfort him and show him to the Palace. Let no other disaster follow this one!

*Exit Atossa and her servants.*

**532**

Chorus:

Lord Zeus!

You have now destroyed Persia's proud and vast army and you have cast a shroud of appalling grief over Susa and Agbatana!

Chorus:

Look now at the multitude of women who tear up their garments with their trembling hands!

They share in our misery.

Look now how the flood of tears drench their sad breasts!

**540**

Chorus:

And the young wives!  
Listen to their murmuring wails, their pleas to see again their newly-wedded husbands.  
Heart-renting, bottomless pleas!  
Look how they abandon their soft-quilted beds!  
Beds of pleasure for the young!

Chorus:

Sisters, we join you in your grief!  
We mourn the death of your men!

Chorus:

And so, the whole of Asia mourns!  
The whole of Asia is robbed of its men!

**550**

Chorus:

Listen to the loud cry! Do you hear it?  
“Xerxes! It was Xerxes who led these men!  
Xerxes who’s sent them to their destruction!”

Chorus:

“Xerxes!

It was a dreadful, mindless mistake to take our men aboard those ships!”

Chorus:

If only their leader was Darius!  
Darius, his father!  
Darius, expert at the helm!  
Darius, expert at the bow!  
Darius, loved by all the people of Susa!

Chorus:

Soldiers on foot and sailors were put aboard ships...

Chorus:

Savage Fate! Agony!

Chorus:

Ships with sea-blue eyes and canvas sails, spread wide like the wings of birds...

Chorus:

Savage Fate! Agony!

**560**

Chorus:

Murderous ships that killed them all!

Chorus:

Savage Fate! Agony!

Chorus:

Ships that were destroyed by the Ionian enemy!

Chorus:

Savage Fate! Agony!

Chorus:

Such destruction!

Chorus:

They say the ruin was so complete, our King barely managed to escape, taking the freezing paths of the Thracian plains!

**570**

Chorus:

Those whose Fate declared they should be murdered first are left to the mercy of the flesh-slashing crags of Kychrea!

Chorus:

Groan, men, groan! Scream out loudly your grief! Let the Heavens hear your lament!

Chorus:

Let your bitter misery be heard by all on earth!

Chorus:

Savage Fate! Agony!

Chorus:

Look how the frenzied waters are shredding the corpses of our men!

Look how the voiceless fish rip the corpses of our men!

**580**

Chorus:

Look how the Persian homes wail, grieving the loss of their men!  
Look how their aged parents, orphaned now of their children, look how they cry!  
They have learnt of the mighty disaster the heavens have cast upon them.

Chorus:

Savage Fate! Agony!

Chorus:

No longer, no more will the people of Asia will obey the will and command of Persia!  
No longer, no more will they pay their dues!  
No longer, no more will they bend their heads low and bow to our master!  
No longer, no more does our King have any power!

**591**

Chorus:

No longer will the common tongue be checked!  
No longer is there power on the throne and the tongues will now utter what they want!

Chorus:

The wave-beaten shores of Ajax's island carry on their blood-stained soil all of Persia's glory!  
*Enter Atossa carrying a basket of sacrificial offerings, followed by her servants*

**598**

Atossa:

My friends, those who know about misfortune know that when its storm of strife breaks, people will get frightened of every little thing but when the winds of fortune are on their sails, they think these winds will always be there for them, proving them with endless joy.  
That's how it is with me, right now. Everywhere I look, my eyes see heaven-sent terror and wherever I turn my ears – Oh, the sounds they hear are not the sounds of victory!  
Such is the turbulence that my heart now feels whenever I hear bad news.  
That's why I've hurried here, out of the palace, without my chariot and my servants, carrying libations on behalf of my son's father, to appease the souls of the dead.

**611**

Here I have some sweet, white milk from an unmated cow. Here, some clear honey, the juice made by the bees who work the flowers, and here, some blessed water that came from a virgin spring.  
Here, I have some pure, unmixed wine, the pride of its wild mother, a vine of the field.  
And here, here is the ash-green fruit of the olive tree, with its delightful aroma. An immortal plant with rich foliage.  
And these, too: Some garlands of flowers, children of the ever-nurturing earth.

**619**

But you, my friends, come with me now and chant the solemn hymns of sacrifice while I pour the libations to the dead. Call out to Darius! Summon his spirit here, while I send off these offerings to the gods below.

