

Iphigenia in Tauris

Euripides

Translated by Robert Potter

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

IPHIGENIA, daughter of Agamemnon

ORESTES, brother of IPHIGENIA

PYLADES, friend Of ORESTES

THOAS, King of the Taurians

HERDSMAN

MESSENGER

MINERVA

CHORUS OF GREEK WOMEN, captives, attendants on IPHIGENIA in the temple

(SCENE:-Before the great temple of Diana of the Taurians. A blood-stained altar is prominently in view. IPHIGENIA, clad as a priestess, enters from the temple.)

IPHIGENIA To Pisa, by the fleetest coursers borne,
Comes Pelops, son of Tantalus, and weds
The virgin daughter of Oenomaus:
From her sprung Atreus; Menelaus from him,

And Agamemnon; I from him derive
My birth, his Iphigenia, by his queen,
Daughter of Tyndarus. Where frequent winds
Swell the vex'd Euripus with eddying blasts,
And roll the darkening waves, my father slew me,
A victim to Diana, so he thought,
For Helen's sake, its bay where Aulis winds,
To fame well known; for there his thousand ships,
The armament of Greece, the imperial chief
Convened, desirous that his Greeks should snatch
The glorious crown of victory from Troy,
And punish the base insult to the bed
Of Helen, vengeance grateful to the soul
Of Menelaus. But 'gainst his ships the sea
Long barr'd, and not one favouring breeze to swell
His flagging sails, the hallow'd flames the chief
Consults, and Calchas thus disclosed the fates:-
"Imperial leader of the Grecian host,
Hence shalt thou not unmoor thy vessels, ere
Diana as a victim shall receive
Thy daughter Iphigenia: what the year
Most beauteous should produce, thou to the queen
Dispensing light didst vow to sacrifice:
A daughter Clytemnestra in thy house
Then bore (the peerless grace of beauty thus
To me assigning); her must thou devote
The victim." Then Ulysses by his arts,
Me, to Achilles as design'd a bride,
Won from my mother. My unhappy fate
To Aulis brought me; on the altar there
High was I placed, and o'er me gleam'd the sword,
Aiming the fatal wound: but from the stroke
Diana snatch'd me, in exchange a hind
Giving the Grecians; through the lucid air
Me she conveyed to Tauris, here to dwell,

Where o'er barbarians a barbaric king
Holds his rude sway, named Thoas, whose swift foot
Equals the rapid wing: me he appoints
The priestess of this temple, where such rites
Are pleasing to Diana, that the name
Alone claims honour; for I sacrifice
(Such, ere I came, the custom of the state)
Whatever Grecian to this savage shore
Is driven: the previous rites are mine; the deed
Of blood, too horrid to be told, devolves
On others in the temple: but the rest,
In reverence to the goddess, I forbear.
But the strange visions which the night now past
Brought with it, to the air, if that may soothe
My troubled thought, I will relate. I seem'd,
As I lay sleeping, from this land removed,
To dwell at Argos, resting on my couch
Mid the apartments of the virgin train.
Sudden the firm earth shook: I fled, and stood
Without; the battlements I saw, and all
The rocking roof fall from its lofty height
In ruins to the ground: of all the house,
My father's house, one pillar, as I thought,
Alone was left, which from its cornice waved
A length of auburn locks, and human voice
Assumed: the bloody office, which is mine
To strangers here, respecting, I to death,
Sprinkling the lustral drops, devoted it
With many tears. My dream I thus expound:-
Orestes, whom I hallow'd by my rites,
Is dead: for sons are pillars of the house;
They, whom my lustral lavers sprinkle, die.
I cannot to my friends apply my dream,
For Strophius, when I perish'd, had no son.
Now, to my brother, absent though he be,

Libations will I offer: this, at least,
With the attendants given me by the king,
Virgins of Greece, I can: but what the cause
They yet attend me not within the house,
The temple of the goddess, where I dwell?

(She goes into the temple. ORESTES and PYLADES enter cautiously.)

ORESTES Keep careful watch, lest some one come this way.

PYLADES I watch, and turn mine eye to every part.

ORESTES And dost thou, Pylades, imagine this
The temple of the goddess, which we seek,
Our sails from Argos sweeping o'er the main?

PYLADES Orestes, such my thought, and must be thine.

ORESTES And this the altar wet with Grecian blood?

PYLADES Crimson'd with gore behold its sculptured wreaths.

ORESTES See, from the battlements what trophies hang!

PYLADES The spoils of strangers that have here been slain.

ORESTES Behooves us then to watch with careful eye.

O Phoebus, by thy oracles again
Why hast thou led me to these toils? E'er since,
In vengeance for my father's blood, I slew
My mother, ceaseless by the Furies driven,
Vagrant, an outcast, many a bending course
My feet have trod: to thee I came, of the
Inquired this whirling frenzy by what means,
And by what means my labours I might end.
Thy voice commanded me to speed my course
To this wild coast of Tauris, where a shrine
Thy sister hath, Diana; thence to take
The statue of the goddess, which from heaven

(So say the natives) to this temple fell:
This image, or by fraud or fortune won,
The dangerous toil achieved, to place the prize
In the Athenian land: no more was said;
But that, performing this, I should obtain
Rest from my toils. Obedient to thy words,
On this unknown, inhospitable coast
Am I arrived. Now, Pylades (for thou
Art my associate in this dangerous task),
Of thee I ask, What shall we do? for high
The walls, thou seest, which fence the temple round.
Shall we ascend their height? But how escape
Observing eyes? Or burst the brazen bars?
Of these we nothing know: in the attempt
To force the gates, or meditating means
To enter, if detected, we shall die.
Shall we then, ere we die, by flight regain
The ship in which we hither plough'd the sea?

PYLADES Of flight we brook no thought, nor such hath been
Our wont; nor may the god's commanding voice
Be disobey'd; but from the temple now
Retiring, in some cave, which the black sea
Beats with its billows, we may lie conceal'd
At distance from our bark, lest some, whose eyes
May note it, bear the tidings to the king,
And we be seized by force. But when the eye
Of night comes darkling on, then must we dare,
And take the polish'd image from the shrine,
Attempting all things: and the vacant space
Between the triglyphs (mark it well) enough
Is open to admit us; by that way
Attempt we to descend: in toils the brave
Are daring; of no worth the abject soul.

ORESTES This length of sea we plough'd not, from this coast,
Nothing effected, to return: but well

Hast thou advised; the god must be obey'd.
Retire we then where we may lie conceal'd;
For never from the god will come the cause,
That what his sacred voice commands should fall
Effectless. We must dare. No toil to youth
Excuse, which justifies inaction, brings.

(They go out. IPHIGENIA and the CHORUS enter from the temple.)

IPHIGENIA (singing) You, who your savage dwellings hold
Nigh this inhospitable main,
'Gainst clashing rocks with fury roll'd,
From all but hallow'd words abstain.
Virgin queen, Latona's grace,
joying in the mountain chase,
To thy court, thy rich domain,
To thy beauteous-pillar'd fane
Where our wondering eyes behold
Battlements that blaze with gold,
Thus my virgin steps I bend,
Holy, the holy to attend;
Servant, virgin queen, to thee;
Power, who bear'st life's golden key,
Far from Greece for steeds renown'd,
From her walls with towers crown'd,
From the beauteous-planted meads
Where his train Eurotas leads,
Visiting the loved retreats,
Once my father's royal seats.

CHORUS (singing) I come. What cares disturb thy rest?
Why hast thou brought me to the shrine?
Doth some fresh grief afflict thy breast?
Why bring me to this seat divine?
Thou daughter of that chief, whose powers

Plough'd with a thousand keels the strand
And ranged in arms shook Troy's proud towers
Beneath the Atreidae's great command!

IPHIGENIA (singing) O ye attendant train,
How is my heart oppress'd with wo!
What notes, save notes of grief, can flow,
A harsh and unmelodious strain?
My soul domestic ills oppress with dread,
And bid me mourn a brother dead.
What visions did my sleeping sense appall
In the past dark and midnight hour! 'Tis ruin, ruin all.
My father's houses-it is no more:
No more is his illustrious line.
What dreadful deeds hath Argos known!
One only brother, Fate, was mine;
And dost thou rend him from me? Is he gone
To Pluto's dreary realms below?
For him, as dead, with pious care This goblet I prepare;
And on the bosom of the earth shall flow
Streams from the heifer mountain-bred,
The grape's rich juice, and, mix'd with these,
The labour of the yellow bees,
Libations soothing to the dead.
Give me the oblation: let me hold
The foaming goblet's hallow'd gold.
O thou, the earth beneath,
Who didst from Agamemnon spring;
To thee, deprived of vital breath,
I these libations bring.
Accept them: to thy honour'd tomb,
Never, ah! never shall I come;
Never these golden tresses bear,
To place them there, there shed the tear;
For from my country far, a hind
There deem'd as slain, my wild abode I find.

CHORUS (singing) To thee thy faithful train
The Asiatic hymn will raise,
A doleful, a barbaric strain,
Responsive to thy lays,
And steep in tears the mournful song,-
Notes, which to the dead belong;
Dismal notes, attuned to woe
By Pluto in the realms below:
No sprightly air shall we employ
To cheer the soul, and wake the sense of joy.

