

HIPPOLYTUS

by Euripides (428 BC)

Aphrodite enters above the skene.

Aphrodite

Mighty and of high renown, among mortals and in heaven alike, I am called the goddess Aphrodite. Of all those who dwell between the Euxine Sea and the Pillars of Atlas and look on the light of the sun, I honor those who reverence my power, but I lay low all those who think proud thoughts against me. For in the gods as well one finds this trait: they enjoy receiving honor from mortals.

The truth of these words I shall shortly demonstrate. Hippolytus, Theseus' son by the Amazon woman and ward of holy Pittheus, alone among the citizens of this land of Trozen, says that I am the basest of divinities. He shuns the bed of love and will have nothing to do with marriage. Instead, he honors Apollo's sister Artemis, Zeus's daughter, thinking her the greatest of divinities. In the green wood, ever consort to the maiden goddess, he clears the land of wild beasts with his swift dogs and has gained a companionship greater than mortal. To this pair I feel no grudging ill-will: why should I? Yet for his sins against me I shall punish Hippolytus this day. I have already come a long way with my plans and I need little further effort. One day when he came from Pittheus' house to the land of Pandion to see and celebrate the holy mysteries of Demeter, his father's high-born wife Phaedra saw him, and her heart was seized with a dreadful longing by my design. And before she came to this land of Trozen, she built, hard by the rock of Pallas Athena, a temple to Aphrodite overlooking this land since she loved a foreign love. After ages shall call this foundation Aphrodite-Next-Hippolytus.

But since Theseus has left the land of Cecrops, fleeing the blood-guilt he incurred for the murder of the Pallantidae, and sailed with his wife to this land, consenting to a year-long exile from his home, from this point on the poor woman, groaning and struck senseless by the goad of love, means to die in silence, and none of her household knows of her malady. But that is not the way this passion is fated to end. I shall reveal the matter to Theseus and it will come to light, and the young man who wars against me shall be killed by his father with the curses the sea-lord Poseidon granted as a gift to Theseus: three times may Theseus pray to the god and have his prayer fulfilled. But Phaedra, noble though she is, shall nonetheless die. I do not set such store by her misfortune as to let my enemies off from such penalty as will satisfy my heart.

But now I see Hippolytus coming, finished with the toil of the hunt, and so I shall leave this place. A great throng of his servants treads close at his heels and shouts, hymning the praises of the goddess Artemis. Clearly he does not know that the gates of the Underworld stand open for him and that this day's light is the last he shall ever look upon. *Exit Aphrodite. Enter Hippolytus by Eisosdos A, carrying a garland, with a chorus of servants*

Hippolytus *sung*

Come follow me and sing of Zeus's heavenly daughter Artemis, who cares for us.

Hippolytus and chorus of Servants *sung*

Lady, lady most revered, daughter of Zeus, my greeting, daughter of Leto and of Zeus, of maidens the fairest by far, who dwellest in the broad heaven in the court of your good father, the gilded house of Zeus. My greeting to you, fair one, fairest of all who dwell in Olympus!

Hippolytus

For you, lady, I bring this plaited garland I have made, gathered from an inviolate meadow, a place where the shepherd does not dare to pasture his flocks, where the iron scythe has never come: no, it is inviolate, and the bee makes its way through it in the spring-time. Shamefast Awe tends this garden with streams of river-water, for those to pluck who have acquired nothing by teaching but rather in whose very nature chastity in all things has ever won its place: the base may not pluck. But, dear lady, take this coronal for your golden hair from a worshipful hand. For I alone of mortals have this privilege: I spend my days with you and speak with you, I hear your voice but never see your face. May I end my life just as I have begun it!

Servant

Lord—for it is as gods that one should address one's masters —would you take a piece of good advice from me?

Hippolytus

Most certainly. Else I should not seem wise.

Servant

The rule observed by mortals—do you know it?

Hippolytus

No. What is the law you question me about?

Servant

To hate what's haughty and not friend to all.

Hippolytus

And rightly. Who that's haughty gives no pain?

Servant

And is there charm in affability?

Hippolytus

Yes, much, and profit too with little toil.

Servant

Do you think the same is true among the gods?

Hippolytus

Yes, if we humans follow heavenly usage.

Servant

How then no word for a high and mighty goddess?

Hippolytus

Which? Careful lest your tongue commit some slip.

Servant *pointing to the statue of Aphrodite*

The goddess here, who stands beside your gate.

Hippolytus

I greet her from afar, for I am pure.

Servant

Yet she's revered and famous among mortals.

Hippolytus

I do not like a god worshipped at night.

Servant

My son, to honor the gods is only just.

Hippolytus

Men have their likes, in gods and men alike.

Servant

I wish you fortune—and the good sense you need!

Hippolytus

Go, servants, enter the house and prepare the meal. After the hunt a full table is a pleasure. And you must rub down my horses so that when I am sated with meat I can yoke them to my chariot and give them their proper exercise.

Exit the Chorus of Servants into the palace.

As for your Aphrodite, I bid her a very good day!*Exit Hippolytus into the palace.*

Servant

I, however, since we should not imitate the young when their thoughts are like these, shall pray, in words befitting a slave, to your statue, my lady Aphrodite. You should be forgiving: if youth makes someone's heart stiff with pride and he utters folly, pretend not to hear him. For gods should be wiser than mortals.*Exit Servant into the palace. Enter by Eisodos B women of Trozen as Chorus.*

Chorus

There is a cliff dripping water whose source, men say, is the river Oceanus: it pours forth from its overhanging edge a flowing stream in which pitchers are dipped. It was there that I found a friend soaking her clothes in the river-water and laying them out on the warm rock's broad back in the sun. From there it was that I first had news of my queen.

Chorus

She lies afflicted, they say, in a bed of sickness and keeps indoors, with fine-spun cloths covering her blond head. And I hear that for three days now, her mouth taking no food, she has kept her body pure of Demeter's grain, wishing because of some secret grief to ground her life's craft in the unhappy journey's-end of death.

Chorus

Has some god possessed you, dear girl? Do your wits wander under the spell of Pan or Hecate, the august Corybantes or Cybele, the mountain mother? Are you being worn down for some fault against Dictynna, her of the wild beasts, and are you tainted with failure to offer the holy batter? For she also haunts the Lake and passes over the dry land that stands in the eddies of the surf.

Chorus

Or is it your husband, the nobly born king of the Erechtheid Athenians? Does some other woman rule his passion, someone in the palace, making love to him apart from your bed? Or has some sailor from Crete put in at that harbor most hospitable to sailors bearing news to the queen, and is her soul for this reason bound bedfast in grief over her misfortunes?

Chorus

Women's nature is an uneasy harmony, and with it is wont to dwell the slack unhappy helplessness of birth-pangs and their folly. Through my womb also has this breath darted. But I called on the heavenly easer of travail, Artemis, mistress of arrows, and she is always—the gods be praised—my much-envied visitor.

Chorus Leader *Enter the Nurse from the palace, then Phaedra supported by servants. Other servants bring a couch onto the stage on which the Queen lies down.*

But here is her aged nurse before the door, and she is bringing the Queen out of the palace. The cloud of unhappiness on her brow is growing. My heart longs to know what it is, why her body is so ravaged, its color so changed.

Nurse

Oh, the troubles mortals have, the wretched diseases! What shall I do to you? What shall I not do? Here is daylight and here the bright sky, and your sick-bed stands now outside the house. For to come out here was all you talked of. But soon you will hurry back into your chamber, for you slip all too soon from contentment, and you find joy in nothing, taking no pleasure in what is at hand but loving rather what is far off. Yet better it is to be sick than to tend the sick. The first is a single thing, while the second joins grief of heart to toil of hand. But the life of mortals is wholly trouble, and there is no rest from toil. Anything we might love more than life is hid in a surrounding cloud of darkness, and we are clearly unhappy lovers of whatever light there is that shines on earth because we are ignorant of another life, since the life below is not revealed to us. We are borne along foolishly by mere tales.