Chorus:

Yes, my Queen, revered Queen of the Persians.  
Send now your offerings down below, to the kingdom of Hades while we sing prayers to the gods, asking them to act kindly towards us.

**629**

Chorus: *Praying*

O, Hermes and Earth! Most holy gods of the underworld and you, Hades, Lord of the dead!  
Send us here, to the sun's light, the spirit of Darius because if there's anyone who might know of a remedy for our disaster, it would certainly be him.

Chorus: *To another member of the chorus*

Do you think that our holy and divine king can understand my tearful groans?  
Does he understand my incomprehensible, barbaric tongue?  
Or must I wail so loudly that my misery and sorrow are driven hard and deep into the earth?  
Can he hear me from below the earth?

**640**

Chorus:

Come Earth!  
Come all you lords of the underworld!  
Bring us the spirit of our proud and blessed king, the king of all the Persians!

Chorus:

A king equal to the gods!

A child of Susa.

Chorus:

Let him leave his home below the earth and send here, to the upper world!

To Persia, where no one his equal was ever buried.

Chorus:

Beloved was the man, beloved is his grave, beloved is the soul beneath that soil!

**650**

Chorus:

Come, Aidoneus! Be our Darius' guide and bring him to us! Come!

Chorus:

Come, Aidoneus! Bring to us our divine Lord, Darius! Do this for us, Aidoneus! Come!

Chorus:

Divine he is, indeed because he had never caused the deaths of his men in unwise wars!

Divinely inspired because he always led his soldiers well.

Come, Aidoneus, come!

Chorus:

Come King! Come, King of our past! Come to us, King!

Appear at the top of your tomb!

Pick up the tip of your royal gown and come to us!

**660**

Chorus:

Raise high your saffron sandal!

Raise high your royal crown!

Chorus:

Come Darius! Come beloved father!

Darius, our untainted Lord!

Chorus:

Come King and hear of misfortunes unheard of before.

Come, Lord, father of our King, come, appear before us!

Chorus:

Look at us, Lord!

Our youth has all been destroyed and a pall of gloom hovers above us,

A gloom like the gloom that hangs over Hades' river, Styx.

**671**

Chorus:

Come Darius! Come beloved father!

Darius, our untainted Lord!

Chorus:

Come, come, come, our Lord!

Lord, loved by all!

Your death was mourned with bitter tears by all!

Chorus:

Our Lord, our Lord, our Lord!

Tell us why these horrors struck our land?

Chorus:

Our men have gone!

Our three-tiered ships have gone!

All our ships are gone!

All our ships are gone!

All our ships are no more!

*The Ghost of Darius appears above his tomb*

**681**

Darius:

Most trusted citizens! Men with whom I shared my youth!

Elderly Persians, what troubles have visited our city?

I heard the earth groaning, I saw it beaten and torn apart; and above my tomb I saw my wife; and a terror ran through me, so I readily accepted her libations and came here.

And you, men, you have surrounded my tomb and grieve bitterly.

You cry out to me with words that come from deep within your souls, calling me pitifully, to leave my grave and appear before you.

This is a difficult thing for the dead because the gods below would much rather seize souls than release them.

**690**

Still, since they listened to my pleas, I am here.

But speak quickly, lest I overstay my time.

Speak and tell me of the new calamity that fell upon the Persians.

Chorus:

O, Lord! I dare not raise my eyes! I dare not speak before you!

My deep reverence to you is very old.

Darius:

But I am here now. You've called for me with groans and lamentations, so speak now and, in brief, uncluttered words, tell me what troubles you. Forget the reverence.

**700**

Chorus:

My Lord! I dare not do as you say, my Lord!

How could I open my mouth and speak before you?

How could I reveal troublesome news to those I love?

Darius:

Well, then, my friend, since your reverence for me holds your heart from speaking out, you, wife, old royal partner of mine, stop your tears and your sobbing and tell me the truth of the matter.

Fate delivers many troubles to mortals. They come constantly to them and as their life drags on, they're likely to have ill come at them from both the sea as well as the land.

**709**

Atossa:

My dear husband, while your eyes could see the sun, you surpassed all mortals in Fortune's goodwill.

You were envied by all of Persia's folks. You lived your life just like a blessed god. Even now, Darius,

I envy you! I envy you because while you were alive you did not see such a boundless misfortune.

You have died before you saw it.

Let me tell you of it in just a few words:

The whole might of Persia is almost totally ruined!

Darius:

How so? Did a plague visit us? Or was there a civil disturbance in the city?