IPHIGENIA (singing) The Atreidae are no more;
Extinct their sceptre's golden light;
My father's house from its proud height
Is fallen: its ruins I deplore.
Who of her kings at Argos holds his reign,
Her kings once bless'd? But Sorrow's train
Rolls on impetuous for the rapid steeds
Which o'er the strand with Pelops fly.
From what atrocious deeds
Starts the sun back, his sacred eye
Of brightness, loathing, turn'd aside?
And fatal to their house arose,
From the rich ram, Thessalia's golden pride,
Slaughter on slaughter, woes on woes:
Thence, from the dead ages past,
Vengeance came rushing on its prey,
And swept the race of Tantalus away.
Fatal to thee its ruthless haste;
To me too fatal, from the hour
My mother wedded, from the night
She gave me to life's opening light,
Nursed by affliction's cruel power.
Early to me, the Fates unkind,
To know what sorrow is assign'd:
Me Leda's daughter, hapless dame,

First blooming offspring of her bed
(A father's conduct here I blame),
A joyless victim bred;
When o'er the strand of Aulis, in the pride
Of beauty kindling flames of love,
High on my splendid car I move,
Betrothed to Thetis' son a bride:
Ah, hapless bride, to all the train
Of Grecian fair preferr'd in vain!
But now, a stranger on this strand,
'Gainst which the wild waves beat,
I hold my dreary, joyless seat,
Far distant from my native land,
Nor nuptial bed is mine, nor child, nor friend.
At Argos now no more I raise
The festal song in Juno's praise;
Nor o'er the loom sweet-sounding bend,
As the creative shuttle flies;
Give forms of Titans fierce to rise;
And, dreadful with her purple spear,
Image Athenian Pallas there:
But on this barbarous shore
The unhappy stranger's fate I moan,
The ruthless altar stain'd with gore,
His deep and dying groan;
And, for each tear that weeps his woes,
From me a tear of pity flows.
Of these the sad remembrance now must sleep:
A brother dead, ah me! I weep:
At Argos him, by fate oppress'd,
I left an infant at the breast,
A beauteous bud, whose opening charms
Then blossom'd in his mother's arms;
Orestes, born to high command,
The imperial sceptre of the Argive land.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS Leaving the sea-wash'd shore a herdsman comes
Speeding, with some fresh tidings to thee fraught.

(A HERDSMAN enters.)

HERDSMAN Daughter of Agamemnon, and bright gem
Of Clytemnestra, hear strange things from me.

IPHIGENIA And what of terror doth thy tale import?

HERDSMAN Two youths, swift-rowing 'twixt the clashing rocks
Of our wild sea, are landed on the beach,
A grateful offering at Diana's shrine,
And victims to the goddess. Haste, prepare
The sacred lavers, and the previous rites.

IPHIGENIA Whence are the strangers? from what country named?

HERDSMAN From Greece: this only, nothing more, I know.

IPHIGENIA Didst thou not hear what names the strangers bear?

HERDSMAN One by the other was call'd Pylades.

IPHIGENIA How is the stranger, his companion, named?

HERDSMAN This none of us can tell: we heard it not.

IPHIGENIA How saw you them? how seized them? by what chance?

HERDSMAN Mid the rude cliffs that o'er the Euxine hang-

IPHIGENIA And what concern have herdsmen with the sea?

HERDSMAN To wash our herds in the salt wave we came.

IPHIGENIA To what I ask'd return: how seized you them?
Tell me the manner; this I wish to know:

For slow the victims come, nor hath some while
The altar of the goddess, as was wont,
Been crimson'd with the streams of Grecian blood.

HERDSMAN Our herds, which in the forest feed, we drove

Amid the tide that rushes to the shore,
‘Twixt the Symplegades: it was the place,
Where in the rifted rock the chafing surge
Hath hallow’d a rude cave, the haunt of those
Whose quest is purple. Of our number there
A herdsman saw two youths, and back return’d
With soft and silent step; then pointing, said,
“Do you not see them? These are deities
That sit there.” One, who with religious awe
Revered the gods, with hands uplifted pray’d,
His eyes fix’d on them,-“Son of the sea-nymph
Leucothoe, guardian of the labouring bark,
Our lord Palaemon, be propitious to us!
Or sit you on our shores, bright sons of Jove,
Castor and Pollux? Or the glorious boast
Of Nereus, father of the noble choir
Of fifty Nereids?” One, whose untaught mind
Audacious folly harden’d ‘gainst the sense
Of holy awe, scoff’d at his prayers, and said,-
“These are wreck’d mariners, that take their seat
In the cleft rock through fear, as they have heard
Our prescribed rite, that here we sacrifice
The stranger.” To the greater part he seem’d
Well to have spoken, and we judged it meet
To seize the victims, by our country’s law
Due to the goddess. Of the stranger youths,
One at this instant started from the rock:
Awhile he stood, and wildly toss’d his head,
And groan’d, his loose arms trembling all their length,
Convulsed with madness; and a hunter loud
Then cried,-“Dost thou behold her, Pylades?
Dost thou not see this dragon fierce from hell
Rushing to kill me, and against me rousing
Her horrid vipers? See this other here,
Emitting fire and slaughter from her vests,

Sails on her wings, my mother in her arms
Bearing, to hurl this mass of rock upon me!
Ah, she will kill me! Whither shall I fly?"
His visage might we see no more the same,
And his voice varied; now the roar of bulls,
The howl of dogs now uttering, mimic sounds
Sent by the maddening Furies, as they say.
Together thronging, as of death assured,
We sit in silence; but he drew his sword,
And, like a lion rushing mid our herds,
Plunged in their sides the weapon, weening thus
To drive the Furies, till the briny wave
Foam'd with their blood. But when among our herds
We saw this havoc made, we all 'gan rouse
To arms, and blew our sounding shells to alarm
The neighbouring peasants; for we thought in fight
Rude herdsmen to these youthful strangers, train'd
To arms, ill match'd; and forthwith to our aid
Flock'd numbers. But, his frenzy of its force
Abating, on the earth the stranger falls,
Foam bursting from his mouth: but when he saw
The advantage, each adventured on and hurl'd
What might annoy him fallen: the other youth
Wiped off the foam, took of his person care,
His fine-wrought robe spread over him; with heed
The flying stones observing, warded of
The wounds, and each kind office to his friend
Attentively perform'd. His sense return'd;
The stranger started up, and soon perceived
The tide of foes that roll'd impetuous on,
The danger and distress that closed them round.
He heaved a sigh; an unremitting storm
Of stones we pour'd, and each incited each:
Then we his dreadful exhortation heard:-
"Pylades, we shall die; but let us die

With glory: draw thy sword, and follow me.”
But when we saw the enemies advance
With brandish'd swords, the steep heights crown'd with wood
We fell in flight: but others, if one flies,
Press on them; if again they drive these back,
What before fled turns, with a storm of stones
Assaulting them; but, what exceeds belief,
Hurl'd by a thousand hands, not one could hit
The victims of the goddess: scarce at length,
Not by brave daring seized we them, but round
We closed upon them, and their swords with stones
Beat, wily, from their hands; for on their knees
They through fatigue had sunk upon the ground:
We bare them to the monarch of this land:
He view'd them, and without delay to the
Sent them devoted to the cleansing vase,
And to the altar. Victims such as these,
O virgin, wish to find; for if such youths
Thou offer, for thy slaughter Greece will pay,
Her wrongs to thee at Aulis well avenged.

LEADER These things are wonderful, which thou hast told
Of him, whoe'er he be, the youth from Greece
Arrived on this inhospitable shore.

IPHIGENIA 'Tis well: go thou, and bring the strangers hither:
What here is to be done shall be our care.

(The HERDSMAN departs.)

O my unhappy heart! before this hour
To strangers thou wast gentle, always touch'd
With pity, and with tears their tears repaid,
When Grecians, natives of my country, came
Into my hands: but from the dreams, which prompt
To deeds ungentle, showing that no more
Orestes views the sun's fair light, whoe'er

Ye are that hither come, me will you find
Relentless now. This is the truth, my friends:
My heart is rent; and never will the wretch,
Who feels affliction's cruel tortures, bear
Good-will to those that are more fortunate.
Never came gale from Jove, nor flying bark,
Which 'twixt the dangerous rocks of the Euxine sea
Brought Helen hither, who my ruin wrought,
Nor Menelaus; that on them my foul wrongs
I might repay, and with an Aulis here
Requite the Aulis there, where I was seized,
And, as a heifer, by the Grecians slain:
My father too, who gave me birth, was priest.
Ah me! the sad remembrance of those ills
Yet lives: how often did I stroke thy cheek,
And, hanging on thy knees, address thee thus:-
"Alas, my father! I by thee am led
A bride to bridal rites unblest'd and base:
Them, while by thee I bleed, my mother hymns,
And the Argive dames, with hymeneal strains,
And with the jocund pipe the house resounds:
But at the altar I by thee am slain;
For Pluto was the Achilles, not the son
Of Peleus, whom to me thou didst announce
The affianced bridegroom, and by guile didst bring
To bloody nuptials in the rolling car."
But, o'er mine eyes the veil's fine texture spread,
This brother in my hands who now is lost,
I clasp'd not, though his sister; did not press
My lips to his, through virgin modesty,
As going to the house of Peleus: then
Each fond embrace I to another time
Deferr'd, as soon to Argos to return.
If, O unhappy brother, thou art dead,
From what a state, thy father's envied height

Of glory, loved Orestes, art thou torn!-
These false rules of the goddess much I blame:
Whoe'er of mortals is with slaughter stain'd,
Or hath at childbirth given assisting hands,
Or chanced to touch aught dead, she as impure
Drives from her altars; yet herself delights
In human victims bleeding at her shrine.
Ne'er did Latona from the embrace of Jove
Bring forth such inconsistency: I then deem
The feast of Tantalus, where gods were guests,
Unworthy of belief, as that they fed
On his son's flesh delighted; and I think
These people, who themselves have a wild joy
In shedding human blood, their savage guilt
Charge on the goddess: for this truth I hold;
None of the gods is evil, or doth wrong.

