

Iphigenia in Aulis

By Euripides Written 410 B.C.E

Dramatis Personae Agamemnon Attendant, an old man Chorus of Women of Chalcis Menelaus Clytemnestra Iphigenia Achilles

Scene The sea-coast at Aulis. Enter AGAMEMNON and ATTENDANT.

AGAMEMNON Old man, come hither and stand before my dwelling.

ATTENDANT I come; what new schemes now, king Agamemnon?

AGAMEMNON You shall hear.

ATTENDANT I am all eagerness. It is little enough sleep old age allows me and keenly it watches over my eyes.

AGAMEMNON What can that star be, steering his course yonder?

ATTENDANT Sirius, still shooting over the zenith on his way near the Pleiads' sevenfold track.

AGAMEMNON The birds are still at any rate and the sea is calm; hushed are the winds, and silence broods over this narrow firth.

ATTENDANT Then why are you outside your tent, why so restless, my lord Agamemnon? All is yet quiet here in Aulis, the watch on the walls is not yet astir. Let us go in.

AGAMEMNON I envy you, old man, aye, and every man who leads a life secure, unknown and unrenowned; but little I envy those in office.

ATTENDANT And yet it is there we place the be-all and end-all of existence.

AGAMEMNON Aye, but that is where the danger comes; and ambition, sweet though it seems, brings sorrow with its near approach. At one time the unsatisfied claims of Heaven upset our life, at another the numerous peevish fancies of our subjects shatter it.

ATTENDANT I like not these sentiments in one who is a chief. It was not to enjoy all blessings that Atreus begot you, O Agamemnon; but you must needs experience joy and sorrow alike, mortal as you are. Even though you like it not, this is what the gods decree; but you, after letting your taper spread its light abroad, write the letter which is still in your hands and then erase the same words again, sealing and re-opening the scroll, then flinging the tablet to the ground with floods of tears and leaving nothing undone in your aimless behaviour to stamp you mad. What is it troubles you? what news is there affecting you, my liege? Come, share with me your story; to a loyal and trusty heart you will be telling it; for Tyndareus sent me that day to form part of your wife's dowry and to wait upon the bride with loyalty.

AGAMEMNON Leda, the daughter of Thestius, had three children, girls, Phoebe, Clytemnestra my wife, and Helen; this last it was who had for wooers the foremost of the favoured sons of Greece; but terrible threats of spilling his rival's blood were uttered by each of them, should he fail to win the maid. Now the matter filled Tyndareus, her father, with perplexity; at length this thought occurred to him; the suitors should swear unto each other and join right hands thereon and pour libations with burnt sacrifice, binding themselves by this curse, "Whoever wins the child of Tyndareus for wife, him will we assist, in case a rival takes her from his house and goes his way, robbing her husband of his rights; and we will march against that man in armed array and raze his city to the ground, Hellene no less than barbarian." Now when they had once pledged their word and old Tyndareus with no small cleverness had beguiled them by his shrewd device, he allowed his daughter to choose from among her suitors the one towards whom the breath of love might fondly waft her. Her choice fell on Menelaus; would she had never taken him!

Anon there came to Lacedaemon from Phrygia's folk Paris, the man who, legend says, adjudged the goddesses' dispute; in robes of gorgeous hue, ablaze with gold, in true barbaric pomp; and he, finding Menelaus gone from home, carried Helen off with him to his home on Ida, a willing paramour. Goaded to frenzy Menelaus flew through Greece, invoking the ancient oath exacted by Tyndareus and declaring the duty of helping the injured husband. Whereat the chivalry of Greece, brandishing their spears and donning

their harness, came hither to the narrow straits of Aulis with armaments of ships and troops, with many a steed and many a car, and they chose me to captain them all for the sake of Menelaus, since I was his brother. Would that some other had gained that distinction instead of me!

But after the army was gathered and come together, we still remained at Aulis weather-bound; and Calchas, the seer, bade us in our perplexity sacrifice my own begotten child Iphigenia to Artemis, whose home is in this land, declaring that if we offered her, we should sail and sack the Phrygians' capital, but if we forbore, this was not for us. When I heard this, I commanded with loud proclamation to disband the whole host, as I could never bear to slay a daughter of mine. Whereupon my brother, bringing every argument to bear, persuaded me at last to face the crime; so I wrote in a folded scroll and sent to my wife, bidding her despatch our daughter to me on the pretence of wedding Achilles, at the same time magnifying his exalted rank and saying that he refused to sail with the Achaeans, unless a bride of our lineage should go to Phthia. Yes, this was the inducement I offered my wife, inventing, as I did, a sham marriage for the maiden. Of all the Achaeans we alone know the real truth, Calchas, Odysseus, Menelaus and myself; but that which I then decided wrongly, I now rightly countermand again in this scroll, which you, old man, have found me opening and resealing beneath the shade of night. Up now and away with this missive to Argos, and I will tell you by word of mouth all that is written herein, the contents of the folded scroll, for you are loyal to my wife and house.

ATTENDANT Say on and make it plain, that what my tongue utters may accord with what you have written.

AGAMEMNON "Daughter of Leda, in addition to my first letter I now send you word not to despatch your daughter to Euboea's embosomed wing, to the waveless bay of Aulis; for after all we will celebrate our child's wedding at another time."

ATTENDANT And how will Achilles, cheated of his bride, curb the fury of his indignation against you and your wife?

AGAMEMNON Here also is a danger.

ATTENDANT Tell me what you mean.

AGAMEMNON It is but his name, not himself, that Achilles is lending, knowing nothing of the marriage or of my scheming or my professed readiness to betroth my daughter to him for a husband's embrace.

ATTENDANT A dreadful venture, king Agamemnon! you that, by promise of your daughter's hand to the son of the goddess, were bringing the maid hither to be sacrificed for the Greeks.

AGAMEMNON Woe is me! ah woe! I am utterly distraught; bewilderment comes over me. Away hurry your steps, yielding nothing to old age.

ATTENDANT In havee I go, my liege.

AGAMEMNON Sit not down by woodland founts; scorn the witcheries of sleep.

ATTENDANT Hush!

AGAMEMNON And when you pass any place where roads diverge, cast your eyes all round—taking heed that no mule-wain pass by on rolling wheels, bearing my daughter hither to the ships of the Greeks, and you see it not.

ATTENDANT It shall be so.

AGAMEMNON Start then from the bolted gates, and if you meet the escort, start them back again, and drive at full speed to the abodes of the Cyclopes.

ATTENDANT But tell me, how shall my message find credit with your wife or child?

AGAMEMNON Preserve the seal which you bear on this scroll. Away! already the dawn is growing grey, lighting the lamp of day yonder and the fire of the sun's four steeds; help me in my trouble.

Exit ATTENDANT.

None of mortals is prosperous or happy to the last, for none was ever born to a painless life.

Exit AGAMEMNON.

Enter MENELAUS and ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT As *MENELAUS* wrests a letter from him
Strange daring, Menelaus, where you have no right.

MENELAUS Stand back! you carry loyalty to your master too far.

ATTENDANT The very reproach you have for me is to my credit.

MENELAUS You shall rue it, if you meddle in matters that concern you not.

ATTENDANT You had no right to open a letter, which I was carrying.

MENELAUS No, nor you to be carrying sorrow to all Greece.

ATTENDANT Argue that point with others, but surrender that letter to me.

MENELAUS I shall not let go.

ATTENDANT Nor yet will I let loose my hold.

MENELAUS Why then, this staff of mine will be dabbling your head with blood ere long.

ATTENDANT To die in my master's cause were a noble death.

MENELAUS Let go! you are too wordy for a slave.

ATTENDANT *Seeing AGAMEMNON approaching* Master, he is wronging me; he snatched your letter violently from my grasp, Agamemnon, and will not heed the claims of right. *Enter AGAMEMNON.*

AGAMEMNON How now? what means this uproar at the gates, this indecent brawling?

MENELAUS My tale, not his, has the better right to be spoken.

AGAMEMNON You, Menelaus! what quarrel have you with this man, why are you hauling him hence?

Exit ATTENDANT.

MENELAUS Look me in the face! Be that the prelude to my story.

AGAMEMNON Shall I, the son of Atreus, close my eyes from fear?