Atossa:

Neither of these, Darius. Our whole army was destroyed near Athens.

Darius:

Tell me, wife: Which of my sons led our army?

Atossa:

Our war-eager Xerxes, Darius! He emptied our land of all its men.

Darius:

Did he rush off into this madness on foot or with ships?

**720**

Atossa:

Both, my husband. It was a twin front by a twin army.

Darius:

But how did he manage to take such a vast land army over to that distant shore?

Atossa:

He cleverly yoked the narrows of the Hellespond and then crossed over.

Darius:

What? So he managed to close the great Bosphorous?

Atossa:

That's right. Perhaps some divine power had helped him in this.

Darius:

Ah! Dreadful! Some great spirit has obviously ripped the reason right out of his mind.

Atossa:

And now we can all see just how great is the damage he caused.

Darius:

All those you're mourning, what has happened to them?

Atossa:

Once the naval force was destroyed, the land force followed soon afterwards.

Darius:

And that's how the whole of our army was brought down by the enemy spear.

**730**

Atossa:

The whole of Susa now wails for its desolation.

Darius:

What a shocking loss! All our brave men! Our whole defence force!

Atossa:

The same with the Bactrian army. It's all gone! Not even one old man is left standing!

Darius:

Poor man! What a huge army of young allies he has destroyed!

Atossa:

Xerxes, alone, they say... he and a very small number of his men...

Darius:

Please tell me, how did Xerxes meet his end? Where did he fall? Is there any hope he survived?

Atossa:

Happily, he has managed to come to the very bridge he built, the one crossing the Bosphorous.

Darius:

And has he safely touched foot upon our land? Is that certain?

Atossa:

Yes, Darius. The report on that was quite reliable. There is no doubt about his safety.

**739**

Darius:

So quickly! So quickly the oracle delivered its deed!

And Zeus decided these divine prophesies be delivered upon my son's head.

I had always thought that these prophesies would be delivered further into the distant future but, if a man rushes to his own doom then the gods will help him.

And so, now we see that my son has burst a whole fountain of troubles for all my loved ones.

Oh, my ignorant son!

You have rushed out with youthful audacity and, treating the Hellespond as if it were a slave, you have shackled the sacred waters of the Bosphorous hoping to stop their flow!

You threw your hammered chains across its waters and made a broad bridge to have our mighty army cross it.

Ignorant fool! You thought a mortal could defeat a god! Poseidon, even!

Tell me, wife, does not all this mean that my son was ill in his mind?

**750**

Oh! I am afraid all the wealth I amassed with my own hard work will be an easy steal for the first foreigner to get to it!

Atossa:

Xerxes the fool was taught by fools. They taunted him. They told him that while you, his father, had worked with your sword to bring home enough wealth for your children, he, himself, out of cowardice, acted out his bravery here, at home, doing nothing to enlarge his father's wealth.

He heard all this again and again from these terrible fools and so he gathered our great army for an expedition against Hellas.

**759**

Darius:

These men, then, were the workers of the dreadful deed. This dreadful deed that will be remembered for ever. No such disaster has ever before fallen upon Susa!

Never before has this city suffered such destruction.

Never! Not since the day Zeus had declared that this mighty land should be ruled by one man and that this man would be king over the whole of Asia. That man would hold the royal scepter and govern over the whole of Asia and its rich flock.

Never did this city suffer such a loss, not since that day.

Medus was the first to rule the army of this land.

His son completed his father's work because his mind followed the path of wisdom.

Then, he was immediately followed by a third man, a man called Cyrus, who was blessed with good fortune. Cyrus sat upon the royal throne and brought total peace for all his folk.

**770**

He was a wise man and so no god became his enemy. He conquered the land of the Lydians and of the Phrygians and, also with war, he subjugated the whole of Ionia.

His son, Cyrus' son, was the fourth to take the throne and to lead its army.

Then came Mardus, the fifth man to lead this nation. Mardus was a disgrace to his people and to his ancient throne.

But brave Artaphrenes, tricked Mardus and had him killed in his Palace, with the help of some of his friends with whom he had sworn an oath and conspired to do so.

Then came the sixth man, Marafis and then the seventh, Artaphrenes and it was my lot to follow this man.

**780**

I, too, wanted to embark upon many expeditions of my own and so, I, too, gathered many armies; but I have never caused so much destruction to the city.

But my son, Xerxes, in his youth, forgot all my advice and preferred his own, new, fancy ideas.

*To the chorus*

You, my old friends, know full well that none of us, none of us men who had become kings, has caused so much grief to this land.