(She enters the temple.)

CHORUS (singing) Ye rocks, ye dashing rocks, whose brow
Frowns o'er the darken'd deeps below;
Whose wild, inhospitable wave,
From Argos flying and her native spring,
The virgin once was known to brave,
Tormented with the brize's maddening sting,
From Europe when the rude sea o'er
She pass'd to Asia's adverse shore;
Who are these hapless youths, that dare to land,
Leaving those soft, irriguous meads,
Where, his green margin fringed with reeds,
Eurotas rolls his ample tide,
Or Dirce's hallow'd waters glide,
And touch this barbarous, stranger-hating strand,
The altars where a virgin dews,

And blood the pillar'd shrine imbrues?
Did they with oars impetuous sweep
(Rank answering rank) the foamy deep,
And wing their bark with flying sails,
To raise their humble fortune their desire;
Eager to catch the rising gales,
Their bosoms with the love of gain on fire?
For sweet is hope to man's fond breast;
The hope of gain, insatiate guest,
Though on her oft attends Misfortune's train;
For daring man she tempts to brave
The dangers of the boisterous wave,
And leads him heedless of his fate
Through many a distant barbarous state.
Vain his opinions, his pursuits are vain!
Boundless o'er some her power is shown,
But some her temperate influence own.
How did they pass the dangerous rocks
Clashing with rude, tremendous shocks?
How pass the savage-howling shore,
Where once the unhappy Phineus held his reign,
And sleep affrighted flies its roar,
Steering their rough course o'er this boisterous main,
Form'd in a ring, beneath whose waves
The Nereid train in high arch'd caves
Weave the light dance, and raise the sprightly song,
While, whispering in their swelling sails,
Soft Zephyrs breathe, or southern gales
Piping amid their tackling play,
As their bark ploughs its watery way
Those hoary cliffs, the haunts of birds, along,
To that wild strand, the rapid race
Where once Achilles deign'd to grace?
O that from Troy some chance would bear
Leda's loved daughter, fatal fair

(The royal virgin's vows are mine)
That her bright tresses roll'd in crimson dew,
Her warm blood flowing at this shrine
The altar of the goddess might imbrue;
And Vengeance, righteous to repay
Her former mischiefs, seize her prey!
But with what rapture should I hear his voice,
If one this shore should reach from Greece,
And bid the toils of slavery cease!
Or might I in the hour of rest
With pleasing dreams of Greece be bless'd;
So in my house, my native land rejoice;
In sleep enjoy the pleasing strain
For happiness restored again

(IPHIGENIA enters from the temple.)

IPHIGENIA But the two youths, their hands fast bound in chains,
The late-seized victims to the goddess, come.
Silence, my friends; for, destined at the shrine
To bleed, the Grecian strangers near approach;
And no false tidings did the herdsman bring.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS Goddess revered, if grateful to thy soul
This state presents such sacrifice, accept
The victims, which the custom of this land
Gives thee, but deem'd unholy by the Greeks.

(Guards lead in ORESTES and PYLADES, bound.)

IPHIGENIA No more; that to the goddess each due rite
Be well perform'd shall be my care. Unchain
The strangers' hands; that, hallow'd as they are,

They may no more be bound.

(The guards release ORESTES and PYLADES.)

Go you, prepare
Within the temple what the rites require.
Unhappy youths, what mother brought you forth,
Your father who? Your sister, if perchance
Ye have a sister, of what youths deprived?
For brother she shall have no more. Who knows
Whom such misfortunes may attend? For dark
What the gods will creeps on; and none can tell
The ills to come: this fortune from the sight
Obscures. But, O unhappy strangers, say,
Whence came you? Sail'd you long since for this land?
But long will be your absence from your homes,
For ever, in the dreary realms below.

ORESTES Lady, whoe'er thou art, why for these things
Dost thou lament? why mourn for ills, which soon
Will fall on us? Him I esteem unwise,
Who, when he sees death near, tries to o'ercome
Its terrors with bewailings, without hope
Of safety: ill he adds to ill, and makes
His folly known, yet dies. We must give way
To fortune; therefore mourn not thou for us:
We know, we are acquainted with your rites.

IPHIGENIA Which of you by the name of Pylades
Is call'd? This first it is my wish to know.

ORESTES If aught of pleasure that may give thee, he.

IPHIGENIA A native of what Grecian state, declare.

ORESTES What profit knowing this wouldst thou obtain?

IPHIGENIA And are you brothers, of one mother born?

ORESTES Brothers by friendship, lady, not by birth.

IPHIGENIA To thee what name was by thy father given?

ORESTES With just cause I Unhappy might be call'd.

IPHIGENIA I ask not that; to fortune that ascribe.

ORESTES Dying unknown, rude scoffs I shall avoid.

IPHIGENIA Wilt thou refuse? Why are thy thoughts so high?

ORESTES My body thou mayst kill, but not my name.

IPHIGENIA Wilt thou not say a native of what state?

ORESTES The question naught avails, since I must die.

IPHIGENIA What hinders thee from granting me this grace?

ORESTES The illustrious Argos I my country boast.

IPHIGENIA By the gods, stranger, is thy birth from thence?

ORESTES My birth is from Mycenae, once the bless'd.

IPHIGENIA Dost thou an exile fly, or by what fate?

ORESTES Of my free will, in part not free, I fly.

IPHIGENIA Wilt thou then tell me what I wish to know?

ORESTES Whate'er is foreign to my private griefs.

IPHIGENIA To my dear wish from Argos art thou come.

ORESTES Not to my wish; but if to thine, enjoy it.

IPHIGENIA Troy, whose fame spreads so wide, perchance thou know'st.

ORESTES O that I ne'er had known her, ev'n in dreams!

IPHIGENIA They say she is no more, by war destroy'd.

ORESTES It is so: you have heard no false reports.

IPHIGENIA Is Helena with Menelaus return'd?

ORESTES She is; and one I love her coming rues.

IPHIGENIA Where is she? Me too she of old hath wrong'd.

ORESTES At Sparta with her former lord she dwells.

IPHIGENIA By Greece, and not by me alone abhorr'd!

ORESTES I from her nuptials have my share of grief.

IPHIGENIA And are the Greeks, as Fame reports, return'd?

ORESTES How briefly all things dost thou ask at once!

IPHIGENIA This favour, ere thou die, I wish to obtain.

ORESTES Ask, then: since such thy wish, I will inform thee.

IPHIGENIA Calchas, a prophet, -came he back from Troy?

ORESTES He perish'd at Mycenae such the fame.

IPHIGENIA Goddess revered! But doth Ulysses live?

ORESTES He lives, they say, but is not yet return'd.

IPHIGENIA Perish the wretch, nor see his country more!

ORESTES Wish him not ill, for all with him is ill.

IPHIGENIA But doth the son of sea-born Thetis live?

ORESTES He lives not: vain his nuptial rites at Aulis.

IPHIGENIA That all was fraud, as those who felt it say.

ORESTES But who art thou, inquiring thus of Greece?

IPHIGENIA I am from thence, in early youth undone.

ORESTES Thou hast a right to inquire what there hath pass'd.

IPHIGENIA What know'st thou of the chief, men call the bless'd?

ORESTES Who? Of the bless'd was not the chief I knew.

IPHIGENIA The royal Agamemnon, son of Atreus.

ORESTES Of him I know not, lady; cease to ask.

IPHIGENIA Nay, by the gods, tell me, and cheer my soul.

ORESTES He's dead, the unhappy chief: no single ill.

IPHIGENIA Dead! By what adverse fate? O wretched me!

ORESTES Why mourn for this? How doth it touch thy breast?

IPHIGENIA The glories of his former state I mourn.

ORESTES Dreadfully murdered by a woman's hand.

IPHIGENIA How wretched she that slew him, he thus slain!

ORESTES Now then forbear: of him inquire no more.

IPHIGENIA This only: lives the unhappy monarch's wife?

ORESTES She, lady, is no more, slain by her son.

IPHIGENIA Alas, the ruin'd house! What his intent?

ORESTES To avenge on her his noble father slain.

IPHIGENIA An ill, but righteous deed, how justly done!

ORESTES Though righteous, by the gods be is not bless'd.

IPHIGENIA Hath Agamemnon other offspring left?

ORESTES He left one virgin daughter, named Electra.