Phaedra

Raise up my body, hold my head erect! My limbs are unstrung. Take my fair arms, servants! It is grievous to have this head-dress on my head. Take it off, spread my tresses on my shoulders!

Nurse

Courage, my child! Do not shift your body so roughly. You will bear up under your ailment more easily with calmness and nobility of mind. Mortals must endure trouble.

Phaedra *sung*

Oh, oh! How I long to draw a drink of pure water from a dewy spring and to take my rest lying under the poplar trees and in the uncut meadow!

Nurse

My child, what are these words of yours? Won't you stop saying such things before the crowd, hurling wild words that are mounted on madness?

Phaedra *sung*

Take me to the mountain: I mean to go to the wood, to the pine-wood, where hounds that kill wild beasts tread, running close after the dappled deer! By the gods, how I want to shout to the hounds and to let fly past my golden hair a javelin of Thessaly, to hold in my hand the sharp-pointed weapon!

Nurse

Why, my child, these fevered thoughts? Why concern yourself with hunting? Why do you long for water from a flowing spring? For hard by the city wall is a dewy slope from which you might have a drink.

Phaedra *sung*

Mistress of the Salt Lake, Artemis, mistress of the coursing-ground for horses, oh that I might find myself on your ground taming Eneitic horses!

Nurse

What whirling words are these you utter yet again in your madness? One time you are off going to the mountains to the hunt you long for, another time on the sands untouched by the waves you yearn for horses. All this calls for a skilful diviner to say which of the gods is wrenching your head aside, my child, and striking your wits awry.

Phaedra

Dear luckless me, what have I done? Where have I wandered from the path of good sense? I was mad, I fell by the stroke of some divinity. Oh, how unhappy I am. Nurse, cover my head up again. For I am ashamed of my words. Go on, cover it: the tears stream down from my eyes and my gaze is turned to shame. For to be right in my mind is grievous pain, while this madness is an ill thing. Best is to perish in unconsciousness. *The Nurse veils Phaedra's head.*

Nurse

I cover your head. But when will my body be covered in death? My long life has taught me many lessons: mortals should not mix the cup of their affection to one another too strong, and it should not sink to their very marrow, but the affection that binds their hearts should be easy to loosen, easy either to thrust from them or to bind tightly. It is a grievous burden that one soul should be in travail over two the way I grieve for her. Men say that a way of life too unswerving leads more to a fall than to satisfaction and is more hurtful to health. That is why I have much less praise for excess than for moderation. The wise will bear me out.

Chorus Leader

Old woman, faithful nurse to the Queen, we see Phaedra's unhappy plight, yet it is unclear to us what is wrong with her. We want to ask you and hear your answer.

Nurse

I have given up questioning her: she will not say.

Chorus Leader

Not even how the trouble first began?

Nurse

'Tis all one: on all these things she holds her tongue.

Chorus Leader

How weak she is! How wracked her body seems!

Nurse

No wonder: she's been three days without food.

Chorus Leader

Is she deranged? Or does she mean to die?

Nurse

To die? Her fast, no doubt, will end her there.

Chorus Leader

It's very strange if this contents her husband.

Nurse

No, for she hides it and denies she's ill.

Chorus Leader

Can he not guess by looking on her face?

Nurse

No, for as it happens he's abroad.

Chorus Leader

Aren't you then applying force, trying to find out her malady, what is causing her wits to wander?

Nurse

I have tried everything and made no progress. Yet I shall not relax even now from my efforts so that you standing by may also bear witness on my behalf what kind of servant I have been to my masters in distress.

Come, dear child, let us both forget the words that are past: **you** be more gracious, loosening your morose brow and the path your thoughts take, while **I**, where in the past I was not able to follow you sympathetically, shall let that be and take another and better tack. If your malady is one of those that are unmentionable, here are women to help set it to rights. If your misfortune may be spoken of to men, speak so that the thing may be revealed to doctors. *Phaedra is silent.* Well, why are you silent? You ought not to be mute, child, but should either refute me if I have said something amiss or comply with the good advice I have given. *She is silent again.* Say something! Look at me! Oh unlucky me, women, it is in vain that I endure this toil, and I am just as far off as before. Formerly words failed to soften her, and now too she is not won over.

But know well—and in the face of this be more stubborn than the sea if you like—know that if you die you have betrayed your sons, who shall have no share in their father's house, none: I tell you in the name of that horse-riding queen of the Amazons who bore a master to rule over your sons, a bastard with thoughts of legitimacy, you know him well, Hippolytus. . .

Phaedra

Oh pain!

Nurse

Does this then touch you close?

Phaedra

You have killed me, Nurse, and I beg you by the gods to say nothing of this man again!

Nurse

You see? You are in your right mind, but though you are sane, you are not willing to benefit your sons and to save your own life.

Phaedra

I love my children. It is another fate that buffets me.

Nurse

Your hands, may I presume, are clean of blood?

Phaedra

My hands are clean. It is my heart that's stained.

Nurse

Not spells, I hope, launched by some enemy?

Phaedra

A friend destroys me. Neither of us wills it.

Nurse

Has Theseus done some wrong against you then?

Phaedra

Never may I be found out wronging him!

Nurse

What is this dread that makes you wish to die?

Phaedra

Oh, let me err! It is not you I wrong.

Nurse

If I must fail, the fault is yours, not mine. *The Nurse assumes the posture of a suppliant, grasping Phaedra's hand and knees.*

Phaedra

What? Seize my hand? Use force, the suppliant grasp?

Nurse

Yes, and your knees, too! I shall not let go!

Phaedra

To learn the truth, poor woman, will be your doom!

Nurse

What doom is worse for me than losing you?

Phaedra

It will be your death. To me the affair brings honor.

Nurse

Why keep it hid, then, when my request is noble?

Phaedra

Out of great shame I scheme to make great good.

Nurse

Why, speak it out, then, and you'll be more honored!

Phaedra

I ask you by the gods, be gone, let go!

Nurse

No, for you do not give the gift you ought.

Phaedra

I shall: your suppliant hand commands my awe.

Nurse

I'm silent now. The word henceforth is yours.

Phaedra

Unhappy mother, what a love you felt!

Nurse

For the Cretan bull? Or what is this you mean?

Phaedra

And you, poor sister, Dionysus' bride.

Nurse

What's wrong with you, daughter? Why defame your kin?

Phaedra

And I the third, how wretchedly I perish!

Nurse

I am astonished. Where will these words lead?

Phaedra

From far back, nothing recent, is my woe!

Nurse

Of what I wish to hear I'm no whit wiser.

Phaedra

Oh! Could you but say the words that I must say!

Nurse

I am no seer, to know what's hid from sight.

Phaedra

What is this thing they call—'to be in love'?

Nurse

At once great pleasure, daughter, and great pain.

Phaedra

It is the second that I think is mine.

Nurse

What, are you in love, my child? Who's the man?

Phaedra

Whatever his name is, son of the Amazon. . .

Nurse

You mean Hippolytus?

Phaedra

Yours are the words, not mine.

Nurse

Ah, what can you mean, my child? This is my death! Women, this is unendurable, I can not endure to live! Hateful to me is the day, the light I see! I shall throw myself down, die and be quit of life! Farewell, I am gone! For the chaste—they do not will it but yet 'tis so—are in love with disaster! Aphrodite is not after all a goddess but something even more mighty. She has destroyed her, me, and the house.