Chorus:

So, now what, King Darius?

What is the meaning of your speech? What must we do to reverse this reversal of our fortunes? How will the Persians manage to prosper again after this disaster?

**790**

Darius:

How? By not ever marching against the Greeks again, no matter how much greater our Median forces are than theirs, because the land itself is their strongest ally.

Chorus:

Ally? How do you mean their land is their ally?

Darius:

She is their ally because she kills with starvation the invading enemy, even if it is enormous

Chorus:

But we could bring together a far superior force.

A smaller, individually chosen force that can be managed much more easily.

Darius:

But not even the few of our men who are still in Hellas will manage to save themselves and return home safely.

Chorus:

What was that you said, my Lord?

Will not the rest of the barbarian army manage to leave Europe and cross the Hellespond?

**800**

Darius:

If we are to learn from the events so far that the oracles were totally correct, then we can say that only a few, if any, of our army will make it back here.

Oracles, of course are not always correct but if these are correct, then Xerxes has relied upon hollow hopes, to have left such an elite force back there and in such huge numbers.

Our men will remain back there, where the river Asopus nourishes the plains and fields of Boetia.

And when they get here, too, they will be met with an even great disaster because of their arrogance and their disrespect for the heavens.

Awful disrespect for the heavens!

**810**

The moment they went to Greece, they forgot their respect to the gods and began to destroy all the statues and images of the gods and set fire to all the temples.

They have destroyed altars and they have upturned from their stands holy edifices, leaving them scattered everywhere on the ground.

And so, what ruin they've caused will be, in turn, visited upon them with an even greater fury.

And the suffering will continue later. The fountain of their suffering is not yet empty.

Clotted blood and gore will fall by the Dorian spear upon the land of Platea!

Too much blood and too much gore!

The mountain of corpses will be seen by the eyes of even the third generation of their children.

It will be a silent but stark lesson for them.

That mountain of corpses will tell them that mortals should not be overly proud.

**820**

The seed of pride brings forth the fruit of disaster, the harvest of which is endless tears.  
Take note of these event! Take note the punishment that follows them and never forget Athens. Never forget Greece!

Let none of you look down upon your present fortune and, with greed and lust for more wealth, go off to squander it.

Zeus punishes with a heavy hand those with excessive pride.

**830**

Teach my son these things. Give him the wisdom to stop showing mindless arrogance towards the gods.

And you, old woman, beloved wife and mother of our son, Xerxes, go back into the Palace, find his best clothes and go out to greet him. The grief over his disaster has made him tear up his refined clothes and now they hang on his body like shredded rags.

Console him, old lady, use your sweet words to him because, so far as I know your words are the only ones he'll tolerate.

Now I must leave and go back to the dark world beneath the earth.

**840**

Farewell then, old friends and, though you're in the midst of troubles, give your hearts some pleasure.

The dead gain no profit from wealth.

*Exit the ghost of Darius*

Chorus:

How painful it is to hear the troubles that have visited and are yet to visit the barbarians!

Atossa:

Ah! What painful fortune!

Rivers of grief flood my heart!

Ah, my son! To hear the story about your tattered clothes!

You, my royal son! Such shame!

But I better rush to get my son some dignified clothes and try to meet him.

I won't fail my beloved son in his hour of need.

**852**

Chorus:

What grandeur, what prosperity our city enjoyed, back in the days when our aged king, Darius ruled!

An almighty king, a virtuous, peace-loving, god-like king!

Chorus:

During his reign we raised armies worthy of world-wide praise. We conquered high-towered cities and came back to our happy homes, victorious, unhurt and unwearied.

Chorus:

And he had conquered so many cities!

Without ever having to cross the streams of Halys!

Without having to leave his Palace!

Chorus:

He took all those cities that stood by the shores of the river Strymon, all those cities near the Thracian villages.

Chorus:

And then, all those other cities, those beyond the waters of the shores, the ones in the mainland.

Huge towers protect those cities from all directions.

Still, they all became subjects of our King.

Chorus:

The same with all those cities on either side of the wide Hellespond...

Chorus:

And on the Propontis, with its deep harbours...

Chorus:

And all those at the mouth of the Pontus. They all became our subjects, too.

**879**

Chorus:

And so have all the sea-washed islands around the peninsula near our shores –

Islands like Lesbos and Samos, the island of the olive tree...

Chios, Paros, Naxos, Mykonos...