MENELAUS See you this scroll, the bearer of a shameful message?

AGAMEMNON I see it, yes; and first of all surrender it.

MENELAUS No, not till I have shewn its contents to all the Greeks.

AGAMEMNON What! have you broken the seal and know already what you should never have known?

MENELAUS Yes, I opened it and know to your sorrow the secret machinations of your heart.

AGAMEMNON Where did you catch my servant? Ye gods what a shameless heart you have!

MENELAUS I was awaiting your daughter's arrival at the camp from Argos.

AGAMEMNON What right have you to watch my doings? Is not this an act of shamelessness?

MENELAUS My wish to do it gave the spur, for I am no slave to you.

AGAMEMNON Infamous! Am I not to be allowed the management of my own house?

MENELAUS No, for you think crooked thoughts, one thing now, another formerly, and something different presently.

AGAMEMNON Most exquisite refining on evil themes! A hateful thing the tongue of cleverness!

MENELAUS Aye, but a mind unstable is an unjust possession, disloyal to friends. Now I am anxious to test you, and seek not you from rage to turn aside from the truth, nor will I on my part overstrain the case. You remember when you were all eagerness to captain the Greeks against Troy, making a pretence of declining, though eager for it in your heart; how humble you were then, taking each man by the hand and keeping open doors for every fellow townsman who cared to enter, affording each in turn a chance to speak with you, even though some desired it not, seeking by these methods to purchase popularity from all bidders; then when you had secured the command, there came a change over your manners; you were no longer so cordial to former friends, but hard of access, seldom to be found at home. But the man of real worth ought not to change his manners in the hour of prosperity, but should then show himself most staunch to friends, when his own good fortune can help them most effectually.

This was the first cause I had to reprove you, for it was here I first discovered your villainy; but afterwards, when you came to Aulis with all the gathered hosts of Greece, you were of no account; no! the want of a favourable breeze filled you with consternation at the chance dealt out by Heaven. Anon the Greeks began demanding that you should send the fleet away instead of vainly toiling on at Aulis; what dismay and confusion was then depicted in your looks, to think that you, with a thousand ships at your command, had not occupied the plains of Priam with your armies! And you would ask my counsel, "What am I to do? what scheme can I devise. where find one?" to save yourself being stripped of your command and losing your fair

fame. Next when Calchas bade you offer your daughter in sacrifice to Artemis, declaring that the Greeks should then sail, you were overjoyed, and did gladly undertake to offer the maid, and of your own accord—never allege compulsion!—you are sending word to your wife to despatch your daughter hither on pretence of wedding Achilles. This is the same air that heard you say it; and after all you turn round and have been caught recasting your letter to this effect, "I will no longer be my daughter's murderer." Exactly so! Countless others have gone through this phase in their conduct of public affairs; they make an effort while in power, and then retire dishonourably, sometimes owing to the senselessness of the citizens, sometimes deservedly, because they are too feeble of themselves to maintain their watch upon the state. For my part, I am more sorry for our unhappy Greece, whose purpose was to read these worthless foreigners a lesson, while now she will let them escape and mock her, thanks to you and your daughter. May I never then appoint a man to rule my country or lead its warriors because his kinship! Ability what the general must have; since any man, with ordinary intelligence, can govern a state.

CHORUS For brethren to come to words and blows, whenever they disagree, is terrible.

AGAMEMNON I wish to rebuke you in turn, briefly, not lifting mine eyes too high in shameless wise, but in more sober fashion, as a brother; for it is a good man's way to be considerate. Priou, why this burst of fury, these bloodshot eyes? who wrongs you? what is it you want? You are fain to win a virtuous bride. Well, I cannot supply you; for she, whom you once had, was ill controlled by you. Am I then, a man who never went astray, to suffer for your sins? or is it my popularity that galls you? No! it is the longing you have to keep a fair wife in your embrace, casting reason and honour to the winds. A bad man's pleasures are like himself Am I mad, if I change to wiser counsels, after previously deciding amiss? Your is the madness rather in wishing to recover a wicked wife, once you had lost her—a stroke of Heaven-sent luck.

Those foolish suitors swore that oath to Tyndareus in their longing to wed; but Hope was the goddess that led them on, I trow, and she it was that brought it about rather than you and your mightiness. So take the field with them; they are ready for it in the folly of their hearts; for the deity is not without insight, but is able to discern where oaths have been wrongly pledged or forcibly extorted. I will not slay my children, nor shall your interests be prospered by justice in your vengeance for a worthless wife, while I am left wasting, night and day, in sorrow for what I did to one of my own flesh and blood, contrary to all law and justice. There is your answer shortly' given, clear and easy to understand; and if you will not come to your senses, I shall do the best for myself.

CHORUS This differs from your previous declaration, but there is good in it—your child's reprieve.

MENELAUS Ah me, how sad my lot! I have no friends then after all.

AGAMEMNON Friends you have, if you seek not their destruction.

MENELAUS Where will you find any proof that you are sprung from the same sire as I?

AGAMEMNON Your moderation, not your madness do I share by nature.

MENELAUS Friends should sympathize with friends in sorrow.

AGAMEMNON Claim my help by kindly service, not by paining me.

MENELAUS So you have no mind to share this trouble with Greece?

AGAMEMNON No, Greece is diseased like you according to some god's design.

MENELAUS Go vaunt you then on your sceptre, after betraying your own brother! while seek some different means and other friends.

Enter MESSENGER.

MESSENGER Agamemnon, lord of all Hellenes! I am come and bring you your daughter, whom you did call Iphigenia in your home; and her mother, your wife Clytemnestra, is with her, and the child Orestes, a sight to gladden you after your long absence from your palace; but, as they had been travelling long and far, they are now refreshing their tender feet at the waters of a fair spring, they and their horses, for we turned these loose in the grassy meadow to browse their fill; but I am come as their forerunner to prepare you for their reception; for the army knows already of your daughter's arrival, so quickly did the rumour spread; and all the folk are running together to the sight, that they may see your child; for Fortune's favourites enjoy a worldwide fame and have all eyes fixed on them. "Is it a wedding?" some ask, "or what is happening? or has king Agamemnon from fond yearning summoned his daughter hither?" From others you would have heard: "They

are presenting the maiden to Artemis, queen of Aulis, previous to marriage; who can the bridegroom be, that is to lead her home?" Come, then, begin the rites—that is the next step—by getting the baskets ready; crown your heads; prepare the wedding-hymn, you and prince Menelaus with you; let flutes resound throughout the tents with noise of dancer's feet; for this is a happy day, that is come for the maid.

AGAMEMNON You have my thanks; now go within; for the rest it will be well, as Fate proceeds.

Exit MESSENGER.

Ah, woe is me! unhappy wretch, what can I say? where shall I begin? Into what cruel straits have I been plunged! Fortune has outwitted me, proving far cleverer than any cunning of mine. What an advantage humble birth possesses! for it is easy for her sons to weep and tell out all their sorrows; while to the high-born man come these same sorrows, but we have dignity throned over our life and are the people's slaves. I, for instance, am ashamed to weep, nor less, poor wretch, to check my tears at the awful pass to which I am brought. Oh! what am I to tell my wife? how shall I welcome her? with what face meet her? for she too has undone me by coming uninvited in this my hour of sorrow; yet it was but natural she should come with her daughter to prepare the bride and perform the fondest duties, where she will discover my villainy. And for this poor maid—why maid? Death, methinks, will soon make her his bride—how I pity her! Thus will she plead to me, I trow: "My father will you slay me? Be such the wedding you yourself may find, and whosoever is a friend to you!" while Orestes, from his station near us, will cry in childish accents, inarticulate, yet fraught with meaning. Alas! to what utter ruin Paris, the son of Priam, the cause of these troubles, has brought me by his union with Helen!

CHORUS I pity her myself, in such wise as a woman, and she a stranger, may bemoan the misfortunes of royalty.

MENELAUS *Offering his hand* Your hand, brother! let me grasp it.

AGAMEMNON I give it; your is the victory, mine the sorrow.