IPHIGENIA Of her that died a victim is aught said?

ORESTES This only, dead, she sees the light no more.

IPHIGENIA Unhappy she! the father too who slew her!

ORESTES For a bad woman she unseemly died.

IPHIGENIA At Argos lives the murdered father's son?

ORESTES Nowhere he lives, poor wretch! and everywhere.

IPHIGENIA False dreams, farewell; for nothing you import.

ORESTES Nor are those gods, that have the name of wise,
Less false than fleeting dreams. In things divine,
And in things human, great confusion reigns.
One thing is left; that, not unwise of soul,
Obedient to the prophet's voice he perish'd;
For that he perish'd, they who know report.

LEADER What shall we know, what of our parents know?
If yet they live or not, who can inform us?

IPHIGENIA Hear me: this converse prompts a thought, which gives
Promise of good, ye youths of Greece, to you,
To these, and me: thus may it well be done,
If, willing to my purpose, all assent.

Wilt thou, if I shall save thee, go for me
A messenger to Argos, to my friends
Charged with a letter, which a captive wrote,
Who pitied me, nor murderous thought my hand,
But that he died beneath the law, these rites
The goddess deeming just? for from that hour
I have not found who might to Argos bear
Himself my message, back with life return'd,
Or send to any of my friends my letter.
Thou, therefore, since it seems thou dost not bear
Ill-will to me, and dost Mycenae know,
And those I wish to address, be safe, and live,
No base reward for a light letter, life
Receiving; and let him, since thus the state
Requires, without thee to the goddess bleed.

ORESTES Virgin unknown, well hast thou said in all
Save this, that to the goddess he should bleed
A victim; that were heavy grief indeed.
I steer'd the vessel to these ills; he sail'd
Attendant on my toils: to gain thy grace
By his destruction, and withdraw myself
From sufferings, were unjust: thus let it be:
Give him the letter; to fulfil thy wish,
To Argos he will bear it: me let him
Who claims that office, slay: base is his soul,
Who in calamities involves his friends,
And saves himself; this is a friend, whose life,
Dear to me as my own, I would preserve.

IPHIGENIA Excellent spirit! from some noble root
It shows thee sprung, and to thy friends a friend
Sincere; of those that share my blood if one
Remains, such may he be! for I am not
Without a brother, strangers, from my sight
Though distant now. Since then thy wish is such,
Him will I send to Argos; he shall bear

My letter; thou shalt die; for this desire
Hath strong possession of thy noble soul.

ORESTES Who then shall do the dreadful deed, and slay me?

IPHIGENIA I: to atone the goddess is my charge.

ORESTES A charge unenvied, virgin, and unblest'd.

IPHIGENIA Necessity constrains: I must obey.

ORESTES Wilt thou, a woman, plunge the sword in men?

IPHIGENIA No: but thy locks to sprinkle round is mine.

ORESTES Whose then, if I may ask, the bloody deed?

IPHIGENIA To some within the temple this belongs.

ORESTES What tomb is destined to receive my corse?

IPHIGENIA The hallow'd fire within, and a dark cave.

ORESTES O, that a sister's hand might wrap these limbs!

IPHIGENIA Vain wish, unhappy youth, whoe'er thou art,
Hast thou conceived; for from this barbarous land
Far is her dwelling. Yet, of what my power
Permits (since thou from Argos draw'st thy birth),
No grace will I omit: for in the tomb
I will place much of ornament, and pour
The dulcet labour of the yellow bee,
From mountain flowers extracted, on thy pyre.
But I will go, and from the temple bring
The letter; yet 'gainst me no hostile thought
Conceive. You, that attend here, guard them well,
But without chains. To one, whom most I love
Of all my friends, to Argos I shall send
Tidings perchance unlook'd for; and this letter,
Declaring those whom he thought dead alive,
Shall bear him an assured and solid joy.

(She enters the temple.)

CHORUS (chanting) Thee, o'er whose limbs the bloody drops shall soon
Be from the lavers sprinkled, I lament.

ORESTES This asks no pity, strangers: but farewell.

CHORUS (chanting) Thee for thy happy fate we reverence, youth
Who to thy country shall again return.

PYLADES To friends unwish'd, who leave their friends to die.

CHORUS (chanting) Painful dismissal! Which shall I esteem
Most lost, alas, alas! which most undone?
For doubts my wavering judgment yet divide,
If chief for thee my sighs should swell, or thee.

ORESTES By the gods, Pylades, is thy mind touch'd
In manner like as mine?

PYLADES I cannot tell;
Nor to thy question have I to reply.

ORESTES Who is this virgin? With what zeal for Greece
Made she inquiries of us what the toils
At Troy, if yet the Grecians were return'd,
And Calchas, from the flight of birds who form'd
Presages of the future. And she named
Achilles: with what tenderness bewail'd
The unhappy Agamemnon! Of his wife
She ask'd me, -of his children: thence her race
This unknown virgin draws, an Argive; else
Ne'er would she send this letter, nor have wish'd
To know these things, as if she bore a share
(If Argos flourish) in its prosperous state.

PYLADES Such were my thoughts (but thou hast given them words,
Preventing me) of every circumstance,
Save one: the fate of kings all know, whose state
Holds aught of rank. But pass to other thoughts.

ORESTES What? Share them; so thou best mayst be inform'd.

PYLADES That thou shouldst die, and I behold this light,
Were base: with thee I sail'd, with thee to die
Becomes me; else shall I obtain the name
Of a vile coward through the Argive state,
And the deep vales of Phocis. Most will think
(For most think ill) that by betraying the
I saved myself, home to return alone;
Or haply that I slew thee, and thy death
Contrived, that in the ruin of thy house
Thy empire I might grasp, to me devolved
As wedded to thy sister, now sole heir.
These things I fear, and hold them infamous.
Behooves me then with thee to die, with the
To bleed a victim, on the pyre with thine
To give my body to the flames; for this
Becomes me as thy friend. who dreads reproach.

ORESTES Speak more auspicious words: 'tis mine to bear
Ills that are mine; and single when the wo,
I would not bear it double. What thou say'st
Is vile and infamous, would light on me,
Should I cause thee to die, who in my toils
Hast borne a share: to me, who from the gods
Suffer afflictions which I suffer, death
Is not unwelcome: thou art happy, thine
An unpolluted and a prosperous house;
Mine impious and unblest: if thou art saved,
And from my sister (whom I gave to thee,
Betroth'd thy bride) art blest with sons, my name
May yet remain, nor all my father's house
In total ruin sink. Go then, and live:
Dwell in the mansion of thy ancestors:
And when thou comest to Greece, to Argos famed
For warrior-steeds, by this right hand I charge the
Raise a sepulchral mound, and on it place
A monument to me; and to my tomb

Her tears, her tresses let my sister give;
And say, that by an Argive woman's hand
I perish'd, to the altar's bloody rites
A hallow'd victim. Never let thy soul
Betray my sister, for thou seest her state,
Of friends how destitute, her father's house
How desolate. Farewell. Of all my friends,
Thee have I found most friendly, from my youth
Train'd up with me, in all my sylvan sports
Thou dear associate, and through many toils
Thou faithful partner of my miseries.
Me Phoebus, though a prophet, hath deceived,
And, meditating guile, hath driven me far
From Greece, of former oracles ashamed;
To him resign'd, obedient to his words,
I slew my mother, and my meed is death.

PYLADES Yes, I will raise thy tomb: thy sister's bed
I never will betray, unhappy youth,
For I will hold thee dearer when thou art dead,
Than while thou livest; nor hath yet the voice
Of Phoebus quite destroy'd thee, though thou stand
To sometimes mighty but sometimes mighty woes
Yield mighty changes, so when Fortune wills.

ORESTES Forbear: the words of Phoebus naught avail me;
For, passing from the shrine, the virgin comes.

(IPHIGENIA enters from the temple. She is carrying a letter.)

IPHIGENIA (to the guards) Go you away, and in the shrine prepare
What those, who o'er the rites preside, require.

(The guards go into the temple.)

Here, strangers, is the letter folded close:
What I would further, hear. The mind of man
In dangers, and again, from fear relieved,
Of safety when assured, is not the same:
I therefore fear lest he, who should convey
To Argos this epistle, when return'd
Safe to his native country, will neglect
My letter, as a thing of little worth.

ORESTES What wouldst thou then? What is thy anxious thought?

IPHIGENIA This: let him give an oath that he will bear
To Argos this epistle to those friends,
To whom it is my ardent wish to send it.

ORESTES And wilt thou in return give him thy oath?

IPHIGENIA That I will do, or will not do, say what.

ORESTES To send him from this barbarous shore alive.

IPHIGENIA That's just: how should he bear my letter else?

ORESTES But will the monarch to these things assent?

IPHIGENIA By me induced. Him I will see embark'd.

ORESTES Swear then; and thou propose the righteous oath.

IPHIGENIA This, let him say, he to my friends will give.

PYLADES Well, to thy friends this letter I will give.

IPHIGENIA Thee will I send safe through the darkening rocks.

PYLADES What god dost thou invoke to attest thy oath?

IPHIGENIA Diana, at whose shrine high charge I hold.

PYLADES And I heaven's potent king, the awful Jove.

