GUARD

Yes, let’s hope he’s found . . .
though whether found or not is up to chance:
what’s certain, though, is that you’ll not
be seeing me again.
It’s more than I could hope
that I’ve got safe away this time—
for that I owe the gods much thanks.

The guard departs back towards the plain.

SECOND CHORAL SONG

CHORUS

°There are many formidable things,
but none more formidable° than
are human beings.
They sail over ocean’s grey wastes
with southerly storm-winds between
towering waves.
And the god most primeval of all—
undying, unwearying Earth—
by turning the soil
they repeatedly rake her and tear,
as horses pull ploughs back and forth,
year after year.

The birds in thought-fluttering flocks
are captured in snares, and wild beasts
trapped by their tricks,
and the shoals of the fish in the sea
get entangled in spiralling nets—
man’s ingenuity!
They’ve invented devices and wiles
to domesticate animals that
roam in the wilds;
the resolute mountain-bred ox
and shaggy-maned horse are controlled,
ecks under yokes.
Humans have learnt the skills to use
language and reason quick as the breeze;
and attitudes that bind the town;
and shields from frost and pelting of rain.
This all-resourceful human creature,
short of resource for nothing in future!
Only from death there’s no release—
though cures have been found from dire disease.
They turn their clever aptitude
sometimes to bad, and sometimes to good.
Those who honour the country’s law,
revering the gods, raise their city secure:
yet there’s no city for someone veering
off into ways of error through daring.
May one committing things like those
not join in my thoughts, nor visit my house.

SCENE 4

The guard returns bringing Antigone as a prisoner.

CHORUS-LEADER
I’m bewildered by this portent:
there is no denying this is
young Antigone. O wretched
child of wretched father, what has
happened? Surely they’re not bringing
you for disregarding royal
edicts, caught in something foolish?

GUARD
This is the one who did the deed,
arrested in the act of burying.
But where’s Creon?

CHORUS-LEADER
Here, coming from the palace just as he is wanted.