Chorus:

Andros, too and its nearest neighbour, Tenos.

**888**

Chorus:

As well as all the islands deeper into the ocean. Those between Europe and Asia, such as Lemnos, Icaros, Rhodes, Cnidos and the Cyprian cities of Paphos and Soli...

Chorus:

As well as Salamis, the daughter city of the island that has caused our great grief.

**900**

Chorus:

All those prosperous and heavily populated Greek cities in Ionia – Darius ruled them all as he pleased.

Chorus:

Darius had a huge army at his command.

Men from many allied cities. Inexhaustible strength!

Chorus:

But now, beaten in war, destroyed at sea, we suffer this dreadful reversal of fortune.

Chorus:

There is no doubt. This is the work of God's hand.

*Enter Xerxes in tattered gowns, exhausted, distressed. On his shoulder is an empty quiver.*

*Two or three attendant soldiers in similar condition.*

**908**

Xerxes:

Ah! Miserable Fate! Black Fortune!

Black, unbearable, unexpected disaster!

A savage single-minded Fate has ravished the Persian race!

What troubles are still in store for me?

All strength has abandoned my body... my limbs... there is none left to face these elders.

Ah, Zeus! Why has this evil Fate not buried me, as well, send me to the underworld, among all my men?

**919**

Chorus:

My King!

King of our brave army!

King of the men who have honoured Persia!

Blooms of manhood mowed down by Fate's sickle!

Chorus:

Our land groans at the loss of her own sons slaughtered for their King...

Chorus:

...slaughtered for Xerxes who's clogged the halls of Hades with their Persian corpses.

Countless the brilliant blooms of Persia, brave masters of the arrow, who have gone to the underworld.

**929**

Chorus:

Oh, Asia! She has fallen to her knees, my King!

Fallen to her knees!

Oh, Asia!

Xerxes:

And I! Look at me!

Born to bring disaster to my race and to my land!

Chorus:

I will send for the Mariandynian mourners, my King, experts at the dirge!

They will sing for you a greeting of tears.

And they'll sing of our grave Fate!

And they'll sing of our misfortune!

Xerxes:

Sing loudly, my friends!

Sing tearfully!

Sing out a dire cry!

Fate has turned against me!

Chorus:

Yes, yes, my King!

We shall sing the loud lament, in reverence for your suffering and for the suffering of our brave sailors, killed by the waves.

Chorus:

We shall cry and lament the pain a city feels for the loss of her men.  
A deep lament, a loud cry, a full flood of tears running.

**950**

Xerxes:

It was the Ionians!

It was the Ionians!

It was the Ionians who destroyed us!

The god of war, Ares, worked with them. He was on their side.

Worked with their massive ships and slaughtered us in the water and on the shore.

Chorus:

The horror comes!

The horror must be questioned!

Where is the rest of our great army?

Where are the rest of our brave men?

King where are your battle mates?

Chorus:

Where are Pharandaces, Susas, Pelagon, Dodamas, Agdabatas...

Chorus:

Where are Psammis and Susiscanes of Agbatana?

King, where are they all now?

**962**

Xerxes:

I have left them back there.

Their corpses crashing against the rough shores of Salamis!

They have been thrown out of a Tyrian ship.

Chorus:

Ah! Scream, Persians, scream! Let the tears flow for this loss!

Where is your Pharnuchus and where is the brave Ariomardus now?

**969**

Chorus:

Where is the great King Senalkis and where is Lilaius, son of a great race?

Where is Memphis and all those others?

Chorus:

Where is Masistras and Thambis and Artemvaris and Ystaichmas?

Where are they all now? Tell us, Xerxes!

Xerxes:

Ah, the poor souls! They took one look at hateful, ancient Athens –they managed but one look!- and with a single clash of oars they fell and there, upon that shore, they lie still!

Chorus:

And what of your most trusted man, the Persian best, the eye that never shuts, Batachonus' son, Alpistis? What of him?

**980**

Chorus:

And his thousands and thousands of men?

Chorus:

Sisames, Megavatis' son and Pathus and great Oevaris?

Lord, tell us. Did you leave those men behind also?

Chorus:

Poor men! Men with miserable luck!

King, you talk of disaster –disaster beyond disaster – suffered by the noble Persians!

**989**

Xerxes:

You bring to the surface of my soul the misery of the loss of my brave comrades!

My soul screams at the thought. My heart thrashes about in my breast calling their names.

Unforgettable suffering, unforgettable names!

Chorus:

Still, there are more!