IPHIGENIA But if thou slight thy oath, and do me wrong?

PYLADES Never may I return. But if thou fail,
And save me not?

IPHIGENIA Then never, while I live,

May I revisit my loved Argos more!

PYLADES One thing, not mention'd, thy attention claims.

IPHIGENIA If honour owes it, this will touch us both.

PYLADES Let me in this be pardon'd, if the bark
Be lost, and with it in the surging waves
Thy letter perish, and I naked gain
The shore; no longer binding be the oath.

IPHIGENIA Know'st thou what I will do? For various ills
Arise to those that plough the dangerous deep.
What in this letter is contain'd, what here
Is written, all I will repeat to thee,
That thou mayst bear my message to my friends.
'Gainst danger thus I guard: if thou preserve
The letter, that though silent will declare
My purport; if it perish in the sea,
Saving thyself, my words too thou wilt save.

PYLADES Well hast thou said touching the gods and me.
Say then to whom at Argos shall I bear
This letter? What relate as heard from thee?

IPHIGENIA (reading) This message to Orestes, to the son
Of Agamemnon, bear:-She, who was slain
At Aulis, Iphigenia, sends thee this:
She lives, but not to those who then were there.

ORESTES Where is she? From the dead return'd to life?

IPHIGENIA She whom thou seest: but interrupt me not.
To Argos, O my brother, ere I die,
Bear me from this barbaric land, and far
Remove me from this altar's bloody rites,
At which to slay the stranger is my charge.-

ORESTES What shall I say? Where are we, Pylades?

IPHIGENIA Or on thy house for vengeance will I call,
Orestes. Twice repeated, learn the name.

ORESTES Ye gods!

IPHIGENIA In my cause why invoke the gods?

ORESTES Nothing: proceed: my thoughts were wandering wide:
Strange things of thee unask'd I soon shall learn.

IPHIGENIA Tell him the goddess saved me, in exchange
A hind presenting, which my father slew
A victim, deeming that he plunged his sword
Deep in my breast: me in this land she placed.
Thou hast my charge: and this my letter speaks.

PYLADES O, thou hast bound me with an easy oath:
What I have sworn with honest purpose, long
Defer I not, but thus discharge mine oath.
To thee a letter from thy sister, lo,
I bear, Orestes; and I give it thee.

(PYLADES hands the letter to ORESTES.)

ORESTES I do receive it, but forbear to uncloset
its foldings, greater pleasure first to enjoy
Than words can give. My sister, O most dear,
Astonish'd ev'n to disbelief, I throw
Mine arms around thee with a fond embrace,
In transport at the wondrous things I hear.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS Stranger, thou dost not well with hands profane
Thus to pollute the priestess of the shrine,
Grasping her garments hallow'd from the touch.

ORESTES My sister, my dear sister, from one sire,
From Agamemnon sprung, turn not away,
Holding thy brother thus beyond all hope.

IPHIGENIA My brother! Thou my brother! Wilt thou not
Unsay these words? At Argos far he dwells.

ORESTES Thy brother, O unhappy! is not there.

IPHIGENIA Thee did the Spartan Tyndarus bring forth?

ORESTES And from the son of Pelops' son I sprung,

IPHIGENIA What say'st thou? Canst thou give me proof of this?

ORESTES I can: ask something of my father's house.

IPHIGENIA Nay, it is thine to speak, mine to attend.

ORESTES First let me mention things which I have heard
Electra speak: to thee is known the strife
Which fierce 'twixt Atreus and Thyestes rose.

IPHIGENIA Yes, I have heard it; for the golden ram,-

ORESTES In the rich texture didst thou not inweave it?

IPHIGENIA O thou most dear! Thou windest near my heart.

ORESTES And image in the web the averted sun?

IPHIGENIA In the fine threads that figure did I work.

ORESTES For Aulis did thy mother bathe thy limbs?

IPHIGENIA I know it, to unlucky spousals led.

ORESTES Why to thy mother didst thou send thy locks?

IPHIGENIA Devoted for my body to the tomb.

ORESTES What I myself have seen I now as proofs
Will mention. In thy father's house, hung high
Within thy virgin chambers, the old spear
Of Pelops, which he brandish'd when he slew
Oenomaus, and won his beauteous bride,
The virgin Hippodamia, Pisa's boast.

IPHIGENIA O thou most dear (for thou art he), most dear
Acknowledged, thee, Orestes, do I hold,
From Argos, from thy country distant far?

ORESTES And hold I thee, my sister, long deem'd dead?
Grief mix'd with joy, and tears, not taught by woe

To rise, stand melting in thy eyes and mine.

IPHIGENIA Thee yet an infant in thy nurse's arms
I left, a babe I left thee in the house.
Thou art more happy, O my soul, than speech
Knows to express. What shall I say? 'tis all
Surpassing wonder and the power of words.

ORESTES May we together from this hour be bless'd!

IPHIGENIA An unexpected pleasure, O my friends,
Have I received; yet fear I from my hands
Lest to the air it fly. O sacred hearths
Raised by the Cyclops! O my country, loved
Mycenae! Now that thou didst give me birth,
T thank thee; now I thank thee, that my youth
Thou trainedst, since my brother thou has train'd,
A beam of light, the glory of his house.

ORESTES We in our race are happy; but our life,
My sister, by misfortunes is unhappy.

IPHIGENIA I was, I know, unhappy, when the sword
My father, frantic, pointed at my neck.

ORESTES Ah me! methinks ev'n now I see thee there.

IPHIGENIA When to Achilles, brother, not a bride,
I to the sacrifice by guile was led,
And tears and groans the altar compass'd round.

ORESTES Alas, the lovers there!

IPHIGENIA I mourn'd the deed
My father dared; unlike a father's love;
Cruel, unlike a father's love, to me.

ORESTES Ill deeds succeed to ill: if thou hadst slain
Thy brother, by some god impell'd, what griefs
Must have been thine at such a dreadful deed!

IPHIGENIA (chanting) Dreadful my brother, O how dreadful! scarce
Hast thou escaped a foul, unhallow'd death,

Slain by my hands. But how will these things end?
What Fortune will assist me? What safe means
Shall I devise to send thee from this state,
From slaughter, to thy native land, to Argos,
Ere with thy blood the cruel sword be stain'd?
This to devise, O my unhappy soul!
This to devise is thine. Wilt thou by land,
Thy bark deserted, speed thy flight on foot?
Perils await thee mid these barbarous tribes,
Through pathless wilds; and 'twixt the clashing rocks,
Narrow the passage for the flying bark,
And long. Unhappy, ah, unhappy me!
What god, what mortal, what unlook'd-for chance
Will expedite our dangerous way, and show
Two sprung from Atreus a release from ills?

LEADER What having seen and heard I shall relate,
Is marvellous, and passes fabling tales.

PYLADES When after absence long, Orestes, friend
Meets friend, embraces will express their joy.
Behooves us now, bidding farewell to grief,
And heedful to obtain the glorious name
Of safety, from this barbarous land to fly.
The wise, of fortune not regardless, seize
The occasion, and to happiness advance.

ORESTES Well hast thou said; and Fortune here, I ween,
Will aid us; to the firm and strenuous mind
More potent works the influence divine.

IPHIGENIA Nothing shall check, nothing restrain my speech:
First will I question thee what fortune waits
Electra: this to know would yield me joy.

ORESTES With him (pointing to Pylades) she dwells, and happy is her life,

IPHIGENIA Whence then is he? and from what father sprung?

ORESTES From Phocis: Strophius is his father named.

IPHIGENIA By Atreus' daughter to my blood allied?

ORESTES Nearly allied: my only faithful friend.

IPHIGENIA He was not then, me when my father slew.

ORESTES Childless was Strophius for some length of time.

IPHIGENIA O thou, the husband of my sister, hail

ORESTES More than relation, my preserver too.

IPHIGENIA But to thy mother why that dreadful deed?

ORESTES Of that no more: to avenge my father's death.

IPHIGENIA But for what cause did she her husband slay?

ORESTES Of her inquire not: thou wouldst blush to hear.

IPHIGENIA The eyes of Argos now are raised to thee.

ORESTES There Menelaus is lord; I, outcast, fly.

IPHIGENIA Hath he then wrong'd his brother's ruin'd house?

ORESTES Not so: the Furies fright me from the land.

IPHIGENIA The madness this, which seized thee on the shore?

ORESTES I was not first beheld unhappy there.

IPHIGENIA Stern powers! they haunt thee for thy mother's blood.

ORESTES And ruthless make me champ the bloody bit.

IPHIGENIA Why to this region has thou steer'd thy course?

ORESTES Commanded by Apollo's voice, I come.

IPHIGENIA With what intent? if that may be disclosed.

