

**Aeschylus, *Seven Against Thebes*****Stage Directions: A large gathering of citizens of Thebes.**

Men of Cadmus's city, he who guards from the stern the concerns of the State and guides its helm with eyes untouched by sleep must speak to the point. For if we succeed, the responsibility is heaven's; but if—may it not happen—disaster is our lot, Eteocles would be the one name shouted many times throughout the city in the citizens' resounding uproars and laments. From these evils may Zeus the Defender, upholding his name, shield the city of the Cadmeans!

But now you—both he who is still short of his youthful prime, and he who, though past his prime, still strengthens the abundant growth of his body, and every man still in his prime, as is fitting—you must aid the State and the altars of your homeland's gods so that their honors may never be obliterated. You must aid, too, your children, and Mother Earth, your beloved nurse. For welcoming all the distress of your childhood, when you were young and crept upon her kind soil, she raised you to inhabit her and bear the shield, and to prove yourselves faithful in this time of need. And so, until today, God has been favorably inclined, for though we have long been under siege, the war has gone well for the most part through the gods' will. But now, as the seer, the herdsman of birds, informs us, using his ears and his mind to understand with unerring skill the prophetic birds unaided by sacrificial fire—he, master of such prophecy, declares that the greatest Argive attack is being planned in night assembly and that they will make plans to capture our city. Hurry each of you to the battlements and the gates of our towered walls! Rush with all your armor! Fill the parapets and take your positions on the platforms of the towers. Stand your ground bravely where the gates open out, and do not be afraid of this crowd of foreigners. God will bring it to a good end.

I myself have dispatched scouts and men to observe their army, and I am confident that their going is not in vain. Once I have heard their report, I will not be taken by any trickery.