More men that we miss. Tell us of their fate.

Chorus:

Of the Fate of Xanthis, chief of a horde of Mardian soldiers and of the great fighter, Anchares. Tell us of Diaexis and Arsaces, valiant experts of the horse...

Chorus:

What of Lythimas and war-hungry Tolmus?

My mind is gone! My mind is gone!

King, why are not these men gathered about your chariot now?

**1002**

Xerxes:

Yes, they are not with me because these brave Generals are all slaughtered.

Chorus:

Gone without their due glory!

Xerxes:

Ah! What misery!

Chorus:

Oh, gods! What misery you've sent us!

Destruction unforeseen!

This is an obvious curse, sent by the Heavens!

Xerxes:

An incurable curse that will last for ages!

Chorus:

There is no doubt. There is no doubt it is an incurable curse.

**1010**

Xerxes:

A strange curse! A new sort of curse!

Chorus:

Cursed was the hour we met the Ionian fleet.

Cursed in war is the Persian race!

Xerxes:

How can it be otherwise?

Oh, how I ache at the loss of such a great army!

Chorus:

What's left of our Persian army?

It is all gone!

Destroyed to the last man!

Xerxes:

Look! Look at the remnants of my royal robe!

Chorus:

I see it, I see it!

**1020**

Xerxes:

And this quiver...

Chorus:

Is this all that's left of all your possessions?

Xerxes:

A quiver, bereft of arrows.

Chorus:

So little left from so very much!

Xerxes:

No friends to defend us now! None left!

Chorus:

Oh! The Ionians don't shirk from battle!

Xerxes:

A brave race, indeed but I did not expect to see such a disaster.

Chorus:

You mean the loss of our sailors?

**1030**

Xerxes:

Yes! I tore my robes at the sight of that disaster!

Chorus:  
Gruesome disaster! Gruesome calamity!  
Xerxes:  
Gruesome indeed! Dreadful catastrophe!  
Chorus:  
Double and triple the pain!  
Xerxes:  
A catastrophe for us, a victory for our enemy!  
Chorus:  
Gone is all our might!  
Xerxes:  
I have been stripped bare of my guards!  
Chorus:  
Nor friend! They've all been taken by the sea's slaughter.  
Xerxes:  
Cry, men, cry! Cry for our misfortune!  
But now, go to your homes.  
Chorus:  
Oh, dreadful, dreadful Fate!

**1040**

Xerxes:  
Come, accompany my sad song!  
Chorus:  
One sad song accompanying another!  
Xerxes:  
Join your lament to mine!  
Chorus:  
How miserable our plight!  
How horrible our Fate!  
I suffer with you, my King!  
Xerxes:  
Beat your breasts!  
Beat your breasts and cry for my misfortune!  
Chorus:  
Oh, unbearable misfortune!  
Xerxes:  
Join me in my lament!  
Chorus:  
Your misfortune, my King, is my misfortune!

**1050**

Xerxes:  
Come, raise your voices with mine!  
Chorus:  
Oh, black and bitter fortune!  
Oh, black and bitter pain!  
Xerxes:  
Beat your breast!  
Beat your breast and raise a Mysian cry!  
Chorus:  
Savage Fate! Agony!  
Xerxes:  
And tear out the hair from your grey beard!  
Chorus:  
My fists are clenched around it, my Lord and I'm crying!  
Xerxes:  
Cry out in shrill notes, my men!  
Chorus:  
Shrill are our voices!  
Xerxes:  
Tear your robes with your fingers!

Chorus:  
Savage Fate! Agony!  
Xerxes:  
Cry and tear out your hair for the loss of our men!  
Chorus:  
My fists are clenched around it, my Lord and I'm crying!  
Xerxes:  
Drench your eyes with tears!  
**1060**  
Chorus:  
I am drenched in tears, my Lord!  
Xerxes:  
Accompany my sad song!  
Chorus:  
Savage Fate! Agony!  
Xerxes:  
Cry loudly through the city!  
Chorus:  
Savage Fate! Agony!  
Xerxes:  
Walk with solemn steps and pour our your lament!  
Chorus:  
Savage Fate!  
What sad soil our Persia has now! Too sad to walk upon!  
Xerxes:  
Oh, Savage Fate!  
Poor sailors of the three-tiered ships!  
All lost!  
Agony!  
Chorus:  
We will follow you with our tears and our dirge of misery!  
*All Exit*

**END OF AESCHYLUS'**  
***PERSIANS***