ORESTES I will inform thee, though to length of speech

This leads. When vengeance from my hands o'ertook

My mother's deeds-foul deeds, which let me pass

In silence-by the Furies' fierce assaults

To flight I was impell'd: to Athens then

Apollo sent me, that, my cause there heard,

I might appease the vengeful powers, whose names

May not be utter'd: the tribunal there
Is holy, which for Mars, when stain'd with blood,
Jove in old times establish'd. There arrived,
None willingly received me, by the gods
As one abhorr'd; and they, who felt the touch
Of shame, the hospitable board alone
Yielded; and though one common roof beneath,
Their silence showing they disdain'd to hold
Converse with me, I took from them apart
A lone repast; to each was placed a bowl
Of the same measure; this they filled with wine,
And bathed their spirits in delight. Unmeet
I deem'd it to express offence at those
Who entertain'd me, but in silence grieved,
Showing a cheer as though I mark'd it not,
And sigh'd for that I shed my mother's blood.
A feast, I hear, at Athens is ordain'd
From this my evil plight, ev'n yet observed,
In which the equal-measured bowl then used
Is by that people held in honour high.
But when to the tribunal on the mount
Of Mars I came, one stand I took, and one
The eldest of the Furies opposite:
The cause was heard touching my mother's blood,
And Phoebus saved me by his evidence:
Equal, by Pallas number'd, were the votes
And I from doom of blood victorious freed
Such of the Furies as there sat, appeased
By the just sentence, nigh the court resolved
To fix their seat; but others, whom the law
Appeased not, with relentless tortures still
Pursued me, till I reach'd the hallow'd soil
Of Phoebus: stretch'd before his shrine, I swore
Foodless to waste my wretched life away,
Unless the god, by whom I was undone,

Would save me: from the golden tripod burst
The voice divine, and sent me to this shore,
Commanding me to bear the image hence,
Which fell from Jove, and in the Athenian land
To fix it. What the oracular voice assign'd
My safety, do thou aid: if we obtain
The statue of the goddess, I no more
With madness shall be tortured, but this arm
Shall place thee in my bark, which ploughs the waves
With many an oar, and to Mycenae safe
Bear thee again. Show then a sister's love,
O thou most dear; preserve thy father's house,
Preserve me too; for me destruction waits,
And all the race of Pelops, if we bear not
This heaven-descended image from the shrine.

LEADER The anger of the gods hath raged severe,
And plunged the race of Tantalus in woes.

IPHIGENIA Ere thy arrival here, a fond desire
To be again at Argos, and to see
Thee, my loved brother, fill'd my soul. Thy wish
Is my warm wish, to free thee from thy toils,
And from its ruins raise my father's house;
Nor harbour I 'gainst him, that slew me, thought
Of harsh resentment: from thy blood my hands
Would I keep pure, thy house I would preserve.
But from the goddess how may this be hid?
The tyrant too I fear, when he shall find
The statue on its marble base no more.
What then from death will save me? What excuse
Shall I devise? Yet by one daring deed
Might these things be achieved: couldst thou bear hence
The image, me too in thy gallant bark
Placing secure, how glorious were the attempt!
Me if thou join not with thee, I am lost
Indeed; but thou, with prudent measures form'd,

Return. I fly no danger, not ev'n death,
Be death required, to save thee: no: the man
Dying is mourn'd, as to his house a loss;
But woman's weakness is of light esteem.

ORESTES I would not be the murderer of my mother,
And of thee too; sufficient is her blood.
No; I will share thy fortune, live with thee,
Or with thee die: to Argos I will lead thee,
If here I perish not; or dying, here
Remain with thee. But what my mind suggests,
Hear: if Diana were averse to this,
How could the voice of Phoebus from his shrine
Declare that to the state of Pallas hence
The statue of the goddess I should bear,
And see thy face? All this, together weigh'd,
Gives hope of fair success, and our return.

IPHIGENIA But how effect it, that we neither die,
And what we wish achieve? For our return
On this depends: this claims deliberate thought.

ORESTES Have we not means to work the tyrant's death?

IPHIGENIA For strangers full of peril were the attempt.

ORESTES Thee would it save and me, it must be dared.

IPHIGENIA I could not: yet thy promptness I approve.

ORESTES What if thou lodge me in the shrine conceal'd?

IPHIGENIA That in the shades of night we may escape?

ORESTES Night is a friend to frauds, the light to truth.

IPHIGENIA Within are sacred guards; we 'scape not them.

ORESTES Ruin then waits us: how can we be saved?

IPHIGENIA I think I have some new and safe device.

ORESTES What is it? Let me know: impart thy thought,

IPHIGENIA Thy sufferings for my purpose I will use,-

ORESTES To form devices quick is woman's wit.

IPHIGENIA And say, thy mother slain, thou fledd'st from Argos.

ORESTES If to aught good, avail thee of my ills.

IPHIGENIA Unmeet then at this shrine to offer thee.

ORESTES What cause alleged? I reach not thine intent.

IPHIGENIA As now impure: when hallow'd, I will slay thee.

ORESTES How is the image thus more promptly gain'd?

IPHIGENIA Thee I will hallow in the ocean waves.

ORESTES The statue we would gain is in the temple.

IPHIGENIA That, by thy touch polluted, I would cleanse.

ORESTES Where? On the watery margin of the main?

IPHIGENIA Where thy tall bark secured with cables rides.

ORESTES And who shall bear the image in his hands?

IPHIGENIA Myself; profaned by any touch, but mine.

ORESTES What of this blood shall on my friend be charged?

IPHIGENIA His hands, it shall be said, like thine are stain'd.

ORESTES In secret this, or to the king disclosed?

IPHIGENIA With his assent; I cannot hide it from him.

ORESTES My bark with ready oars attends thee near.

IPHIGENIA That all be well appointed, be thy charge.

ORESTES One thing alone remains; that these conceal

Our purpose: but address them, teach thy tongue

Persuasive words: a woman hath the power

To melt the heart to pity: thus perchance

All things may to our warmest wish succeed.

IPHIGENIA Ye train of females, to my soul most dear,

On you mine eyes are turn'd, on you depends

My fate; with prosperous fortune to be bless'd,

Or to be nothing, to my country lost,
Of a dear kinsman and a much-loved brother
Deprived. This plea I first would urge, that we
Are women, and have hearts by nature form'd
To love each other, of our mutual trusts
Most firm preservers. Touching our design,
Be silent, and assist our flight: naught claims
More honour than the faithful tongue. You see
How the same fortune links us three, most dear
Each to the other, to revisit safe
Our country, or to die. If I am saved,
That thou mayst share my fortune, I to Greece
Will bring thee safe: but thee by this right hand,
Thee I conjure, and thee; by this loved cheek
Thee, by thy knees, by all that in your house
Is dearest to you, father, mother, child,
If you have children. What do you reply?
Which of you speaks assent? Or which dissents?
But be you all assenting: for my plea
If you approve not, ruin falls on me,
And my unhappy brother too must die.

LEADER Be confident, loved lady and consult
Only thy safety: all thou givest in charge,
Be witness, mighty Jove, I will conceal.

IPHIGENIA O, for this generous promise be you bless'd.

(To ORESTES and PYLADES)

To enter now the temple be thy part,
And thine: for soon the monarch of the land
Will come, inquiring if the strangers yet
Have bow'd their necks as victims at the shrine.
Goddess revered, who in the dreadful bay
Of Aulis from my father's slaughtering hand
Didst save me; save me now, and these: through thee,

Else will the voice of Phoebus be no more
Held true by mortals. From this barbarous land
To Athens go propitious: here to dwell
Beseems thee not; thine be a polish'd state!

(ORESTES, PYLADES, and IPHIGENIA enter the temple.)

CHORUS (singing) O bird, that round each craggy height
Projecting o'er the sea below,
Wheelest thy melancholy flight,
Thy song attuned to notes of woe;
The wise thy tender sorrows own,
Which thy lost lord unceasing moan;
Like thine, sad halcyon, be my strain,
A bird, that have no wings to fly:
With fond desire for Greece I sigh,
And for my much-loved social train;
Sigh for Diana, pitying maid,
Who joys to rove o'er Cynthus' heights.
Or in the branching laurel's shade,
Or in the soft-hair'd palm delights,
Or the hoar olive's sacred boughs,
Lenient of sad Latona's woes;
Or in the lake, that rolls its wave
Where swans their plumage love to lave;
Then, to the Muses soaring high,
The homage pay of melody.
Ye tears, what frequent-falling showers
Roll'd down these cheeks in streams of woe,
When in the dust my country's towers
Lay levell'd by the conquering foe;
And, to their spears a prey, their oars
Brought me to these barbaric shores!
For gold exchanged, a traffic base,

No vulgar slave, the task is mine,
Here at Diana's awful shrine,
Who loves the woodland hind to chase,
The virgin priestess to attend,
Daughter of rich Mycenae's lord;
At other shrines her wish to bend,
Where bleeds the victim less abhorr'd:
No respite to her griefs she knows;
Not so the heart inured to woes,
As train'd to sorrow's rigid lore:
Now comes a change; it mourns no more:
But lo long bliss when ill succeeds,
The anguish'd heart for ever bleeds.
Thee, loved virgin, freed from fear
Home the Argive bark shall bear:
Mountain Pan, with thrilling strain,
To the oars that dash the main
In just cadence well agreed,
Shall accord his wax-join'd reed:
Phoebus, with a prophet's fire
Sweeping o'er his seven-string'd lyre,
And his voice attuning high
To the swelling harmony,
Thee shall guide the wild waves o'er
To the soft Athenian shore.
Leaving me, thy oars shall sweep
Eager o'er the foaming deep:
Thou shalt catch the rising gales
Swelling in thy firm-bound sails;
And thy bark in gallant pride
Light shall o'er the billows glide.
Might I through the lucid air
Fly where rolls yon flaming car,
O'er those loved and modest bowers,
Where I pass'd my youthful hours,

I would stay my weary flight,
Wave no more my pennons light,
But, amid the virgin band,
Once my loved companions, stand:
Once mid them my charms could move,
Blooming then, the flames of love;
When the mazy dance I trod,
While with joy my mother glow'd;
When to vie in grace was mine,
And in splendid robes to shine;
For, with radiant tints impress'd,
Glow'd for me the gorgeous vest;
And these tresses gave new grace,
As their ringlets shade my face.