MENELAUS By Pelops our reputed grandsire and Atreus our father I swear to tell you the truth from my heart, without any covert purpose, but only what I think. The sight of you in tears made me pity you, and in return I shed a tear for you myself; I withdraw from my former proposals, ceasing to be a cause of fear to you; yea, and I will put myself in your present position; and I counsel you, slay not your child nor prefer my interests to your own; for it is not just that you should grieve, while I am glad, or that your children should die, while mine still see the light of day. What is it, after all, I seek? If I am set on marriage, could I not find a bride as choice elsewhere? Was I to lose a brother—the last I should have lost—to win a Helen, getting bad for good? I was mad, impetuous as a youth, till I perceived, on closer view, what slaying children really meant. Moreover I am filled with compassion for the hapless maiden, doomed to bleed that I may wed, when I reflect that we are kin. What has your daughter to do with Helen? Let the army be disbanded and leave Aulis; dry those streaming eyes, brother, and provoke me not to tears. Whatever concern you have in oracles that affect your child, let it be none of mine; into your hands I resign my share therein. A sudden change, you'll say, from my fell proposals! A natural course for me; affection for my brother caused the change. These are the ways of a man not void of virtue, to pursue on each occasion what is best.

CHORUS A generous speech, worthy of Tantalus, the son of Zeus! You do not shame your ancestry.

AGAMEMNON I thank you, Menelaus, for this unexpected suggestion; it is an honourable proposal, worthy of you.

MENELAUS Sometimes love, sometimes the selfishness of their families causes a quarrel between brothers; I loathe a relationship of this kind which is bitterness to both.

AGAMEMNON it is useless, for circumstances compel me to carry out the murderous sacrifice of my daughter.

MENELAUS How so? who will compel you to slay your own child?

AGAMEMNON The whole Achaean army here assembled.

MENELAUS Not if you send her back to Argos.

AGAMEMNON I might do that unnoticed, but there will be another thing I cannot.

MENELAUS What is that? You must not fear the mob too much.

AGAMEMNON Calchas will tell the Argive host his oracles.

MENELAUS Not if he be killed ere that—an easy matter.

AGAMEMNON The whole tribe of seers is a curse with its ambition.

MENELAUS Yes, and good for nothing and useless, when amongst us.

AGAMEMNON Has the thought, which is rising in my mind, no terrors for you?

MENELAUS How can I understand your meaning, unless you declare it?

AGAMEMNON The son of Sisyphus knows all.

MENELAUS Odysseus cannot possibly hurt us.

AGAMEMNON He was ever shifty by nature, siding with the mob.

MENELAUS True, he is enslaved by the love of popularity, a fearful evil.

AGAMEMNON Bethink you then, will he not arise among the Argives and tell them the oracles that Calchas delivered, saying of me that I undertook to offer Artemis a victim, and after all am proving false? Then, when he has carried the army away with him, he will bid the Argives slay us and sacrifice the maiden; and if I escape to Argos, they will come and destroy the place, razing it to the ground, Cyclopean walls and all. That is my trouble. Woe is me! to what straits Heaven has brought me at this pass! Take one precaution for me, Menelaus, as you go through the host, that Clytemnestra learn this not, till I have taken my child and devoted her to death, that my affliction may be attended with the fewest tears.

Turning to the CHORUS

And you, ye stranger dames, keep silence.

Exeunt AGAMEMNON and MENELAUS.

CHORUS Happy they who find the goddess come in moderate might, sharing with self-restraint in Aphrodite's gift of marriage and enjoying calm and rest from frenzied passions, wherein the Love-god, golden-haired, stretches his charmed bow with arrows twain, and one is aimed at happiness, the other at life's confusion. O lady Cypris, queen of beauty! far from my bridal bower I ban the last. Be mine delight in moderation and pure desires, and may I have a share in love, but shun excess therein Men's natures vary, and their habits differ, but true virtue is always manifest. Likewise the training that comes of education conduces greatly to virtue; for not only is modesty wisdom, but it has also the rare grace of seeing by its better judgment what is right; whereby glory, ever young, is shed over life by reputation. A great thing it is to follow virtue's footsteps—for women in their secret loves; while in men again an inborn sense of order, shown in countless ways, adds to a city's greatness.

You came, O Paris, to the place where you were reared to herd the cows amid the white heifers of Ida, piping in foreign strain and breathing on your reeds an echo of the Phrygian airs Olympus played. Full-uddered cows were browsing at the spot where that verdict 'twixt goddesses was awaiting you the cause of your going to Greece to stand before the ivory palace, kindling love in Helen's tranced eyes and feeling its flutter in your own breast; whence the fiend of strife brought Greece with her chivalry and ships to the towers of Troy. Oh! great is the bliss the great enjoy. Behold Iphigenia, the king's royal child, and Clytemnestra, the daughter of Tyndareus; how proud their lineage! how high their pinnacle of fortune! These mighty ones, whom wealth attends, are very gods in the eyes of less favoured folk. Halt we here, maidens of Chalcis, and lift the queen from her chariot to the ground without stumbling, supporting her gently in our arms, with kind intent, that the renowned daughter of Agamemnon but just arrived may feel no fear; strangers ourselves, avoid we aught that may disturb or frighten the strangers from Argos.

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA and IPHIGENIA.

CLYTEMNESTRA I take this as a lucky omen, your kindness and auspicious greeting, and have good hope that it is to a happy marriage I conduct the bride.

To Attendants

Take from the chariot the dowry I am bringing for my daughter and convey it within with careful heed. My daughter, leave the horse-drawn car, planting your faltering footstep delicately.

To the CHORUS

Maidens, take her in your arms and lift her from the chariot, and let one of you give me the support of her hand, that I may quit my seat in the carriage with fitting grace. Some of you stand at the horses' heads; for the horse has a timid eye, easily frightened; here take this child Orestes, son of Agamemnon, babe as he still

is. What! sleeping, little one, tired out by your ride in the chariot? Awake to bless your sister's wedding; for you, my gallant boy, shall get by this marriage a kinsman gallant as yourself, the Nereid's godlike offspring. Come hither to your mother, my daughter, Iphigenia, and seat yourself beside me, and stationed near show my happiness to these strangers; yes, come hither and welcome the sire you love so dearly. Hail! my honoured lord, king Agamemnon! we have obeyed your commands and are come.

Enter AGAMEMNON.

IPHIGENIA *Throwing herself into AGAMEMNON'S arms* Be not wroth with me, mother, if I run from your side and throw myself on my father's breast. O my father! I long to outrun others and embrace you after this long while; for I yearn to see your face; be not wroth with me.

CLYTEMNESTRA You may do so, daughter; for of all the children I have born, you have ever loved your father best.

IPHIGENIA I see you, father, joyfully after a long season.

AGAMEMNON And I your father you; your words do equal duty for both of us.

IPHIGENIA All hail, father! you did well in bringing me hither to you.

AGAMEMNON I know not how I am to say yes or no to that, my child.

IPHIGENIA Ha! how wildly you are looking, in spite of your joy at seeing me.

AGAMEMNON A man has many cares when he is king and general too.

IPHIGENIA Be mine, all mine today; turn not unto moody thoughts.

AGAMEMNON Why so I am, all yours today; I have no other thought.

IPHIGENIA Then smooth your knitted brow, unbend and smile.

AGAMEMNON Lo! my child, my joy at seeing you is even as it is.

IPHIGENIA And have you then tear-drops streaming from your eyes?

AGAMEMNON Aye, for long is the absence from each other, that awalts us.

IPHIGENIA I know not, dear father mine, I know not of what you are speaking.

AGAMEMNON You are moving my pity all the more by speaking so sensibly.

IPHIGENIA My words shall turn to senselessness, if that will cheer you more.

AGAMEMNON *Aside* Ah, woe is me! this silence is too much.

To IPHIGENIA

You have my thanks.

IPHIGENIA Stay with your children at home, father.

AGAMEMNON My own wish! but to my sorrow I may not humour it.

IPHIGENIA Ruin seize their warring and the woes of Menelaus!

AGAMEMNON First will that, which has been my life-long ruin, bring ruin unto others.

IPHIGENIA How long you were absent in the bays of Aulis!

AGAMEMNON Aye, and there is still a hindrance to my sending the army forward.

IPHIGENIA Where do men say the Phrygians live, father?

AGAMEMNON In a land where I would Paris, the son of Priam, never had dwelt.

IPHIGENIA it is a long voyage you are bound on, father, after you leave me.