Chorus

Have you marked, oh, have you heard, oh, the queen uttering woes past hearing? Death take me, my friend, before I come to share your thoughts. Ah me! Alas! Oh, how unhappy these pains have made you! Oh, the troubles that have mortals in their keeping! You are undone, you have revealed your miseries to the light of day. The hours of this long day—what awaits you in them? Some unlucky change for the house will be brought to pass. And it is now quite clear to what end the stroke sent by Aphrodite is aimed, o unhappy Cretan girl.

Phaedra

Women of Trozen, dwellers in this extreme forecourt to the land of Pelops, I have pondered before now in other circumstances in the night's long watches how it is that the lives of mortals are in ruins. I think that it is not owing to the nature of their wits that they fare worse than they might, since many people possess good sense. Rather, one must look at it this way: we know and understand what is noble but do not bring it to completion. Some fail from laziness, others because they give precedence to some other pleasure than being honorable. Life's pleasures are many, long leisurely talks—a pleasant evil—and the sense of awe. Yet they are of two sorts, one pleasure being no bad thing, another a burden upon houses. If propriety were always clear, there would not be two things designated by the same letters. Since these are the views I happen to have arrived at beforehand, there is no drug could make me pervert them and reverse my opinion.

I shall tell you also the road my thoughts took. When love wounded me, I considered how I might bear it most creditably. My starting point was this, to conceal my malady with silence. For the tongue is not to be trusted: it knows well how to admonish the thoughts of others but gets from itself a great deal of trouble. My second intention was to bear this madness nobly, overcoming it by means of self-control. But third, when with these means I was unable to master Aphrodite, I resolved on death, the best of plans, as no one shall deny. For just as I would not have my good deeds unknown, so may I not have a throng of witnesses to my shameful ones. I knew that both the deed and the passionate longing for it were discreditable, knew besides that I was a woman, a thing all men hate. Damnation take the woman who first began to besmirch her marriage-bed with other men! This contagion began for the female sex with the nobility. For when those of high position resolve on dishonorable acts, surely the lowly will regard them as noble. But I also hate women who are chaste in word but in secret possess an ignoble daring. How, o Aphrodite, Lady of the Sea, how can these women look into the faces of their husbands? How do they not fear that the darkness, their accomplice, and the timbers of the house will break into speech?

My friends, it is this very purpose that is bringing about my death, that I may not be detected bringing shame to my husband or to the children I gave birth to but rather that they may live in glorious Athens as free men, free of speech and flourishing, enjoying good repute where their mother is concerned. For it enslaves a man, even if he is bold of heart, when he is conscious of sins committed by his mother or father. Only one thing, they say, competes in value with life, the

possession of a heart blameless and good. But as for the base among mortals, they are exposed, late or soon, by Time, who holds up to them, as to a young girl, a mirror. In their number may I never be found!

Chorus Leader

Oh, what a fine thing is chastity everywhere, and how splendid is the repute it gains among men!

Nurse

Mistress, though the misfortune you told me of gave me just now a momentary fright, yet now I realize that I was being simple-minded—and among mortals second thoughts are, I suppose, wiser. It is not anything extraordinary, anything beyond all reckoning, that has befallen you, but it is the wrath of the goddess that has descended on you. You are in love: why is that so strange? It is a condition you share with many. Will you, because of love, destroy your own life? Those who are in love today or shall be tomorrow get little profit, then, if they must die for it. Aphrodite, if she streams upon us in great force, cannot be endured. Against those who yield to her demands, she comes in mildness, but the one whom she finds to be high and proud, such a one she takes and mistreats ever so badly.

She moves through the air, she dwells in the sea-wave, and all that lives comes from her. She it is that gives and implants love, that love of which all we of earth are begotten. Those who possess the writings of ancient poets and are themselves concerned with the Muses know that Zeus once lusted for Semele's bed, know too that Dawn, goddess of lovely light, once abducted Cephalus to heaven for love's sake. But these deities still continue to live in heaven and do not exile themselves from the sight of the gods. They are resigned to their defeat by ill-fortune.

But you, will you not resign yourself to this? Your father, then, should have begotten you on fixed terms or with a different set of gods in heaven if you are going to refuse acquiescence in these rules. How many men do you think, men well endowed with sense, see their wives unfaithful and pretend to see nothing? How many fathers do you think help to supply their wayward sons with the pleasures of Aphrodite? This is one of the wise principles mortals follow—dishonorable deeds should keep to the dark. Mortals should not, you know, try to bring to their lives too high a perfection: no more would you make fine and exact the roof over a house. But when you have tumbled into misfortunes as great as yours, how can you think you might swim out of them? No, if the good you have done outweighs the bad, then by mortal reckoning you will be fortunate indeed. So, my daughter, leave off these wicked thoughts, leave off this pride. It is pride, nothing else, to try to best the gods. Bear up under your love: it was a god that willed it. And if you are ill with it, use some good measures to subdue it. There are incantations, and words that charm: something will turn up to cure this love. Men will be slow to invent such contrivances if we women do not find them.

Chorus Leader

Phaedra, the advice she gives is more expedient in view of the disaster that is upon you, but it is you that I praise. Yet this praise is a harder saying to you than her speech and more painful for you to hear.

Phaedra

This is the thing that destroys the well-governed cities and houses of mortal men: words that are too skilfully spoken! Words to delight the ear—that is not at all what you must speak, but rather such advice as brings a good name!

Nurse

Why this high and haughty tone? Noble-sounding words are not what you need but the man! We must get things clear this instant and speak the forthright truth about you. If your life were not in the grip of misfortunes like these and you were in fact a virtuous woman, I would not be leading you to this point merely for your sexual pleasure. But as things stand, the struggle is a great one—to save your life—and no one can begrudge us this course.

Phaedra

O monstrous! Won't you shut your mouth and cease from now on to utter such vile words?

Nurse

Vile, yes, but better for you than your fine sentiments! Better the deed, if it will save your life, than the word you will plume yourself on and die!

Phaedra

Do not, by the gods (for your words are fair but their meaning base) do not, I beg of you, go any further! My soul is all made ready by desire, and if you continue to urge dishonor with eloquence, I shall be entirely spent on what I now flee!

Nurse

If that is what you wish, then although you were better not to be erring, yet if you **are** erring, be ruled by me: for that is the favor that is next best. I have love-medicine within the house—I just thought of it this very moment—that will free you from this malady without disgrace to you or harm to your mind, if only you do not flinch. We must get some token from the man you love, a lock of hair, a piece of clothing, then compound from the twain a single blessing.

Phaedra

This drug, is it an ointment or a potion?

Nurse

I know not: strive for benefit, not lore.

Phaedra

I fear you'll prove too clever for my good.

Nurse

You'd quake, you know, at shadows. What's your fear?

Phaedra

Your telling some word of this to Theseus' son.

Nurse

Dismiss the thought, my child. I shall arrange this business well. I wish only that you, Aphrodite, Lady of the Sea, may be my accomplice. As for what else I have in mind, it will be enough for me to tell our friends within. *Exit Nurse into the palace.*

Chorus

Eros, god of love, distilling liquid desire down upon the eyes, bringing sweet pleasure to the souls of those against whom you make war, never to me may you show yourself to my hurt nor ever come but in due measure and harmony. For the shafts neither of fire nor of the stars exceed the shaft of Aphrodite, which Eros, Zeus's son, hurls forth from his hand.

Chorus

'Tis folly, folly, that the land of Greece makes great the slaughter of cattle by the banks of the Alpheus and in the Pythian house of Apollo if we pay no honor to Eros, mankind's despot, who holds the keys to the sweet chambers of Aphrodite! He ruins mortals and sets them upon all manner of disaster when he visits them.

Chorus

That filly in Oechalia, unjoined as yet to marriage-bed, unhusbanded, unwed, Aphrodite took from the house of her father Eurytus and yoked her like a footloose Naiad or a Bacchant and gave her—to the accompaniment of bloodshed and smoke, with bloody bridal—to Alcmene's son. O unhappy in her marriage!