(THOAS and his retinue enter.)

THOAS Where is the Grecian lady, to whose charge
This temple is committed? Have her rites
Hallow'd the strangers? Do their bodies burn
In the recesses of the sacred shrine?

LEADER OF THE CHORUS She comes, and will inform thee, king, of all.

(IPHIGENIA comes out of the temple. She is carrying the sacred statue of Diana.)

THOAS Daughter of Agamemnon, what means this?
The statue of the goddess in thine arms
Why dost thou bear, from its firm base removed?

IPHIGENIA There in the portal, monarch, stay thy step.

THOAS What of strange import in the shrine hath chanced?

IPHIGENIA Things ominous: that word I, holy, speak.

THOAS To what is tuned thy proem? Plainly speak.

IPHIGENIA Not pure the victims, king, you lately seized.

THOAS What showd thee this? Or speak'st thou but thy thought?

IPHIGENIA Back turn'd the sacred image on its base.

THOAS Spontaneous turn'd, or by an earthquake moved?

IPHIGENIA Spontaneous, and, averted, closed its eyes.

THOAS What was the cause? The blood-stain'd stranger's guilt?

IPHIGENIA That, and naught else; for horrible their deeds.

THOAS What, have they slain some Scythian on the shore?

IPHIGENIA They came polluted with domestic blood.

THOAS What blood? I have a strong desire to know.

IPHIGENIA They slew their mother with confederate swords.

THOAS O Phoebus! This hath no barbarian dared.

IPHIGENIA All Greece indignant chased them from her realms.

THOAS Bear'st thou for this the image from the shrine?

IPHIGENIA To the pure air, from stain of blood removed.

THOAS By what means didst thou know the stranger's guilt?

IPHIGENIA I learn'd it as the statue started back.

THOAS Greece train'd thee wise: this well hast thou discern'd.

IPHIGENIA Now with sweet blandishments they soothe my soul.

THOAS Some glozing tale from Argos telling thee?

IPHIGENIA I have one brother: he, they say, lives happy,-

THOAS That thou mayst save them for their pleasing news?

IPHIGENIA And that my father lives, by fortune bless'd.

THOAS But on the goddess well thy thoughts are turn'd.

IPHIGENIA I hate all Greece; for it hath ruin'd me.

THOAS What with the strangers, say then, should be done?

IPHIGENIA The law ordain'd in reverence we must hold.

THOAS Are then thy lovers ready, and the sword?

IPHIGENIA First I would cleanse them with ablutions pure.

THOAS In fountain waters, or the ocean wave?

IPHIGENIA All man's pollutions doth the salt sea cleanse.

THOAS More holy to the goddess will they bleed.

IPHIGENIA And better what I have in charge advance.

THOAS Doth not the wave ev'n 'gainst the temple beat?

IPHIGENIA This requires solitude: more must I do.

THOAS Lead where thou wilt: on secret rite I pry not.

IPHIGENIA The image of the goddess I must cleanse.

THOAS If it be stain'd with touch of mother's blood.

IPHIGENIA I could not else have borne it from its base.

THOAS Just is thy provident and pious thought;

For this by all the state thou art revered.

IPHIGENIA Know'st thou what next I would?

THOAS 'Tis thine thy will

To signify.

IPHIGENIA Give for these strangers chains.

THOAS To what place can they fly?

IPHIGENIA A Grecian knows

Naught faithful.

THOAS Of my train go some for chains.

(Some attendants go out.)

IPHIGENIA Let them lead forth the strangers.

THOAS Be it so,

IPHIGENIA And veil their faces.

THOAS From the sun's bright beams?

IPHIGENIA Some of thy train send with me.

THOAS These shall go,
Attending thee.

IPHIGENIA One to the city send.

THOAS With what instructions charged?

IPHIGENIA That all remain
Within their houses.

THOAS That the stain of blood
They meet not?

IPHIGENIA These things have pollution in them.

THOAS Go thou, and bear the instructions.

(An attendant departs.)

IPHIGENIA That none come
In sight,

THOAS How wisely careful for the city!

IPHIGENIA Warn our friends most.

THOAS This speaks thy care for me.

IPHIGENIA Stay thou before the shrine.

THOAS To what intent?

IPHIGENIA Cleanse it with lustral fires.

THOAS That thy return
May find it pure?

IPHIGENIA But when the strangers come
Forth from the temple,-

THOAS What must I then do?

IPHIGENIA Spread o'er thine eyes a veil.

THOAS That I receive not
Pollution?

IPHIGENIA Tedious if my stay appear,-

THOAS What bounds may be assign'd?

IPHIGENIA Deem it not strange.

THOAS At leisure what the rites require perform.

IPHIGENIA May this lustration as I wish succeed!

THOAS Thy wish is mine.

(ORESTES and PYLADES, bound, are led from the temple in solemn procession by the guards. THOAS and his retinue veil their heads as it slowly moves past.)

IPHIGENIA (chanting) But from the temple, see,
The strangers come, the sacred ornaments,
The hallow'd lambs-for I with blood must wash
This execrable blood away,-the light
Of torches, and what else my rites require
To purify these strangers to the goddess.
But to the natives of this land my voice
Proclaims, from this pollution far remove,
Art thou attendant at the shrine, who liftest
Pure to the gods thy hands, or nuptial rites
Dost thou prepare, or pregnant matron; hence,
Begone, that this defilement none may touch.
Thou, daughter of Latona and high Jove,
O royal virgin, if I cleanse the stain
Of these, and where I ought with holy rites
Address thee, thou shalt hold thy residence

In a pure mansion; we too shall be bless'd.
More though I speak not, goddess, unexpress'd,
All things to thee and to the gods are known.

(IPHIGENIA, carrying the statue, joins the procession as it goes out. THOAS and his retinue enter the temple.)

CHORUS (singing) Latona's glorious offspring claims the song,
Born the hallow'd shades among,
Where fruitful Delos winds her valleys low;
Bright-hair'd Phoebus, skill'd to inspire
Raptures, as he sweeps the lyre,
And she that glories in the unerring bow.
From the rocky ridges steep,
At whose feet the hush'd waves sleep,
Left their far-famed native shore,
Them the exulting mother bore
To Parnassus, on whose heights
Bacchus shouting holds his rites;
Glittering in the burnish'd shade,
By the laurel's branches made,
Where the enormous dragon lies,
Brass his scales, and flame his eyes,
Earth-born monster, that around
Rolling guards the oracular ground;
Him, while yet a sportive child,
In his mother's arms that smiled,
Phoebus slew, and seized the shrine
Whence proceeds the voice divine:
On the golden tripod placed,
Throne by falsehood ne'er disgraced,
Where Castalia's pure stream flows,
He the fates to mortal shows.
But when Themis, whom of yore

Earth, her fruitful mother, bore,
From her hallow'd seat he drove,
Earth to avenge her daughter strove,
Forming visions of the night,
Which, in rapt dreams hovering light,
All that Time's dark volumes hold
Might to mortal sense unfold,
When in midnight's sable shades
Sleep the silent couch invades:
Thus did Earth her vengeance boast.
His prophetic honours lost,
Royal Phoebus speeds his flight
To Olympus, on whose height
At the throne of Jove he stands,
Stretching forth his little hands,
Suppliant that the Pythian shrine
Feel no more the wrath divine;
That the goddess he appease;
That her nightly visions cease.
Jove with smiles beheld his son
Early thus address his throne,
Suing with ambitious pride
O'er the rich shrine to preside;
He, assenting, bow'd his head.
Straight the nightly visions fled;
And prophetic dreams no more
Hover'd slumbering mortals o'er:
Now to Phoebus given again,
All his honours pure remain;
Votaries distant regions send
His frequented throne to attend:
And the firm decrees of fate
On his faithful voice await.

(A MESSENGER enters.)

MESSENGER Say you, that keep the temple, and attend
The altar, where is Thoas, Scythia's king?
Open these strong-compacted gates, and cal
Forth from the shrine the monarch of the land.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS Wherefore? at thy command if I must speak.

MESSENGER The two young men are gone, through the device
Of Agamemnon's daughter: from this land
They fly; and, in their Grecian galley placed,
The sacred image of the goddess bear.

LEADER Incredible thy tale: but whom thou seek'st,
The monarch, from the temple went in haste.

MESSENGER Whither? for what is doing he should know.

LEADER We know not: but go thou, and seek for him:
Where'er thou find him, thou wilt tell him this.

MESSENGER See, what a faithless race you women are!
In all that hath been done you have a part.

LEADER Sure thou art mad! what with the strangers' flight
Have we to do? But wilt thou not, with all
The speed thou mayst, go to the monarch's house?