AGAMEMNON You will meet your father again, my daughter.

IPHIGENIA Ah! would it were seemly that you should take me as a fellow-voyager!

AGAMEMNON You too have a voyage to make to a haven where you will remember your father.

IPHIGENIA Shall I sail thither with my mother or alone?

AGAMEMNON All alone, without father or mother.

IPHIGENIA What! have you found me a new home, father!

AGAMEMNON Enough of this! it is not for girls to know such things.

IPHIGENIA Speed home from Troy, I pray you, father, as soon as you have triumphed there.

AGAMEMNON There is a sacrifice I have first to offer here.

IPHIGENIA Yea, it is your duty to heed religion with aid of holy rites.

AGAMEMNON You will witness it, for you will be standing near the laver.

IPHIGENIA Am I to lead the dance then round the altar, father?

AGAMEMNON *Aside* I count you happier than myself because you know nothing.

To IPHIGENIA

Go within into the presence of maidens, after you have given me your hand and one sad kiss, on the eve of your long your sojourn far from your father's side. Bosom, cheek, and golden hair! ah, how grievous ye have found Helen and the Phrygians' city! I can no more; the tears come welling to my eyes, the moment I touch you.

Exit IPHIGENIA. Turning to CLYTEMNESTRA

Herein I crave your pardon, daughter of Leda, if I showed excessive grief at the thought of resigning my daughter to Achilles; for though we are sending her to taste of bliss, still it wrings a parent's heart, when he, the father who has toiled so hard for them, commits his children to the homes of strangers.

CLYTEMNESTRA I am not so void of sense; bethink you, I shall go through this as well, when I lead the maiden from the chamber to the sound of the marriage-hymn; wherefore I chide you not; but custom will combine with time to make the smart grow less. As touching him, to whom you have betrothed our daughter, I know his name, it is true, but would fain learn his lineage and the land of his birth.

AGAMEMNON There was one Aegina, the daughter of Asopus.

CLYTEMNESTRA Who wedded her? some mortal or a god?

AGAMEMNON Zeus, and she bare Aeacus, the prince of Cenone.

CLYTEMNESTRA What son of Aeacus secured his father's halls?

AGAMEMNON Peleus, who wedded the daughter of Nereus.

CLYTEMNESTRA With the god's consent, or when he had taken her in spite of gods?

AGAMEMNON Zeus betrothed her, and her guardian gave consent.

CLYTEMNESTRA Where did he marry her? amid the billows of the sea?

AGAMEMNON In Chiron's home, at sacred Pelion's foot.

CLYTEMNESTRA What! the abode ascribed to the race of Centaurs?

AGAMEMNON It was there the gods celebrated the marriage feast of Peleus.

CLYTEMNESTRA Did Thetis or his father train Achilles?

AGAMEMNON Chiron brought him up, to prevent his learning the ways of the wicked.

CLYTEMNESTRA Ah wise the teacher, still wiser the father, who intrusted his son to such hands.

AGAMEMNON Such is the future husband of your daughter.

CLYTEMNESTRA A blameless lord; but what city in Greece is his?

AGAMEMNON He dwells on the banks of the river Apidanus, in the borders of Phthia.

CLYTEMNESTRA Will you convey our daughter thither?

AGAMEMNON He who takes her to himself will see to that.

CLYTEMNESTRA Happiness attend the pair! Which day will he marry her?

AGAMEMNON As soon as the full moon comes to give its blessing.

CLYTEMNESTRA Have you already offered the goddess a sacrifice to usher in the maiden's marriage?

AGAMEMNON I am about to do so; that is the very thing I was engaged in.

CLYTEMNESTRA Will you celebrate the marriage-feast thereafter?

AGAMEMNON Yes, when I have offered a sacrifice required by Heaven of me.

CLYTEMNESTRA But where am I to make ready the feast for the women?

AGAMEMNON Here beside our gallant Argive ships.

CLYTEMNESTRA Finely here! but still I must; good come of it for all that!

AGAMEMNON I will tell you, lady, what to do; so obey me now.

CLYTEMNESTRA Wherein? for I was ever wont to yield you obedience.

AGAMEMNON Here, where the bridegroom is, wait

CLYTEMNESTRA Which of my duties will you perform in the mother's absence?

AGAMEMNON Give your child away with help of Greeks.

CLYTEMNESTRA And where am I to be the while?

AGAMEMNON Get you to Argos, and take care of your unwedded daughters.

CLYTEMNESTRA And leave my child? Then who will raise her bridal torch?

AGAMEMNON I will provide the proper wedding torch.

CLYTEMNESTRA That is not the custom; but you think lightly of these things.

AGAMEMNON It is not good you should be alone among a soldier-crowd.

CLYTEMNESTRA It is good that a mother should give her own child away.

AGAMEMNON Aye, and that those maidens at home should not be left alone.

CLYTEMNESTRA They are in safe keeping, pent in their maiden-bowers.

AGAMEMNON Obey.

CLYTEMNESTRA Nay, by the goddess-queen of Argos! go, manage matters out of doors; but in the house it is my place to decide what is proper for maidens at their wedding.

Exit.

AGAMEMNON Woe is me! my efforts are baffled; I am disappointed in my hope, anxious as I was to get my wife out of sight; foiled at every point, I form my plots and subtle schemes against my best-beloved. But I will go, in spite of all, with Calchas the priest, to inquire the goddess's good pleasure, fraught with ill-luck as it is to me, and with trouble to Greece. He who is wise should keep in his house a good and useful wife or none at all.

Exit.

CHORUS They say the Greeks' gathered host will come in arms aboard their ships to Simois with its silver eddies, even to Troy, the plain of Troy beloved by Phoebus; where famed Cassandra, I am told, whenever the god's resistless prophecies inspire her, wildly tosses her golden tresses, wreathed with crown of verdant bay. And on the towers of Troy and round her walls shall Trojans stand, when sea-borne troops with brazen shields row in on shapely ships to the channels of the Simois, eager to take Helen, the sister of that heavenly pair whom Zeus begat, from Priam, and bear her back to Greece by toil of Achaea's shields and spears; encircling Pergamus, the Phrygians' town, with murderous war around her stone-built towers, dragging men's heads backward to cut their throats, and sacking the citadel of Troy from roof to base, a cause of many tears to maids and Priam's wife; and Helen, the daughter of Zeus, shall weep in bitter grief, because she left her lord. Oh! never may there appear to me or to my children's children the prospect which the weal your Lydian dames and Phrygia's brides will have, as at their looms they hold converse: "Say who will pluck this fair blossom from her ruined country, tightening his grasp on lovely tresses till the tears flow? it is all through you, the offspring of the long-necked swan; if indeed it be a true report that Leda bare you to a winged bird, when Zeus transformed himself thereto, or whether, in the pages of the poets, fables have carried these tales to men's ears idly, out of season."

Enter ACHILLES.

ACHILLES Where in these tents is Achaea's general? Which of his servants will announce to him that Achilles, the son of Peleus, is at his gates seeking him? For this delay at the Euripus is not the same for all of us; there be some, for instance, who, though still unwed, have left their houses desolate and are idling here upon the beach, while others are married and have children; so strange the longing for this expedition that has fallen on their hearts by Heaven's will. My own just plea must I declare, and whoso else has any wish will speak for himself. Though I have left Pharsalia and Peleus, still I linger here by reason of these light breezes at the Euripus, restraining my Myrmidons, while they are ever instant with me saying, "Why do we tarry, Achilles? how much longer must we count the days to the start for Troy? do something, if you are so minded; else lead home your men, and wait not for the tardy action of these Atridae."

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA Hail to you, son of the Nereid goddess! I heard your voice from within the tent and therefore came forth.

ACHILLES O modesty revered! who can this lady be whom I behold, so richly dowered with beauty's gifts?

CLYTEMNESTRA No wonder you know me not, seeing I am one you have never before set eyes on; I praise your reverent address to modesty.

ACHILLES Who are you, and wherefore are you come to the mustering of the Greeks—you, a woman, to a fenced camp of men?

CLYTEMNESTRA The daughter of Leda I; my name Clytemnestra; and my husband king Agamemnon.

ACHILLES Well and shortly answered on all important points! but it ill befits that I should stand talking to women.