Chorus

O holy fortress of Thebes, o mouth where Dirce's stream pours forth, you could second my account of how Aphrodite comes. For she gave as bride to the blazing thunder the mother of twice-born Bacchus and with bloody fate brought her to bed. She is terrible, her breath blows over all and she hovers flittingly like a bee. *A shout within is heard. Phaedra rises from her couch and stands with her ear to the palace door.*

Phaedra

Silence, women! I am undone!

Chorus Leader

What is there in the house to cause you fright?

Phaedra

Be still! Let me hear the voice of those within.

Chorus Leader

I hold my peace. But what you say bodes ill.

Phaedra

Oh, alas, alas!

Oh, unhappy am I in my sufferings!

Chorus

What is the word you utter, the message you cry out? Tell us what report is it that affrights you, rushing upon your heart.

Phaedra

I am destroyed. Stand next to this door and listen what kind of din is being raised in the house.

Chorus

You are by the door. Tidings to be transmitted from the house are your concern. Tell me, tell me, what disaster has come upon you.

Phaedra

It is Hippolytus, son of the horse-loving Amazon, who shouts, dreadfully upbraiding my servant.

Chorus

I hear a voice, but what I have is not clear speech. Tell me what kind of cry it is that comes to you through the door.

Phaedra

It's clear enough. He calls her pander for the wicked, one who has betrayed her master's marriage-bed.

Chorus

Oh, disaster! You are betrayed, my friend. What can I do for you? What was hidden is now revealed and you are ruined —oh! ah!—betrayed by one close to you.

Phaedra

She has destroyed me by speaking of my troubles, trying in kindness but dishonorably to heal this malady of mine.

Chorus Leader

What then? What will you do, you that have suffered things past all contrivance?

Phaedra

I know but one thing, to die with all speed, the sole remedy for my present troubles. *Exit Phaedra into the palace. Enter from the palace Hippolytus, followed by the Nurse.*

Hippolytus

O earth, my mother, o bright and open sunlight, what unspeakable words I have heard!

Nurse

Silence, my son, before your shout is heard.

Hippolytus

I have heard dread things: I cannot now be silent.

Nurse *She kneels as a suppliant before Hippolytus and tries to grasp his hand.*

Do so, I beg you by your fair right hand!

Hippolytus

Keep your hands from me! Do not touch my cloak!

Nurse

I beg you by your knees, do not destroy me!

Hippolytus

What? Didn't you say your tale was not so bad?

Nurse

Its words, my son, are not for the ears of all!

Hippolytus

Fine tales make finer telling to many hearers!

Nurse

My child, I beg you, do not break your oath!

Hippolytus

It was my tongue that swore it, not my mind.

Nurse

Son, what will you do? Destroy those near to you?

Hippolytus *spitting*

Pah! No criminal shall be near and dear to me!

Nurse

Forgive! To err is mankind's lot, my son!

Hippolytus

O Zeus, why have you settled women in the light of the sun, women, this bane mankind find counterfeit? If you wished to propagate the human race, it was not from women that you should have given us this. Rather, men should have put down in the temples either bronze or iron or a mass of gold and have bought offspring, each man for a price corresponding to his means, and then dwelt in houses free from the female sex. [But as matters stand, when we are about to take unto ourselves a bane, we pay out the wealth of our homes.] The clear proof that woman is a great bane is this: her father, who begat her and raised her, adds a dowry to her and thus sends her off in order to be quit of a trouble. But her husband, who has taken this creature of ruin into his house, takes pleasure in adding finery to the statue, lovely finery to a statue most worthless, and tricks her out with garments, wretch that he is, destroying by degrees the wealth of his house. [There is a fatal necessity. Either a man makes a good connection by marriage, and his joy in his in-laws makes him preserve a marriage-relation that gives him pain, or he gets a good wife and bad in-laws and keeps in check his unhappiness with his blessing.]

But the man with a nullity for a wife—he has it easy, although a woman who sits in a house and is a fool is a trouble. But a clever woman—that I loathe! May there never be in my house a woman with more intelligence than befits a woman! For Aphrodite engenders more mischief in the clever. The woman without ability is kept from indiscretion by the slenderness of her wit.

One ought to let no slave pass in to see a woman. Rather one should companion them with wild and brute beasts so that they would be unable either to speak to anyone or to be spoken to in return. But as things are, the wicked ones plot evil within doors, and their servants carry their plans abroad.

It is in this fashion, loathesome creature, that you have come to traffic with me in the sacred bed of my father. I shall pour running water into my ears to wash away your proposals! How could you think me such a traitor, since the very sound of such things makes me feel unclean? I tell you plainly, it is my piety that saves you, woman. For if I had not been off my guard and trapped by an oath in the name of the gods, I would not forbear to tell this whole story to my father. But as it is, while Theseus is out of the country, I shall leave the house and hold my tongue. But I shall return with my father and then see how you look upon him, you and your mistress. [I shall know your boldness, having had experience of it. A curse on you all! I shall never take my fill of hating women, not even if someone says that I am always talking of it. For they too are always in some way evil. Let a man accordingly either teach them to be chaste or allow me to tread upon them forever.]

Exit Hippolytus by Eisosdos B.

Nurse *sung*

How luckless, how ill-starred, is the fate of women! What arts do we have, what speech, once we have faltered, that can undo the knot our words have created? I have received my just deserts! Ho, earth, ho, light of the sun! How shall I escape what has befallen, how hide the painful fact, my friends? What god, what mortal shall appear to help me, sit at my side, and lend hand to my unjust deeds? For my present misfortune crosses now—unhappy the crossing—to the farther bourne of life. Unluckiest am I of women!*Enter Phaedra from the palace.*

Chorus Leader

Oh dear, all is over, mistress, and the designs of your servant have not succeeded: all is lost.

Phaedra

Vile destroyer of your friends, see what you have done to me! May Zeus the father of my race destroy you root and branch with his thunderbolt! Did I not warn you—did I not guess your purpose?—to say nothing of the matters now causing me disgrace? But you could not bear to do so: and so I shall no longer die with an honorable name. I must plan anew. For he, with his mind whetted to a fine edge with anger, will utter against my name the wrongs you have committed [, he will tell Pittheus of my misfortune] and will fill the whole land with ugly tales. My curse on you, and on anyone who itches to perform, for friends unwilling, services that are dishonorable!

Nurse

Mistress, you can, to be sure, find fault with the troubles I have brought you, for the sting of them controls your reason. But if you will hear it I too have something to say in reply. I brought you up and wish your good. When I looked to find a remedy for your malady, what I found was not what I wanted. But if I had had success, I would have been numbered among the very wise. For our reputation for wisdom varies with the outcome.

Phaedra

What? Is this justice and satisfaction for me, to run me through and then to admit you are wrong?

Nurse

We are wasting words. I admit I went too far. But even from this, my child, you can escape with your life.

Phaedra

No more from you! For last time the advice you gave was dishonorable, and what you attempted to do was criminal. Get out of my way and worry about yourself! My own business I shall myself arrange well.

Exit the Nurse into the palace.

Noble women of Trozen, grant me this one request: bury in silence what you have heard this day.

Chorus Leader

I swear by Artemis the holy, Zeus's daughter, that I shall never reveal to the daylight any of your troubles!

Phaedra

It is good. I have one further thing to add: I have discovered a means for coping with this disaster so that I may bequeath to my sons a life of good repute and myself win some benefit in the face of present events. For I shall never disgrace my Cretan home nor shall I go to face Theseus with shameful deeds charged against me if only one life stands in the way.

Chorus Leader

What harm past cure is it you mean to do?

Phaedra

To die. But the manner of it—that shall be my devising.

Chorus Leader

Say no more shocking words!