MESSENGER Not till I first am well inform'd, if here
Within the temple be the king, or not.

(Shouting)

Unbar the gates (to you within I speak);
And tell your lord that at the portal here
I stand, and bring him tidings of fresh ills.

(THOAS and his attendants enter from the temple.)

THOAS Who at the temple of the goddess dares
This clamour raise, and, thundering at the gates,
Strikes terror through the ample space within?

MESSENGER With falsehoods would these women drive me hence,
Without to seek thee: thou wast in the shrine.

THOAS With what intent? or what advantage sought?

MESSENGER Of these hereafter; what more urgent now
Imports thee, hear: the virgin, in this place
Presiding at the altars, from this land
Is with the strangers fled, and bears with her
The sacred image of the goddess; all
Of her ablutions but a false pretence.

THOAS How say'st thou? What is her accursed design?

MESSENGER To save Orestes: this too will amaze thee.

THOAS Whom? What Orestes? Clytemnestra's son?

MESSENGER Him at the altar hallow'd now to bleed.

THOAS Portentous! for what less can it be call'd?

MESSENGER Think not on that, but hear me; with deep thought
Reflect: weigh well what thou shalt hear; devise
By what pursuit to reach and seize the strangers.

THOAS Speak: thou advisest well: the sea though nigh,
They fly not so as to escape my spear.

MESSENGER When to the shore we came, where station'd rode
The galley of Orestes, by the rocks
Conceal'd to us, whom thou hadst sent with her
To hold the strangers' chains, the royal maid
Made signs that we retire, and stand aloof,
As if with secret rites she would perform
The purposed expiation: on she went,
In her own hands holding the strangers' chains
Behind them: not without suspicion-this,
Yet by thy servants, king, allow'd. At length,

That we might deem her in some purpose high
Employ'd, she raised her voice, and chanted loud
Barbaric strains, as if with mystic rites
She cleansed the stain of blood. When we had sat
A tedious while, it came into our thought,
That from their chains unloosed, the stranger youths
Might kill her, and escape by flight: yet fear
Of seeing what we ought not, kept us still
In silence; but at length we all resolved
To go, though not permitted, where they were.
There we behold the Grecian bark with oars
Well furnish'd, wing'd for flight; and at their seats,
Grasping their oars, were fifty rowers; free
From chains beside the stern the two youths stood
Some from the prow relieved the keel with poles;
Some weigh'd the anchors up; the climbing ropes
Some hasten'd, through their hands the cables drew,
Launch'd the light bark, and gave her to the main.
But when we saw their treacherous wiles, we rush'd
Heedless of danger, seized the priestess, seized
The halsers, hung upon the helm, and strove
To rend the rudder-bands away. Debate
Now rose:-“What mean you, sailing o'er the seas,
The statue and the priestess from the land
By stealth conveying? Whence art thou, and who,
That bear'st her, like a purchased slave, away?”
He said, “I am her brother; be of this
Inform'd; Orestes, son of Agamemnon:
My sister, so long lost, I bear away,
Recover'd here.” But naught the less for that
Held we the priestess, and by force would lead
Again to thee: hence dreadful on our cheeks
The blows; for in their hands no sword they held,
Nor we; but many a rattling stroke the youths
Dealt with their fists, against our sides and breasts

Their arms fierce darting, till our batter'd limbs
Were all disabled: now with dreadful marks
Disfigured, up the precipice we fly,
Some bearing on their heads, some in their eyes
The bloody bruises: standing on the heights,
Our fight was safer, and we hurl'd at them
Fragments of rocks; but, standing on the stern,
The archers with their arrows drove us thence;
And now a swelling wave roll'd in, which drove
The galley towards the land. The sailors fear'd
The sudden swell: on his left arm sustain'd,
Orestes bore his sister through the tide,
Mounted the bark's tall side, and on the deck
Safe placed her, and Diana's holy image,
Which fell from heaven; from the midship his voice
He sent aloud:—"Ye youths, that in this bark
From Argos plough'd the deep, now ply your oars,
And dash the billows till they foam: those things
Are ours, for which we swept the Euxine sea.
And steer'd our course within its clashing rocks."
They gave a cheerful shout, and with their oars
Dash'd the salt wave. The galley, while it rode
Within the harbour, work'd its easy way;
But having pass'd its mouth, the swelling flood
Roll'd on it, and with sudden force the wind
Impetuous rising drove it back: their oars
They slack'd not, stoutly struggling 'gainst the wave;
But towards the land the refluent flood impell'd
The galley: then the royal virgin stood,
And pray'd:—"O daughter of Latona, save me,
Thy priestess save; from this barbaric land
To Greece restore me, and forgive my thefts:
For thou, O goddess, dost thy brother love,
Deem then that I love those allied to me."
The mariners responsive to her prayer

Shouted loud paeans, and their naked arms,
Each cheering each, to their stout oars apply.
But nearer and yet nearer to the rock
The galley drove: some rush'd into the sea,
Some strain'd the ropes that bind the loosen'd sails.
Straight was I hither sent to thee, O king,
To inform thee of these accidents. But haste,
Take chains and gyves with thee: for if the flood
side not to a calm, there is no hope
Of safety to the strangers. Be assured,
That Neptune, awful monarch of the main,
Remembers Troy; and, hostile to the race
Of Pelops, will deliver to thy hands,
And to thy people, as is meet, the son
Of Agamemnon; and bring back to the
His sister, who the goddess hath betray'd,
Unmindful of the blood at Aulis shed.

LEADER Unhappy Iphigenia, thou must die,
Thy brother too must die, if thou again,
Seized in thy flight, to thy lord's hands shalt come.

THOAS Inhabitants of this barbaric land,
Will you not rein your steeds, will you not fly
Along the shore, to seize whate'er this skiff
Of Greece casts forth; and, for your goddess roused,
Hunt down these impious men? Will you not launch
Instant your swift-oar'd barks, by sea, by land
To catch them, from the rugged rock to hurl
Their bodies, or impale them on the stake?
But for you, women, in these dark designs
Accomplices, hereafter, as I find
Convenient leisure, I will punish you.
The occasion urges now, and gives no pause.

(MINERVA appears above.)

MINERVA Whither, O royal Thoas, dost thou lead
This vengeful chase? Attend: Minerva speaks.
Cease thy pursuit, and stop this rushing flood
Of arms; for hither, by the fateful voice
Of Phoebus, came Orestes, warn'd to fly
The anger of the Furies, to convey
His sister to her native Argos back,
And to my land the sacred image bear.
Thoas, I speak to thee: him, whom thy rage
Would kill, Orestes, on the wild waves seized,
Neptune, to do me grace, already wafts
On the smooth sea, the swelling surges calm'd.
And thou, Orestes (for my voice thou hear'st,
Though distant far), to my commands attend:
Go, with the sacred image, which thou bear'st,
And with thy sister: but when thou shalt come
To Athens built by gods, there is a place
On the extreme borders of the Attic land,
Close neighbouring to Carystia's craggy height,
Sacred; my people call it Alae: there
A temple raise, and fix the statue there,
Which from the Tauric goddess shall receive
Its name, and from thy toils, which thou, through Greece
Driven by the Furies' maddening stings, hast borne;
And mortals shall in future times with hymns
The Tauric goddess there, Diana, hail.
And be this law establish'd; when the feast
For thy deliverance from this shrine is held,
To a man's throat that they apply the sword,
And draw the blood, in memory of these rites,
That of her honours naught the goddess lose.
Thou, Iphigenia, on the hallow'd heights
Of Brauron on this goddess shalt attend
Her priestess, dying shalt be there interr'd,

Graced with the honours of the gorgeous vests
Of finest texture, in their houses left
By matrons who in childbed pangs expired.
These Grecian dames back to their country lead,
I charge thee; justice this return demands,
For I saved thee, when on the mount of Mars
The votes were equal; and from that decree
The shells in number equal still absolve.
But, son of Agamemnon, from this land
Thy sister bear; nor, Thoas, be thou angry.

THOAS Royal Minerva, he that hears the gods
Commanding, and obeys not, is unwise.
My anger 'gainst Orestes flames no more,
Gone though he be, and bears with him away
The statue of the goddess, and his sister.
Have mortals glory 'gainst the powerful gods
Contending? Let them go, and to thy land
The sacred image bear, and fix it there;
Good fortune go with them. To favour Greece,
These dames, at thy high bidding, I will send.
My arms will I restrain, which I had raised
Against the strangers, and my swift-oar'd barks,
Since, potent goddess, this is pleasing to thee.

MINERVA I praise thy resolution; for the power
Of Fate o'er thee and o'er the gods prevails.
Breathe soft, ye favouring gales, to Athens bear
These sprung from Agamemnon; on their course
Attending, I will go, and heedful save
My sister's sacred image. You too go (to the CHORUS)
Prosperous, and in the fate that guards you bless'd.

(MINERVA vanishes.)

CHORUS (chanting) O thou, among the immortal gods revered
And mortal men, Minerva, we will do
As thou commandest; for with transport high,
Exceeding hope, our ears receive thy words.
O Victory, I revere thy awful power:
Guard thou my life, nor ever cease to crown me!

THE END