CLYTEMNESTRA Stay; why seek to fly? Give me your hand, a prelude to a happy marriage.

ACHILLES What is it you say? I give you my hand? Were I to lay a finger where I have no right, I could never meet Agamemnon's eye.

CLYTEMNESTRA The best of rights have you, seeing it is my child you will wed, O son of the sea-goddess, whom Nereus begat.

ACHILLES What wedding do you speak of? words fail me, lady; can your wits have gone astray and are you inventing this?

CLYTEMNESTRA All men are naturally shy in the presence of new relations, when these remind them of their wedding.

ACHILLES Lady, I have never wooed daughter of yours, nor have the sons of Atreus ever mentioned marriage to me.

CLYTEMNESTRA What can it mean? your turn now to marvel at my words, for yours are passing strange to me.

ACHILLES Hazard a guess; that we can both do in this matter; for it may be we are both correct in our statements.

CLYTEMNESTRA What! have I suffered such indignity? The marriage I am courting has no reality, it seems; I am ashamed of it.

ACHILLES Some one perhaps has made a mock of you and me; pay no heed thereto; make light of it.

CLYTEMNESTRA Farewell; I can no longer face you with unfaltering eyes, after being made a liar and suffering this indignity.

ACHILLES it is "farewell" too I bid you, lady; and now I go within the tent to seek your husband.

ATTENDANT *Calling through the tent-door* Stranger of the race of Aeacus, stay awhile! Ho there! you I mean, O goddess-born, and you, daughter of Leda.

ACHILLES Who is it calling through the half-opened door? what fear his voice betrays!

ATTENDANT A slave am I; of that I am not proud, for fortune permits it not.

ACHILLES Whose slave are you? not mine; for mine and Agamemnon's goods are separate.

ATTENDANT I belong to this lady who stands before the tent, a gift to her from Tyndareus her father.

ACHILLES I am waiting; tell me, if you are desirous, why you have stayed me.

ATTENDANT Are ye really all alone here at the door?

CLYTEMNESTRA To us alone will you address yourself; come forth from the king's tent.

ATTENDANT *Coming out* O Fortune and my own foresight, preserve whom I desire!

ACHILLES That speech will save them—in the future; it has a certain pompous air.

CLYTEMNESTRA Delay not for the sake of touching my right hand, if there is aught that you would say to me.

ATTENDANT Well, you know my character and my devotion to you and your children.

CLYTEMNESTRA I know you have grown old in the service of my house.

ATTENDANT Likewise you know it was in your dowry king Agamemnon received me.

CLYTEMNESTRA Yes, you came to Argos with me, and have been mine this long time past.

ATTENDANT True; and though I bear you all goodwill, I like not your lord so well.

CLYTEMNESTRA Come, come, unfold whatever you have to say.

ATTENDANT Her father, he that begat her, is on the point of slaying your daughter with his own hand.

CLYTEMNESTRA How? Out upon your story, old dotard! you are mad.

ATTENDANT Severing with a sword the hapless maid's white throat.

CLYTEMNESTRA Ah, woe is me! Is my husband mad?

ATTENDANT Nay; sane, except where you and your daughter are concerned; there he is mad.

CLYTEMNESTRA What is his reason? what vengeful fiend impels him?

ATTENDANT Oracles—at least so Calchas says, in order that the host may start

CLYTEMNESTRA Whither? Woe is me, and woe is you, your father's destined victim!

ATTENDANT To the halls of Dardanus, that Menelaus may recover Helen.

CLYTEMNESTRA So Helen's return then was fated to affect Iphigenia?

ATTENDANT You know all; her father is about to offer your child to Artemis.

CLYTEMNESTRA But that marriage—what pretext had it for bringing me from home?

ATTENDANT An inducement to you to bring your daughter cheerfully, to wed her to Achilles.

CLYTEMNESTRA On a deadly errand are you come, my daughter, both you, and I, your mother.

ATTENDANT Piteous the lot of both of you—and fearful Agamemnon's venture.

CLYTEMNESTRA Alas! I am undone; my eyes can no longer stem their tears.

ATTENDANT What more natural than to weep the loss of your children?

CLYTEMNESTRA Whence, old man, do say you had this news?

ATTENDANT I had started to carry you a letter referring to the former writing.

CLYTEMNESTRA Forbidding or combining to urge my bringing the child to her death?

ATTENDANT Nay, forbidding it, for your lord was then in his sober senses.

CLYTEMNESTRA How comes it then, if you were really bringing me a letter, that you do not now deliver into my hands?

ATTENDANT Menelaus snatched it from me—he who caused this trouble.

CLYTEMNESTRA Do you hear that, son of Peleus, the Nereid's child?

ACHILLES I have been listening to the tale of your sufferings, and I am indignant to think I was used as a tool.

CLYTEMNESTRA They will slay my child; they have tricked her with your marriage.

ACHILLES Like you I blame your lord, nor do I view it with mere indifference.

CLYTEMNESTRA No longer will I let shame prevent my kneeling to you, a mortal to one goddess-born; why do I affect reserve? whose interests should I consult before my child's?

Throwing herself before ACHILLES

Oh! help me, goddess-born, in my sore distress, and her that was called your bride—in vain, it is true, yet called she was. For you it was I wreathed her head and led her forth as if to marriage, but now it is to slaughter I am bringing her. On you will come reproach because you did not help her; for though not wedded to her, yet were you the loving husband of my hapless maid in name at any rate. By your beard, right hand, and mother too I do implore you; for your name it was that worked my ruin, and you are bound to stand by that. Except your knees I have no altar whereunto to fly; and not a friend stands at my side. You have heard

the cruel abandoned scheme of Agamemnon; and I, a woman, am come, as you see, to a camp of lawless sailor-folk, bold in evil's cause, though useful when they list; wherefore if you boldly stretch forth your arm in my behalf, our safety is assured; but if you withhold it, we are lost.

CHORUS A wondrous thing is motherhood, carrying with it a potent spell, wherein all share, so that for their children's sake they will endure affliction.

ACHILLES My proud spirit is stirred to range aloft, but it has learnt to grieve in misfortune and rejoice in high prosperity with equal moderation. For these are the men who can count on ordering all their life aright by wisdom's rules. True, there are cases where it is pleasant not to be too wise, but there are others, where some store of wisdom helps. Brought up in godly Chiron's halls myself, I learnt to keep a single heart; and provided the Atridae lead aright, I will obey them; but when they cease therefrom, no more will I obey. Nay, but here and in Troy I will show the freedom of my nature, and, as far as in me lies, do honour to Ares with my spear.

You, lady, who have suffered so cruelly from your nearest and dearest, will I, by every effort in a young man's power, set right, investing you with that amount of pity, and never shall your daughter, after being once called my bride, die by her father's hand; for I will not lend myself to your husband's subtle tricks; no! for it will be my name that kills your child, although it wields not the steel. Your own husband is the actual cause, but I shall no longer be guiltless, if, because of me and my marriage, this maiden perishes, she that has suffered past endurance and been the victim of affronts most strangely undeserved. So am I made the poorest wretch in Argos; I a thing of naught, and Menelaus counting for a man! No son of Peleus I, but the issue of a vengeful fiend, if my name shall serve your husband for the murder. Nay! by Nereus, who begat my mother Thetis, in his home amid the flowing waves, never shall king Agamemnon touch your daughter, no! not even to the laying of a finger-tip upon her robe; else will Sipylus, that frontier town of barbarism, the cradle of those chieftains' line, be henceforth a city indeed, while Phthia's name will nowhere find mention.

Calchas, the seer, shall rue beginning the sacrifice with his barley-meal and lustral water. Why, what is a seer? A man who with luck tells the truth sometimes, with frequent falsehoods, but when his luck deserts him, collapses then and there. It is not to secure a bride that I have spoken thus—there be maids unnumbered eager to have my love—no! but king Agamemnon has put an insult on me; he should have asked my leave to use my name as a means to catch the child, for it was I chiefly who induced Clytemnestra to betroth her daughter to me; verily I had yielded this to Greece, if that was where our going to Troy broke down; I would never have refused to further my fellow soldiers' common interest. But, as it is, I am as naught in the eyes of those chieftains, and little they reckon of treating me well or ill. My sword shall soon know if any one is to snatch your daughter from me, for then will I make it reek with the bloody stains of slaughter, ere it reach Phrygia. Calm yourself then; as a god in his might I appeared to you, without being so, but such will I show myself for all that.