Phaedra

And you, give me advice that is good! This day I shall delight Aphrodite, who is bent on destroying me, when I have taken leave of my life, and I shall fall as victim to a hateful passion. But to someone else I shall prove a bane by my death, so that he may learn not to wax proud over my misfortune; by sharing with me in this malady he will learn to keep within bounds. *Exit Phaedra into the palace.*

Chorus

Would that I could flee to secret clefts in the high mountains, and that there a god might make of me a feathered bird amid the wingèd throngs! Would that I might soar aloft over the surf of the Adriatic shore and the waters of the Eridanus where into the deep-blue swell the luckless girls, in grief for Phaethon, drop the amber radiance of their tears.

Chorus

To the apple-bearing shore of the Hesperides, famous singers, would I go my way, there where the lord of the deep-blue mere forbids further passage to sailors, fixing the sacred boundary of the skies, the pillar held up by Atlas. There founts immortal flow by the place where Zeus lay, and holy Earth with her gifts of blessedness makes the gods' prosperity wax great.

Chorus

O Cretan vessel with wing of white canvas, that ferried over the loud-sounding wave of the sea my lady from her house of blessedness, a boon that was no boon to make an unhappy bride: it was with evil omen, at the start of her journey and its end, that she sped from the land of Crete to glorious Athens and they tied the plaited ends of the mooring-cable on Munichus' shore and trod the mainland.

Chorus

Therefore her mind is wrenched by a terrible malady of unhallowed passion sent from Aphrodite; and sinking under a load of hard misfortune she will fasten about her from the beams of her bridal chamber a hanging noose, fitting it about her white neck, feeling shame at her bitter fate, choosing in its stead the glory of a good name, and putting from her heart her painful desire.

Nurse *within*

Ho there! Ho! Help, neighbors of this house! My lady, Theseus' wife, has hanged herself!

Chorus Leader

Alas! It is all over! The Queen is no more, caught in a suspended noose!

Nurse *within*

Won't you hurry? Will no one fetch a double-edged sword by which to undo this fastening about her neck?

Chorus Leader

Friends, what are we to do? Shall we go into the house and free our lady from the tight-drawn noose?

Chorus member

What, are there not young slaves nearby? To meddle is not the safe course in life.

Nurse

Lay her straight and stretch out her wretched corpse, bitter house-tendance for our lord in his absence!

Chorus Leader

The poor woman is dead, to judge from this report. For they are already laying her out as a corpse. *Enter Theseus by Eisodos A wearing the garlands of a sacred ambassador.*

Theseus

Women, do you know what was the shout that came with leaden sound through the door? For the house has not seen fit to open its gates and greet me in friendly fashion as befits a sacred ambassador. Has anything happened to old Pittheus? He is far on in years, and yet his going from this house would be a grief to me.

Chorus Leader

It is not the old who are affected by this stroke of fortune: the death of the young is your grief.

Theseus

Oh no! Is it my sons my life is robbed of!

Chorus Leader

They live. Their mother—great grief to you—is dead.

Theseus

What do you mean? My wife is dead? But how?

Chorus Leader

She tied aloft a noose to hang herself.

Theseus

Chilled in her heart by grief? Or what was the reason?

Chorus Leader

That is as much as we know. For I too have but lately arrived at your house, Theseus, to mourn your misfortune.

Theseus

Oh! Oh! Why then is my head crowned with these plaited leaves since my sacred embassy has ended in disaster? *He throws his garland to the ground.* Unlock the doors that bar the portal, servants, loose their fastenings, so that I may see the bitter sight of my wife, who by her death has destroyed me! *The central doors open and the eccyclema is wheeled out revealing the body of Phaedra.*

Chorus

Alas, poor woman, how luckless you are! You have endured, you have done such things as to destroy this house! What hardihood was yours: you have died by violence and by deed unhallowed, yourself the wrestler and yourself the thrown. Who was it, poor woman, that brought your life down to darkness?

Theseus *sung*

What misery is mine! I have suffered, luckless one, the greatest of my woes. O fate, how heavily you have fallen upon me and upon my house, an unknown taint sent upon me by baneful powers! No, it is the very destruction of my life! Unhappy woman, I look upon a main of troubles so great I cannot swim out of them or cross the flood of this sorrow. What is the name, poor woman, what is it, that I can rightly call your grievous fate? For you are gone from my hands like a bird, and have sped your swift leap to the house of Hades. Alas! Alas! Terrible, terrible are my sufferings! I am reaping the stroke of the gods because of the sin of someone before me, someone in time now gone.

Chorus Leader

My lord, it is not upon you alone that these ills have come: you have lost a trusty wife, but so have many others.

Theseus *sung*

To the gloom under earth, under earth, I would change my dwelling and die in darkness, luckless man that I am, since I am bereft of your sweet converse! You have destroyed me more utterly than you perished yourself. What was the deadly stroke of fortune, dear wife, that came against your heart? Will someone tell what has happened, or is it for nothing that this royal house roofs over the throng of my slaves? Ah me how wretched at your death am I, what a grief to my house I have seen, grief that cannot be endured or uttered. I am undone: my house is bereft, my children are orphaned, alas, alas, you have left them, dear woman, best of women on whom the brightness of the sun looks and the starry gleam of night.

Chorus

Unhappy man, great is the grief your house holds. My eyes are drenched with tears and melt at your misfortune. But I have long been shuddering at the calamity that is to follow.

Theseus

What's this? What can it be, this tablet hanging from her dear hand? Does it want to tell me of something I do not know? Has the poor woman written me a message of entreaty about our marriage and children? Fear not, poor woman: there is no woman who shall take possession of the bed and house of Theseus. *He takes up the tablet.* See, the impress of the dead woman's gold-chased seal attracts my eyes. Come, let me open its sealed wrappings and see what this tablet wishes to tell me. *He opens the tablet and reads it silently.*

Chorus

Oh! Oh! This is some fresh disaster the god is sending as successor to the other. <> For I say that the house of my king is perished, is no more. [O fate, if it is at all possible, do not trip up this house but hear my prayer. For from some quarter I see, prophetlike, an evil omen.]

Theseus

O woe! What second pain on top of pain is this, pain unendurable, unspeakable! What misery is mine!

Chorus Leader

What is it? Speak, if I may hear it.

Theseus *sung*

The tablet cries aloud, it cries things grievous. How shall I escape from the weight of my misfortunes? For I am utterly undone, such is the tune I in my wretchedness have heard sung by the tablet!

Chorus Leader

Alas! The word you utter is one that presages woe!

Theseus *sung*

No more shall I hold this ruinous bane, hard to send forth though it is, within the gates of my mouth!

spoken in a loud voice, calling everyone in earshot to witness

Ho! City of Athens! Hear me!

Bystanders enter quickly by Eisodos B and gather around.

Hippolytus has dared to put his hand by force to my marriage-bed, dishonoring the holy eye of Zeus.

But, father Poseidon, with one of the three curses you once promised me kill my son, and may he not live out this day, if indeed you have granted me curses I may rely on.

Chorus Leader

My lord, I beg you by the gods, take back your prayer! For you will learn in time that you have made a mistake. Be ruled by me!

Theseus

It cannot be. And what is more, I shall banish him from this land, and of two fates one shall strike him: either Poseidon, honoring my curses, will send him dead to the house of Hades or being banished from here he will wander over foreign soil and drain to the dregs a life of misery. *Enter Hippolytus by Eisodos B.*

Chorus Leader

Look! Your son Hippolytus is here himself, a timely arrival! Abate your harsh anger, my lord Theseus, and think what is best for your house!

Hippolytus

I heard your cry and came in haste, father. But what it was that brought forth your groan, I know not but would gladly hear from your lips.

He sees the corpse of Phaedra.

