

ADMETUS

Citizens of Pherae, be kind enough to accompany me!  
The body was prepared, everything's been done, and my servants  
are carrying it to the grave.  
Now you do what is customary:  
bid farewell to she who has died. 610

*Enter Pheres, with servants carrying gifts.*

CHORUS

I see your father coming here,  
walking stiffly, as old men do.  
His servants carry lovely gifts for your wife,  
treasures for the deceased.

PHERES

I come to share your sorrows, child,  
because you have lost a brave and virtuous wife,  
as nobody will deny. But you have to bear it,  
even though it is difficult.  
Take these gifts, and let them be buried with her.  
You must honor her, child, since she gave her life for you. 620  
She didn't leave me childless, or make me  
wither away in lonely old age without you.  
She set the standard for all women,  
the noblest wife of all, when she agreed to this brave deed.

Oh noble lady, farewell, you who became my savior  
and raised me up when I was down.  
I hope that all goes well with you in the home of Hades.  
I say such marriages bring profit to mortals:  
If they don't, it's not worth marrying.

## ADMETUS

I didn't invite you to this funeral,  
and I don't consider you either a friend or a relative. 630  
Your presence is unwanted. And she won't accept your gifts!  
She lacks for nothing: we took care of everything for her burial.  
You should have shown some sympathy  
when I was about to die, but no, you suddenly weren't there for me.  
You let some young person die instead,  
although it should have been you, because you're the old one.  
And now you come to mourn her when she's dead?  
I don't believe you are my real father,  
Or that she, who claims she gave birth to me, really did.  
I think instead I'm a slave's child,  
snuck in secretly to suck on your wife's breast.  
When it came to the test, you showed who you are! 640  
I don't consider myself to be your child.

I think you surpass all others in your lack of courage!  
You are old and have reached the end of your life,  
but neither you nor your wife were willing  
nor courageous enough to die for your own child.  
You let this woman who is no blood relation at all die instead.  
SHE is now my true mother and father, and her alone.  
You could have shown how heroic you were -  
run that extra mile -  
if you would have died for your child.  
In any case, the time left for you to live is short. 650  
Then she and I could have lived out our lives,  
and I would not have to grieve for her now.

You lived a happy life! You thrived as a king!  
Then you had me as your heir!  
You did not have to leave your house  
for others to pounce on because you were childless.  
You can't say you betrayed me and condemned me to die  
because I dishonored you!  
No, I gave you all the honors that you deserved!  
And this is the gratitude I get from you and mother! 660

You had better make some more children soon,  
who will take care of you as you grow old  
and give you all the honors when you are dead,  
because I won't be the one to bury you.  
Just think of me as dead.  
It is because of another that I am saved;  
I declare her to be my parent,  
And she is the one who deserves to be cared for!

Old people don't mean it when they say they want to die      670  
and complain that old age and long years are a burden.  
Once he looks death in the face, no one wants to die.  
Suddenly old age is no longer such a problem.

#### CHORUS

Stop fighting with your father – we have enough suffering!  
Don't provoke him!

#### PHERES

Who do you think you are to speak to me this way?  
Do you think you are goading on  
some Lydian or Phrygian slave you bought?  
Don't you know I'm a free man,  
a full-blooded noble Thessalian, born of a noble Thessalian?  
You have gone too far with your foolhardy abuse.  
Don't think you can insult me this way  
And get away with it!      680

I brought you up to be king of this palace,  
but that doesn't mean I have to die for you.  
A father dying for his child was certainly not  
a custom my father handed down to me,  
and it's not Greek either.  
You are responsible for what happens to you,  
either good or bad. You got from me what you deserve:  
You rule over many people, and I'll leave you many acres of land,  
just what I got from my own father. Have I harmed you in any way?  
Have I deprived you of anything? You don't have to die for me,

and I don't have to die for you. 690  
You're happy to be alive. Don't you think your father is also?  
We're stuck down below for a long time, I think;  
Life is short up here, but it is still sweet.

You've been shameless in watching out for number one!  
Making sure you won't die, but asking her to die in your place,  
so that you could live a little longer. You call *me* a coward?  
You are the worst of all, letting a woman beat you in bravery!  
She died to save you, her handsome noble young husband!  
You clever man! You've found a way to escape death for all time!  
Just persuade each of your wives to die for you! 700

Can you insult your relatives, reproaching them for  
Not giving their lives for you, when you are such a coward yourself?  
So shut up, and remember,  
if *you* love life so much, then all men do.  
And if you continue to insult me, you'll get as good as you give!

#### CHORUS

That's more than enough abuse - so stop.  
old man, don't keep on insulting your son.

#### ADMETUS

Oh let him! My turn's coming!  
If you don't want to hear the painful truth, stop doing me wrong.

#### PHERES

I would do more wrong if I were to die for you. 710

#### ADMETUS

You think it's the same thing for a young man to die  
as for an old man?

#### PHERES

We all just have one life to live.

ADMETUS

I hope you live longer than Zeus.

PHERES

What have I ever done to harm you?

ADMETUS

You're a selfish old man, lusting after a long life.

PHERES

And what about you? Aren't you burying someone else here?

ADMETUS

Yes, proof of *your* cowardice!

PHERES

Rather proof of yours. I didn't kill her!

ADMETUS

Oh, how I wish that you need me someday!

PHERES

You better get busy finding wives to die for you!

ADMETUS

That's your fault. You wouldn't die for me.

PHERES

I love the light of day; it's a gift from god, and I cherish it!

ADMETUS

You have the heart of a coward, and you call yourself a man?

PHERES

I'll die happily knowing you can't insult me when you bury me!

ADMETUS

You'll die a coward's death, despised by all.

PHERES

When I'm dead, I don't care what people say.

ADMETUS

Really? You truly are a shameless old man!

PHERES

Your wife wasn't shameless, just stupid.

ADMETUS

Go away, and let me bury her in peace!

PHERES

I'll go, so you, her murderer, can get on with burying her.  
One day you will pay for it.  
I think Acastus will avenge his sister's murder,  
at least if he's a man.

## ADMETUS

Get out of here! Now! Grow old with your wife,  
as you deserve: childless, although your child lives.  
You will never be under the same roof with me again!  
If I could make a formal proclamation of renouncing you  
*and any paternal tie I had with you, I would.*