CHORUS Son of Peleus, your words are alike worthy of you and that sea-born deity, the holy goddess.

CLYTEMNESTRA Ah! would I could find words to utter your praise without excess, and yet not lose the graciousness thereof by stinting it; for when the good are praised, they have a feeling, as it were, of hatred for those who in their praise exceed the mean. But I am ashamed of intruding a tale of woe, since my affliction touches myself alone and you are not affected by troubles of mine; but still it looks well for the man of worth to assist the unfortunate, even when he is not connected with them. Wherefore pity us, for our sufferings cry for pity; in the first place, I have harboured an idle hope in thinking to have you wed my daughter; and next, perhaps, the slaying of my child will be to you an evil omen in your wooing hereafter, against which you must guard yourself. Your words were good, both first and last; for if you will it so, my daughter will be saved. Will you have her clasp your knees in suppliant wise? it is no maid's part; yet if it seem good to you, why come she shall with the modest look of free-born maid; but if I shall obtain the self-same end from you without her coming, then let her abide within, for there is dignity in her reserve; still reserve must only go as far as the case allows.

ACHILLES Bring not you your daughter out for me to see, lady, nor let us incur the reproach of the ignorant; for an army, when gathered together without domestic duties to employ it, loves the evil gossip of malicious tongues. After all, should you supplicate me, you will attain a like result as if I had never been supplicated; for I am myself engaged in a mighty struggle to rid you of your troubles. One thing be sure you have heard; I will

not tell a lie; if I do that or idly mock you, may I die, but live if I preserve the maid.

CLYTEMNESTRA Bless you for ever succouring the distressed!

ACHILLES Hearken then to me, that the matter may succeed.

CLYTEMNESTRA What is your proposal? for hear you I must.

ACHILLES Let us once more urge her father to a better frame of mind.

CLYTEMNESTRA He is something of a coward, and fears the army too much.

ACHILLES Still argument overthrows argument.

CLYTEMNESTRA Cold hope indeed; but tell me what I must do.

ACHILLES Entreat him first not to slay his children, and if he is stubborn, come to me. For if he consents to your request, my intervention need go no further, since this consent insures your safety. I too shall show myself in a better light to my friend, and the army will not blame me, if I arrange the matter by reason rather than force; while, should things turn out well, the result will prove satisfactory both to you and your friends, even without my interference.

CLYTEMNESTRA How sensibly you speak! I must act as seems best to you; but should I fail of my object, where am I to see you again? whither must I turn my wretched steps and find you ready to champion my distress?

ACHILLES I am keeping watch to guard you, where occasion calls, that none see you passing through the host of Greeks with that scared look. Shame not your father's house; for Tyndareus deserves not to be ill spoken of, being a mighty man in Greece.

CLYTEMNESTRA it is even so. Command me; I must play the slave to you. If there are gods, you for your righteous dealing will find them favourable; if there are none, what need to toil?

Exeunt ACHILLES and CLYTEMNESTRA.

CHORUS What wedding-hymn was that which raised its strains to the sound of Libyan flutes, to the music of the dancer's lyre, and the note of the pipe of reeds? It was in the day Pieria's fair-tressed choir came over the slopes of Pelion to the marriage-feast of Peleus, beating the ground with print of golden sandals at the banquet of the gods, and hymning in dulcet strains the praise of Thetis and the son of Aeacus, over the Centaurs' hill, down through the woods of Pelion. There was the Dardanian boy, Phrygian Ganymede, whom Zeus delights to honour, drawing off the wine he mixed in the depths of golden bowls; while, along the gleaming sand, the fifty daughters of Nereus graced the marriage with their dancing, circling in a mazy ring. Came too the revel-rout of Centaurs, mounted on horses, to the feast of the gods and the mixing-bowl of Bacchus, leaning on fir-trees, with wreaths of green foliage round their heads; and loudly cried the prophet Chiron, skilled in arts inspired by Phoebus; "Daughter of Nereus, you shall bear a son"—whose name he gave—" a dazzling light to Thessaly; for he shall come with an army of spearmen to the far-famed land of Priam, to set it in a blaze, his body cased in a suit of golden mail forged by Hephaestus, a gift from his goddess-mother, even from Thetis who bore him." Then shed the gods a blessing on the marriage of the high-born bride, who was first of Nereus' daughters, and on the wedding of Peleus. But you, with Argives crown, wreathing the lovely tresses of your hair, like a dappled mountain hind brought from some rocky cave or a heifer undefiled, and staining with blood your human throat; though you were never reared like these amid the piping and whistling of herdsmen, but at your mother's side, to be decked one day by her as the bride of a son of Inachus. Where now does the face of modesty or virtue avail aught? seeing that godlessness holds sway, and virtue is neglected by men and thrust behind them, lawlessness over law prevailing, and mortals no longer making common cause to keep the jealousy of gods from reaching them.

CLYTEMNESTRA *Reappearing from the tent* I have come from the tent to look out for my husband, who went away and left its shelter long ago; while that poor child, my daughter, hearing of the death her father designs for her, is in tears, uttering in many keys her piteous lamentation.

Catching sight of AGAMEMNON

It seems I was speaking of one not far away; for there is Agamemnon, who will soon be detected in the commission of a crime against his own child.

Enter AGAMEMNON.

AGAMEMNON Daughter of Leda, it is lucky I have found you outside the tent, to discuss with you in our

daughter's absence subjects not suited for the ears of maidens on the eve of marriage.

CLYTEMNESTRA What, pray, is dependent on the present crisis?

AGAMEMNON Send the maiden out to join her father, for the lustral water stands there ready, and barley-meal to scatter with the hand on the cleansing flame, and heifers to be slain in honour of the goddess Artemis, to usher in the marriage, their black blood spouting from them.

CLYTEMNESTRA Though fair the words you use, I know not how I am to name your deeds in terms of praise. Come forth, my daughter; full well you know what is in your father's mind; take the child Orestes, your brother, and bring him with you in the folds of your robe.

Enter IPHIGENIA.

Behold how she comes, in obedience to your summons. Myself will speak the rest alike for her and me.

AGAMEMNON My child, why weep you and no longer look cheerfully? why are you fixing your eyes upon the ground and holding your robe before them?

CLYTEMNESTRA Alas! with which of my woes shall I begin? for I may treat them all as first, or put them last or midway anywhere.

AGAMEMNON How now? I find you all alike, confusion and alarm in every eye.

CLYTEMNESTRA My husband, answer frankly the questions I ask you.

AGAMEMNON There is no necessity to order me; I am willing to be questioned.

CLYTEMNESTRA Do you mean to slay your child and mine?

AGAMEMNON *Starting* Ha! these are heartless words, unwarranted suspicions!

CLYTEMNESTRA Peace! answer me that question first.

AGAMEMNON Put a fair question and you shall have a fair answer.

CLYTEMNESTRA I have no other questions to put; give me no other answers.

AGAMEMNON O fate revered, O destiny, and fortune mine!

CLYTEMNESTRA Aye, and mine and this maid's too; the three share one bad fortune.

AGAMEMNON Whom have I injured?

CLYTEMNESTRA Do you ask me this question? A thought like that itself amounts to thoughtlessness.

AGAMEMNON Ruined! my secret out!

CLYTEMNESTRA I know all; I have heard what you are bent on doing to me. Your very silence and those frequent groans are a confession; tire not yourself by telling it.

AGAMEMNON Lo! I am silent; for, if I tell you a falsehood, needs must I add effrontery to misfortune.

CLYTEMNESTRA Well, listen; for I will now unfold my meaning and no longer employ dark riddles. In the first place—to reproach you first with this—it was not of my own free will but by force that you did take and wed me, after slaying Tantalus, my former husband, and dashing my babe on the ground alive, when you had torn him from my breast with brutal violence. Then, when those two sons of Zeus, who were likewise my brothers, came flashing on horseback to war with you, Tyndareus, my aged sire, rescued you because of your suppliant prayers, and you in turn had me to wife. Once reconciled to you upon this footing, you will bear me witness I have been a blameless wife to you and your family, chaste in love, an honour to your house, that so your coming in might be with joy and your going out with gladness. And it is seldom a man secures a wife like this, though the getting of a worthless woman is no rarity. Besides three daughters, of one of whom you art heartlessly depriving me, I am the mother of this son of yours. If anyone asks you your reason for slaying her, tell me, what will you say? or must I say it for you? "It is that Menelaus may recover Helen." An honourable exchange, indeed, to pay a wicked woman's price in children's lives! it is buying what we most detest with what we hold most dear.