But what can this be? I see your wife, father, dead. This is matter for gravest wonder. Just now I left her, and it was no long time ago that she was looking on this light of day. What has happened to her? How did she die? Father, I want to learn this from you. *Theseus is silent.* What, silent? Silence is no use in misfortune. [For the heart that longs to hear all things is proved greedy in misfortune as well.] It is not right to keep your troubles from your kin, no, more than kin, father.

Theseus

O foolish mankind, so often missing the mark, why do you teach crafts numberless and contrive and invent all things when there is one thing you do not understand and have not hunted after, how to teach the senseless to be sensible!

Hippolytus

A formidable expert this, who is able to force insensate fools to show sense. But since these fine-spun disputations of yours, father, are unseasonable, I fear that your misfortunes have caused your tongue to run amok.

Theseus

Ah, but there ought to be for mortals some reliable test for friends, some way to know their minds, which of them is a true friend and which is not, and each man ought to have two voices, the one a voice of justice, the other whatever he chanced to have, so that the voice that thinks unjust thoughts would be convicted of falsehood by the just voice. And in this way we should never be deceived.

Hippolytus

But has one of my kin been slandering me in your ear and are my fortunes diseased though I have done nothing amiss? I am astonished. Your words, cast adrift from all sense, astonish me.

Theseus

Oh, the heart of mortals, how far will it go? What limit can be set to hardihood and brazenness? If it grows great in the course of a man's life, and the man who comes after shall overtop his predecessor in knavery, the gods will have to add another earth to our world to hold the criminal and the vile!

Look at this man! He was born from my loins, and yet he disgraced my bed and is clearly convicted of utter baseness by the dead woman here.

Hippolytus turns away.

Come, show your face to your father, eye to eye, since in any case I have already involved myself in pollution. Are you, then, the companion of the gods, as a man beyond the common? Are you the chaste one, untouched by evil? I will never be persuaded by your vauntings, never be so unintelligent as to impute folly to the gods. Continue then your confident boasting, take up a diet of greens and play the showman with your food, make Orpheus your lord and engage in mystic rites, holding the vaporings of many books in honor. For you have been found out. To all I give the warning: avoid men like this. For they make you their prey with their high-holy-sounding words while they contrive deeds of shame.

She is dead. Do you think this will save you? This is the fact that most serves to convict you, villainous man. For what oaths, what arguments, could be more powerful than she is, to win you acquittal on the charge? Will you claim that she hated you and that the bastard is always regarded as an enemy to the true-born? It is a poor merchant of her own life you make her, then, if she destroyed what was most precious to herself for enmity of you. But will you say that folly is not to be found in men but is native to women? I know that young men are no more stable than women when Aphrodite stirs their young hearts to confusion. But their standing as males steads them well. And so now—but why do I wage this contest against your speech when this corpse, witness most reliable, lies near? Go forth from this land with all speed as an exile, and come no more either to god-built Athens or to the borders of any land ruled by my spear. For if I am to be bested by you when you have done this to me, Isthmian Sinis shall no longer attest that I killed him but say it was an idle boast, and the Skironian rocks near the sea shall deny that I am a scourge to evil-doers.

Chorus Leader

I know not how I might say that any mortal enjoys good fortune. For all that is noblest is now overthrown.

Hippolytus

Father, the anger and vehemence of your heart is dreadful. Yet though the case you argue provides such fine words, it is not fine in fact if one should examine it closely. I am not skilful to make a speech to a crowd but have more ability to address my age-mates and the few. (This too is right and proper, for those who are of no account among the wise are often more inspired speakers before the multitude.) Yet since disaster has come upon me, I must loosen my tongue. I shall begin to speak from the point where you first attacked me expecting you would destroy me with not a word to say in reply. You see the light of the son, you see the earth. Upon this sun-lit earth there is no man—though you deny it—more chaste than I. I know how to reverence the gods and how to make friends who do not try to commit wrong, friends who scruple to give evil orders and to render base services to those about them. I am no mocker of my companions, father, but the same man to friends both absent and present. One thing has not touched me, that wherein you think you have

convicted me: to this very moment my body is pure of the bed of love. I do not know this act save by report or seeing it in painting. I am not eager to look at it either, since I have a virgin soul. But suppose that my chastity does not persuade you of my innocence. I waive the point. You ought to show how I was corrupted. Did her body surpass all other women's in beauty? Or did I hope that by taking an heiress to bed I would succeed to your house? [I was foolish then, nay completely out of my mind. But will you say that to be king is a tempting pleasure even to the virtuous? Not so at all, since kingly power has corrupted the minds of all those who love it.] I for my part would wish to be first at the Greek games but in the city to be second and to enjoy continuous good fortune with my noble friends. For not only is there scope for action, but also the absence of danger yields a greater pleasure than being king.

I have said all else, one more point remains. If I had a witness to what manner of man I am and if I were pleading my case while she was still alive, your careful investigation would have discovered in very truth who the guilty party is. As things stand, I swear by Zeus, god of oaths, and by the earth beneath me that I never put my hand to your wife, never wished to, never had the thought. May I perish with no name or reputation [citiless, homeless, wandering the earth an exile] and may neither sea nor earth receive my body when I am dead if I am guilty! What the fear was that made her take her life I do not know, for I am not at liberty to speak further. Virtue she showed, though she did not possess it, while I who had it did not use it well.

Chorus Leader

You have made a sufficient rebuttal of the charge against you by giving your oath in the name of the gods, which is no slight assurance.

Theseus

Is this man not a chanter of spells and a charlatan? He is confident that by his calm temper he will overmaster my soul though he has dishonored the father who begat him.

Hippolytus

I feel the same great wonder at you, father. For if you were my son and I your father, I would not have banished but killed you, if you had dared to put your hand to my wife.

Theseus

How like you these words are! Not thus will you die, according to the rule you have just laid down for yourself—for a swift death is a mercy for a wretch—but going as a wanderer from your ancestral land over foreign soil you will drain to the dregs a life of misery. [For that is the penalty for an impious man.]

Hippolytus

Alas! What do you mean to do? Will you not even receive the witness of Time in my case but banish me from the land?

Theseus

Yes, beyond the Euxine Sea and the Pillars of Atlas, if I could, such is my hatred of you.

Hippolytus

Will you not examine my oath and sworn testimony or the words of seers? Will you banish me without a trial?

Theseus

There's no divinatory chanciness about this tablet, and its accusation against you deserves my trust. As for the birds that fly above my head, I bid them a long farewell.

Hippolytus

O gods, why do I not then open my mouth, seeing that I am being done to death by you towards whom I am showing piety? But no, I would not convince those I must, and I would break the oath I swore to no purpose.

Theseus

Oh! Your high-and-holy manner will be the death of me! Won't you leave your father's land at once?

Hippolytus

Where am I to turn, unhappy man that I am? What guest-friend's house shall I enter when I am exiled on this charge?

Theseus

Someone, doubtless, that enjoys taking in as guests men to defile their wives and men who keep at home plotting evil.

Hippolytus

Oh! That stroke cut me to the heart. It is nearly enough to make me weep if I am regarded as base and seem so to you.

Theseus

Groans and forethought would have been in place when you had the hardihood to commit outrage against your father's wife.

Hippolytus

O house, would that you could utter speech on my behalf and bear me witness whether I am base!

Theseus

How clever of you to take refuge in witnesses that are dumb, while the facts with mute eloquence betray your baseness!

Hippolytus

Oh! Oh! Would that I could stand apart and look at myself so that I might weep at the misfortunes I am suffering!

Theseus

You are far more practiced in worshipping yourself than in being just and acting piously toward your father.

Hippolytus

O unhappy mother, o birth that gave no pleasure, may no one I love ever be a bastard!

Theseus

Will you not drag him away, servants? Have you not heard me proclaim for a long time that this man is no citizen here?

Hippolytus

Any of them who touches me shall regret it. Rather you yourself, if you have the heart to, thrust me forth from the land.

Theseus

I shall do so if you do not obey my words. For I am not moved by pity for your exile.

Hippolytus

The sentence is fixed, it seems. O how luckless I am, seeing that I know the truth but not how I may tell it! Dearest of gods to me, Artemis, Leto's child, you I have sat with, you I have hunted with, I shall leave glorious Athens as an exile. Now farewell, city and land of Erechtheus! O land of Trozen, how many blessings you possess to pass one's youth in! Farewell: this is my last look at you and my last greeting!

Come, you my age-mates of this land, bid me farewell and send me forth from the land. For you will never see a man more chaste than I, even though my father thinks not so. *Exit Hippolytus and the young members of the crowd by Eisodos A. Exit Theseus into the palace.*

Chorus

Thoughts about the gods, when they come into my mind, are banished by painful understanding: what hope is there left to see their hidden workings in the fortunes and doings of mortals? For from one quarter comes one thing and from another another, and men's life is a shifting thing, ever unstable.

Chorus

O that in answer to my prayer fate might give me this gift from the gods, a lot of blessedness and a heart untouched by sorrow! No mind unswerving and obdurate would I have nor yet again one false-struck, but changing my pliant character ever for the morrow I would share the morrow's happiness my whole life through.

Chorus

For my mind is no longer untroubled but beyond all expectation are the things I look upon. We have seen Greece's fairest star, have seen him go forth sped by his father's wrath to another land. O sands of our city's shore, o mountain thickets where with his swift hounds he slew the wild beasts in company with holy Dictynna!

Chorus

No more shall you mount behind a pair of Enetic horses and take the race-course about the Mere with the feet of your racing steeds. The music that never slept beneath the frame of the lyre-strings shall cease in your father's house. Bare of garlands will be the resting-places of Leto's daughter in the deep greenwood. The rivalry of maidens to be your bride has been brought to an end by your exile.

Chorus

But I for my part will spread abroad your unhappy fate with tears at your misfortune. O unhappy mother, it was to no purpose that you bore him. Oh, I am angry with the gods! Ye Graces that dance your round, why do you not accompany this man from this house? He has been ruined by his father's wrath but is guiltless of no mad deed.

Enter by Eisodos A a messenger. Chorus Leader

But look, I see a servant of Hippolytus, with gloomy face, rushing toward the house.

Messenger

Women, where must I go to find Theseus, this land's king? If you know, tell me. Is he in the palace?*Enter Theseus from the palace.*

Chorus Leader

Here he comes out of the house.

Messenger

I bring you news that deserves your concern and that of the citizens who dwell in Athens and in the land of Trozen.

Theseus

What is it? Has some fresh disaster seized the two neighboring cities?

Messenger

Hippolytus is dead, as good as dead; though he still sees the light of day, yet it will not take much to incline the balance the other way.

Theseus

Who killed him? Did someone have a quarrel with him whose wife he ravished as he did his father's?

Messenger

His own chariot destroyed him, and the curses of your mouth which you uttered against your son to your father, lord of the sea.

Theseus stretching out his arms, palm upwards, in prayer

Merciful gods! So you were after all truly my father, Poseidon, since you have heard my prayer. How did he perish? Tell me, how did Zeus's cudgel strike him for dishonoring me?

Messenger

We were scraping and combing the horses' coats near the wave-beaten shore and weeping at our task. For a messenger had come saying that Hippolytus would no longer dwell in this land, being exiled by you. And he came, singing the same tearful burden, to join us at the shore, and a countless throng of friends and age-mates at his heels came with him. And when some time had passed, he ceased his lamenting and said, 'Why am I distraught at this? I must obey my father's words. Servants, get the yoke-horses ready for my chariot, for this city is no longer mine.'

Thereupon every man worked in haste, and more quickly than one could describe it we set the horses in their gear right beside the master. He seized the reins from the chariot-rail and fitted his feet right into the footstalls. First he spread his hands palms up in prayer to the gods and said, 'O

Zeus, may I no longer live if I am guilty! But whether I am dead or look on the light may my father come to know that he dishonors me!

So saying he took the whip into his hand and applied it to his horses all together. And we servants, on the ground beside the chariot, near the bridle, accompanied our master along the road that makes straight for Argos and Epidaurus.

When we struck deserted country, there is a headland that lies beyond our territory, lying out towards what is at that point the Saronic gulf. There a great noise in the earth, like Zeus's thunder, roared heavily—it made one shudder to hear it. The horses pricked up their heads and ears to heaven, while we servants were taken with a violent fear at the thought where this voice came from. When we turned our eyes to the sea-beaten beach, we saw a wave, immense and uncanny, set fast in the sky, so great that my eye was robbed of the sight of Sciron's coast, and the Isthmus and Asclepius' cliff were hid from view. And then as the sea-surge made it swell and seeth up much foam all about, it came toward the shore where the chariot was. With its very swell and surge the wave put forth a bull, fierce and heaven-sent. With its bellowing the whole land was filled and gave back unearthly echoes, and as we looked on it the sight was too great for our eyes to bear. At once a terrible panic fell upon the horses. My master, who had lived long with the ways of horses, seized the reins in his hands and pulled them, letting his body hang backwards from the straps, like a sailor pulling an oar. But they took the fire-wrought bit in their teeth and carried him against his will, paying no heed to their captain's hand or the harness or the tight-glued chariot. If he held the helm and directed their course toward the softer ground, the bull appeared before him to turn them back, maddening the team with fear. But if they rushed with maddened senses into the rocks, it drew near and silently accompanied the chariot until it upset and overthrew the chariot, striking its wheel-rims on a rock. All was confounded: the wheels' naves and the axle-pins were leaping into the air, and the poor man himself, entangled in the reins, bound in a bond not easy to untie, was dragged along, smashing his head against the rocks and rending his flesh and uttering things dreadful to hear: 'Stay, horses my mangers have nourished, do not blot me out! O wretched curse of my father! Who wishes to stand by the best of men and save his life?'

There were many of us who wished, but we were outsped and our feet lagged behind. He was cut loose from the reins of leather and fell upon the ground I know not how, with scarcely any breath of life still in him. The horses vanished and so too did the monstrous bull to some place or other in that rocky land.

I am, I know, a slave of your house, my lord, but I shall never have the strength to believe that your son was guilty, not even if the whole female sex should hang themselves and fill with writing all the pine-wood that grows upon Mount Ida. For I know that he was good.

Chorus Leader

Alas! New misfortunes have been brought to pass, and there is no escape from fate and destiny.

Theseus

For hatred of the man who has suffered these things I took pleasure at your words. But now in respect for the gods and for this man, since he is my son, I feel neither pleasure nor pain at these misfortunes.

Messenger

What then shall I do? Shall we bring the unhappy man here, or what shall we do, to please your heart?

Theseus

Bring him so that I may look him in the face, the man who denies he violated my bed, and with my words and with the misfortunes sent by the gods give him the lie. *Exit Messenger by Eisosdos A.*

Chorus

You carry along the unyielding hearts of the immortals, Aphrodite, and the hearts of men, and with you is he of the many-colored wings, surrounding them with his swift pinions. Eros flies over the earth and over the loud-roaring salt sea and bewitches the one on whose frenzied mind he darts, winged and gold-gleaming, he bewitches the whelps of the mountain and those of the sea, what

the earth brings forth and what the blazing sun looks down upon, and likewise mortal men. Over all these, Aphrodite, you alone hold your honored sway.