Again, if you go forth with the host, leaving me in your halls, and are long absent at Troy, what will my feelings be at home, do think? when I behold each vacant chair and her chamber now deserted, and then sit down alone in tears, making ceaseless lamentation for her, "Ah! my child, he that begat you has slain you himself, he and no one else, nor was it by another's hand...to your home, after leaving such a price to be paid; for it needs now but a trifling pretext for me and the daughters remaining to give you the reception it is right you should receive. I adjure you by the gods, compel me not to sin against you, nor sin yourself. Go to; suppose you sacrifice the child; what prayer will you utter, when it is done? what will the blessing be that you

will invoke upon yourself as you are slaying our daughter? an ill returning maybe, seeing the disgrace that speeds your going forth. Is it right that I should pray for any luck to attend you? Surely we should deem the gods devoid of sense, if we harboured a kindly feeling towards murderers. Shall you embrace your children on your coming back to Argos? Nay, you have no right. Will any child of thing ever face you, if you have surrendered one of them to death? Has this ever entered into your calculations, or does your one duty consist in carrying a sceptre about and marching at the head of an army? when you mightest have made this fair proposal among the Argives; "Is it your wish, Achaeans, to sail for Phrygia's shores? Why then, cast lots whose daughter has to die." For that would have been a fair course for you to pursue, instead of picking out your own child for the victim and presenting her to the Danaï; or Menelaus, inasmuch as it was his concern, should have slain Hermione for her mother. As it is, I, who still am true to you, must lose my child; while she, who went astray, will return with her daughter, and live in happiness at Sparta. If I am wrong in aught herein, answer me; but if my words have been fairly urged, do not still slay your child, who is mine too, and you will be wise.

CHORUS Harken to her Agamemnon, for to join in saving your children's lives is surely a noble deed; none would gainsay this.

IPHIGENIA Had I the eloquence of Orpheus, my father, to move the rocks by chanted spells to follow me, or to charm by speaking whom I would, I had resorted to it. But as it is, I'll bring my tears—the only art I know; for that I might attempt. And about your knees, in suppliant wise, I twine my limbs these limbs your wife here bore. Destroy me not before my time, for sweet is to look upon the light, and force me not to visit scenes below. I was the first to call you father, you the first to call me child; the first was I to sit upon your knee and give and take the fond caress. And this was what you then wouldst say, "Shall I see you, my child, living a happy prosperous life in a husband's home one day, in a manner worthy of myself?" And I in my turn would ask, as I hung about your beard, whereto I now am clinging, "How shall I see you? Shall I be giving you a glad reception in my halls, father, in your old age, repaying all your anxious care in rearing me? I remember all we said, it is you who have forgotten and now wouldst take my life. By Pelops, I entreat you spare me, by your father Atreus and my mother here, who suffers now a second time the pangs she felt before when bearing me! What have I to do with the marriage of Paris and Helen? why is his coming to prove my ruin, father? Look upon me; one glance, one kiss bestow, that this at least I may carry to my death as a memorial of you, though you heed not my pleading. (*Holding up the baby ORESTES*) Feeble ally though you are, brother, to your loved ones, yet add your tears to mine and entreat our father for your sister's life; even in babes there is a natural sense of ill. O father, see this speechless supplication made to you; pity me; have mercy on my tender years! Yea, by your beard we two fond hearts implore your pity, the one a babe, a full-grown maid the other. By summing all my pleas in one, I will prevail in what I say. To gaze upon yon light is man's most cherished gift; that life below is nothingness, and whoso longs for death is mad. Better live a life of woe than die a death of glory!

CHORUS Ah, wretched Helen! Awful the struggle that has come to the sons of Atreus and their children, thanks to you and those marriages of yours.

AGAMEMNON While loving my own children, I yet understand what should move my pity and what should not; I were a madman else. It is terrible for me to bring myself to this, nor less terrible is it to refuse, daughter; for I must fare the same. You see the vastness of yon naval host, and the numbers of bronze clad warriors from Greece, who can neither make their way to Troy's towers nor raze the far-famed citadel of Troy, unless I offer you according to the word of Calchas the seer. Some mad desire possesses the host of Greece to sail forthwith to the land of the barbarians, and put a stop to the rape of wives from Greece, and they will slay my daughters in Argos as well as you and me, if I disregard the goddess's behests. It is not Menelaus who has enslaved me to him, child, nor have I followed wish of his; nay, it is Greece, for whom I must sacrifice you whether I will or no; to this necessity I bow my head; for her freedom must be preserved, as far as any help of yours, daughter, or mine can go; nor must they, who are the sons Greece, be pillaged of their wives by barbarian robbery.

AGAMEMNON rushes from the stage,

CLYTEMNESTRA My child! Ye stranger ladies! Woe is me for this your death! your father flies, surrendering you to Hades.

IPHIGENIA Woe is me, O mother mine! for the same strain has fallen to both of us in our fortune. No more for me the light of day! no more the beams of yonder sun! Woe for that snow-beat glen in Phrygia and the hills of Ida, where Priam once exposed a tender babe, torn from his mother's arms to meet a deadly doom, even Paris, called the child of Ida in the Phrygians' town. Would Priam never had settled him, the herdsman reared amid the herds, beside that water crystal-clear, where are fountains of the Nymphs and their meadow rich with blooming flowers, where hyacinths and rose-buds blow for goddesses to gather! Hither one day came Pallas and Cypris of the subtle heart, Hera too and Hermes messenger of Zeus—Cypris, proud of the longing she causes; Pallas of her prowess; and Hera of her royal marriage with king Zeus—to decide a hateful strife about their beauty; but it is my death, maidens—fraught, it is true, with glory to the Greeks—that Artemis has received as an offering, before they begin the voyage to Troy.

O mother, mother! he that begat me to this life of sorrow has gone and left me all alone. Ah! woe is me! a bitter, bitter sight for me was Helen, evil Helen! to me now doomed to bleed and die, slaughtered by an impious sire. I would this Aulis had never received in its havens here the sterns of their bronze-beaked ships, the fleet which was speeding them to Troy; and would that Zeus had never breathed on the Euripus a wind to stop the expedition, tempering, as he does, a different breeze to different men, so that some have joy in setting sail, and sorrow some, and others hard constraint, to make some start and others stay and others furl their sails! Full of trouble then, it seems, is the race of mortals, full of trouble verily; and it is ever Fate's decree that man should find distress. Woe! woe to you, you child of Tyndareus, for the suffering and anguish sore, which you are causing the Danaï!

CHORUS I pity you for your cruel fate—a fate I would you never had met!

IPHIGENIA O mother that bare me! I see a throng of men approaching.

CLYTEMNESTRA It is the goddess-born you see, child, for whom you came hither.

IPHIGENIA (*Calling into the tent*) Open the tent-door to me, servants, that I may hide myself.

CLYTEMNESTRA Why seek to fly, my child?

IPHIGENIA I am ashamed to face Achilles.

CLYTEMNESTRA Wherefore?

IPHIGENIA The luckless ending to our marriage causes me to feel ashamed.

CLYTEMNESTRA No time for affectation now in face of what has chanced. Stay then; reserve will do no good, if only we can . . . (*Enter ACHILLES.*)

ACHILLES Daughter of Leda, lady of sorrows!

CLYTEMNESTRA No misnomer that.

ACHILLES A fearful cry is heard among the Argives.

CLYTEMNESTRA What is it? tell me.

ACHILLES It concerns your child.

CLYTEMNESTRA An evil omen for your words.

ACHILLES They say her sacrifice is necessary.

CLYTEMNESTRA And is there no one to say a word against them?

ACHILLES Indeed I was in some danger myself from the tumult.

CLYTEMNESTRA In danger of what? kind sir.

ACHILLES Of being stoned.