Artemis appears above the skene. Artemis

Nobly-born son of Aegeus! Listen, I order you! It is I, Artemis, Leto's daughter, who address you. Why, unhappy man, do you take joy in these things? You have godlessly killed your son, persuaded of things unseen by the false words of your wife. But all too clearly seen is the ruin you have won for yourself! Why do you not hide yourself beneath the earth's depths in shame or change your life for that of a bird above and take yourself out of this pain? For among good men you possess no share in life.

Artemis

Hear, Theseus, the state of your misfortunes. (And yet I accomplish nothing by this, and merely cause you grief.) But it was for this purpose that I came, to make plain that your son's heart is guiltless so that he may die with a good name, make plain, too, the maddened frenzy of your wife or, in some sort, her nobility. For she was stung by the goad of that goddess most hated by us who take pleasure in virginity and fell in love with your son. And as she attempted to conquer Aphrodite by her resolve, she was destroyed all unwitting by the contrivances of her nurse, who told your son under oath of her malady. He, as in fact was right, did not fall in with her words, nor yet again did he break the firmness of his oath, being pious, though he was reviled by you. And Phaedra, fearing lest she be put to the proof, wrote her false letter and destroyed your son by deceit, and though it was a lie, she persuaded you.

Theseus

O pain!

Artemis

Does this tale sting you, Theseus? Hold your peace so that you may hear the sequel and groan the more. Do you know that you possess three reliable curses from your father? One of these you took, base man, to use against your son when you could have used it against an enemy. Your father, the sea-lord, kindly disposed as he was towards you, granted what he had to grant seeing that he had made this promise. But in his sight and in mine you are proved base since you did not wait either for confirmation or for the word of a prophet, you did not put the charge to the proof nor grant to Time the right to investigate it, but more rashly than you ought you let loose the curse upon your son and killed him.

Theseus

Lady, may I live no longer!

Artemis

You have done dreadful deeds, but for all that it is still possible for you to win pardon for these things. Aphrodite willed that things should happen thus, sating her anger. Among the gods the custom is this: no god contrives to cross the will of another, but we all stand aside. For be in no doubt, if it were not that I feared Zeus, I would never have come to such a pitch of shame as to allow the death of the man I love most among mortals. Ignorance acquits your misdoings of baseness, and further the death of your wife made impossible the testing of her words, and thus she persuaded your mind.

Chiefly upon you do these misfortunes break, but I too feel grief. For the gods do not rejoice at the death of the godly, but the wicked we destroy children, house, and all. *Enter Hippolytus by Eisodos A supported by his servants.*

Chorus Leader

Lo, here comes the unhappy man, his young flesh and golden head all mangled. Oh, what trouble has afflicted this house! What a double grief has been brought to pass for it, has seized it by the will of heaven!

Hippolytus

O pain, o pain! Wretched man that I am, how mutilated I am by the unjust words of an unjust father! I am gone, alas, alas! Pains dart through my head and spasms leap in my brain! Hold, so

that I may rest my exhausted body! Oh pain! O hateful horses my own hand has fed, you have destroyed me, have killed me! Oh! Oh! I beg you by the gods, servants, handle my wounded flesh gently! Who is standing on my right at my side? Lift me carefully, draw me with muscles ever tensed, me the wretch, cursed by his father's misdeed. Zeus, Zeus, do you mark this? Here am I, the holy and god-revering one, the man who surpassed all men in chastity, and I go to a death I see plainly. I have lost my life, and all in vain have been my labors of piety towards men.

Hippolytus *sung*

Oh! Oh! And now the pain, the pain, comes over me. Let me go, wretched man that I am, and may death come to me as healer. Kill me, kill the wretch that I am! I long for a two-edged blade to cut my life in two and lay it to rest. O wretched curse of my father! Some bloodstained calamity within the family, committed by ancestors long dead, breaks forth and does not stay, and it has come against me. Why when I am guiltless of no wrong? Alas! What am I to say? How get my life clear of the pain of this disaster? O that the dark compulsion of death's night would lay me, wretched man, to rest!

Artemis

O unhappy man, to what misfortune you are yoked! But it is the nobility of your mind that has destroyed you.

Hippolytus

But what is this? O breath of divine fragrance! Though I am in misfortune I sense you and my body's pain is lightened. The goddess Artemis is in this place!

Artemis

Poor one, she is, dearest of gods to you.

Hippolytus

Do you see me, lady, see my wretched state?

Artemis

Yes, but the law forbids me to shed tears.

Hippolytus

No more do you have your huntsman and your servant!

Artemis

No, but though you die, I love you still.

Hippolytus

No one to tend your horses or your statue!

Artemis

No, treacherous Aphrodite willed it so.

Hippolytus

Ah, now I learn the power that has destroyed me!

Artemis

The slight to her honor galled her, and your virtue.

Hippolytus

One power destroyed us three, I see it now.

Artemis

Your father, you, and Theseus' wife the third.

Hippolytus

Therefore I groan for Theseus' fate as well.

Artemis

He was deceived, a god contrived it so.

Hippolytus

How great, unhappy father, your misfortune!

Theseus

I am gone, my son, I have no joy in life.

Hippolytus

For your misstep I pity you more than me.

Theseus

Would I could die, my son, instead of you!

Hippolytus

Poseidon your father's gifts, what woe they brought!

Theseus

Would they had never come into my mouth!

Hippolytus

You would have killed me still, such was your anger.

Theseus

Yes, for the gods had robbed me of my mind.

Hippolytus

Oh! Would that the race of men could curse the gods!

Artemis

Let be! For though you are in the gloom under the earth, even so will you get revenge for the wrath that has fallen against you by Aphrodite's design, and this will be the reward of your piety and goodness. That mortal of hers that she loves the most I shall punish with these ineluctable arrows shot from my hand. To you, unhappy man, I shall grant, in recompense for these sorrows, supreme honors in the land of Trozen. For unmarried girls before their marriage will cut their hair for you, and over the length of ages you will harvest the deep mourning of their tears. The practiced skill of poetry sung by maidens will for ever make you its theme, and Phaedra's love for you shall not fall nameless and unsung.

But you, child of old Aegeus, take your son in your arms and embrace him. For you were not responsible for killing him, and when the gods so send, it is understandable that men make fatal errors. As for you, Hippolytus, I urge you not to hate your father. For the manner of your death has been fated. Farewell: it is not lawful for me to look upon the dead or to defile my sight with the last breath of the dying. And I see that you are already near that misfortune.

Hippolytus

Farewell to you too, blessed maiden! I wish you joy in your going! Yet how easily you leave our long friendship! Still, at your bidding I end my quarrel with my father. For in times past too I obeyed your words.

Oh, oh! Darkness is coming down upon my eyes! Take me, father, and lay my body straight!

Theseus

Alas, my son, what are you doing to me?

Hippolytus

I am gone. I see the gates of the Underworld.

Theseus

And will you leave me with my hands unclean?

Hippolytus

Oh no, for of this murder I acquit you.

Theseus

What is this you say? You set me free of murder?

Hippolytus

The arrow-taming Artemis be my witness!

Theseus

How noble you are to your father, dearest son.

Hippolytus

I wish you, father, plenteous joy as well!

Theseus

Oh, what a noble, godly heart is lost!

Hippolytus

Pray that your true-born sons may be as good.

Theseus

Do not desert me, son, but struggle on!

Hippolytus

My struggle is over, father. I am gone. Cover my face, and quickly, with my garments!*He falls silent. Theseus covers his face.*

Theseus

Glorious Athens, Pallas' territory, what a man you have been bereft of! Unhappy me, how well I shall remember, Aphrodite, the woes you have brought to pass!

Chorus Leader

This grief has come unlooked for upon all the citizens in common. Floods of tears shall come over us again and again. For tales of the great, when they spread abroad, surpass the common lot in evoking grief.*During the last lines Theseus exits into the palace, accompanied by servants carrying the body of his son. The Chorus exit by Eisodos B.*