CLYTEMNESTRA Surely not for trying to save my daughter?

ACHILLES The very reason.

CLYTEMNESTRA Who would have dared to lay a finger on you?

ACHILLES The men of Greece, one and all.

CLYTEMNESTRA Were not your Myrmidon warriors at your side?

ACHILLES They were the first who turned against me.

CLYTEMNESTRA My child! we are lost, undone, it seems.

ACHILLES They taunted me as the man whom marriage had enslaved.

CLYTEMNESTRA And what did you answer them?

ACHILLES I craved the life of her I meant to wed . . .

CLYTEMNESTRA Justly so.

ACHILLES The wife her father promised me.

CLYTEMNESTRA Aye, and sent to fetch from Argos.

ACHILLES But I was overcome by clamorous cries.

CLYTEMNESTRA Truly the mob is a dire mischief.

ACHILLES But I will help you for all that.

CLYTEMNESTRA Will you really fight them single-handed?

ACHILLES Do you see these warriors here, carrying my arms?

CLYTEMNESTRA Bless you for your kind intent!

ACHILLES Well, I shall be blessed.

CLYTEMNESTRA Then my child will not be slaughtered now?

ACHILLES No, not with my consent at any rate.

CLYTEMNESTRA But will any of them come to lay hands on the maid?

ACHILLES Thousands of them, with Odysseus at their head.

CLYTEMNESTRA The son of Sisyphus?

ACHILLES The very same.

CLYTEMNESTRA Acting for himself or by the army's order?

ACHILLES By their choice—and his own.

CLYTEMNESTRA An evil choice indeed, to stain his hands in blood!

ACHILLES But I will hold him back.

CLYTEMNESTRA Will he seize and bear her hence against her will?

ACHILLES Aye, by her golden hair no doubt.

CLYTEMNESTRA What must I do, when it comes to that?

ACHILLES Keep hold of your daughter.

CLYTEMNESTRA Be sure that she shall not be slain, as far as that can help her.

ACHILLES Believe me, it will come to this.

IPHIGENIA Mother, hear me while I speak, for I see that you are wroth with your husband to no purpose; it is hard for us to persist in impossibilities. Our thanks are due to this stranger for his ready help; but you must also see to it that he is not reproached by the army, leaving us no better off and himself involved in trouble. Listen, mother; hear what thoughts have passed across my mind. I am resolved to die; and this I fain would do with honour, dismissing from me what is mean. Towards this now, mother, turn your thoughts, and with me weigh how well I speak; to me the whole of mighty Greece looks; on me the passage over the sea depends; on me the sack of Troy; and in my power it lies to check henceforth barbarian raids on happy Greece, if ever in the days to come they seek to seize her daughters, when once they have atoned by death for the violation of Helen's marriage by Paris. All this deliverance will my death insure, and my fame for setting Greece free will be a happy one. Besides, I have no right at all to cling too fondly to my life; for you did not bear me for myself alone, but as a public blessing to all Greece.

What! shall countless warriors, armed with shields, those myriads sitting at the oar, find courage to attack the foe and die for Greece, because their fatherland is wronged, and my one life prevent all this? What kind of justice is that? could I find a word in answer? Now turn we to that other point. It is not right that this man should enter the lists with all Argos or be slain for a woman's sake. Better a single man should see the light than ten thousand women. If Artemis is minded to take this body, am I, a weak mortal, to thwart the goddess? Nay, that were impossible. To Greece I resign it; offer this sacrifice and make an utter end of Troy. This is my enduring monument; marriage, motherhood, and fame—all these is it to me. And it is but right, mother, that Hellenes should rule barbarians, but not barbarians Hellenes, those being slaves, while these are free.

CHORUS You play a noble part, maiden; but sickly are the whims of Fate and the goddess.

ACHILLES Daughter of Agamemnon, if some god was bent on blessing me, could I but have won you for my wife. In you I reckon Greece happy, and you in Greece; for this that you have said is good and worthy of your fatherland; since you, abandoning a strife with heavenly powers, which are too strong for you, has fairly weighed advantages and needs. But now that I have looked into your noble nature, I feel still more a fond desire to win you for my bride. Look to it; for I would fain serve you and receive you in my halls; and witness Thetis, how I grieve to think I shall not save your life by doing battle with the Danaï. Reflect, I say; a dreadful ill is death.

IPHIGENIA This I say, without regard to anyone. Enough that the daughter of Tyndareus is causing wars and bloodshed by her beauty; then be not slain yourself, sir stranger, nor seek to slay another on my account; but let me, if I can, save Greece.

ACHILLES Heroic spirit! I can say no more to this, since you are so minded; for yours is a noble resolve; why should not one avow the truth? Yet will I speak, for you will haply change your mind; that you mayst know then what my offer is, I will go and place these arms of mine near the altar, resolved not to permit your death but to prevent it; for brave as you are, at sight of the knife held at your throat, you will soon avail yourself of what I said. So I will not let you perish through any thoughtlessness of yours, but will go to the temple of the goddess with these arms and await your arrival there. (*Exit ACHILLES.*)

IPHIGENIA Mother, why so silent, your eyes wet with tears?

CLYTEMNESTRA I have reason, woe is me! to be sad at heart.

IPHIGENIA Forbear; make me not a coward; here in one thing obey me.

CLYTEMNESTRA Say what it is, my child, for at my hands you shall never suffer injury.

IPHIGENIA Cut not off the tresses of your hair for me, nor clothe yourself in sable garb.

CLYTEMNESTRA Why, my child, What is it you have said? Shall I, when I lose you—

IPHIGENIA "Lose" me, you do not; I am saved and you renowned, as far as I can make you.

CLYTEMNESTRA How so? Must I not mourn your death?

IPHIGENIA By no means, for I shall have no tomb heaped over me.

CLYTEMNESTRA What, is not the act of dying held to imply burial?

IPHIGENIA The altar of the goddess, Zeus's daughter, will be my tomb.

CLYTEMNESTRA Well, my child, I will let you persuade me, for you say well.

IPHIGENIA Aye, as one who prospers and does Greece service.

CLYTEMNESTRA What message shall I carry to your sisters?

IPHIGENIA Put not mourning raiment on them either.

CLYTEMNESTRA But is there no fond message I can give the girls from you?

IPHIGENIA Yes, my farewell words; and promise me to rear this babe Orestes to manhood.

CLYTEMNESTRA Press him to your bosom; it is your last look.

IPHIGENIA O you that are most dear to me! you have helped your friends as you had means.

CLYTEMNESTRA Is there anything I can do to pleasure you in Argos?

IPHIGENIA Yes, hate not my father, your own husband.

CLYTEMNESTRA Fearful are the trials through which he has to go because of you.

IPHIGENIA It was against his will he ruined me for the sake of Greece.

CLYTEMNESTRA Ah! but he employed base treachery, unworthy of Atreus.

IPHIGENIA Who will escort me hence, before my hair is torn?

CLYTEMNESTRA I will go with you.

IPHIGENIA No, not you; you say not well.

CLYTEMNESTRA I will, clinging to your robes.

IPHIGENIA Be persuaded by me, mother, stay here; for this is the better way alike for me and you; but let one of these attendants of my father conduct me to the meadow of Artemis, where I shall be sacrificed.

CLYTEMNESTRA Are you gone from me, my child?

IPHIGENIA Aye, and with no chance of ever returning.

CLYTEMNESTRA Leaving your mother?

IPHIGENIA Yes, as you see, undeservedly.

CLYTEMNESTRA Hold! leave me not!

IPHIGENIA I cannot let you shed a tear. (Exit CLYTEMNESTRA. To the CHORUS) Be it yours, maidens, to hymn in joyous strains Artemis, the child of Zeus, for my hard lot; and let the order for a solemn hush go forth to the Danaï. Begin the sacrifice with the baskets, let the fire blaze for the purifying meal of sprinkling, and my father pace from left to right about the altar; for I come to bestow on Greece safety crowned with victory. Lead me hence, me the destroyer of Troy's town and the Phrygians; give me wreaths to cast about me; bring them hither; here are my tresses to crown; bring lustral water too. Dance to Artemis, queen Artemis the blest, around her fane and altar; for by the blood of my sacrifice I will blot out the oracle, if it needs must be. O mother, lady revered! for you shall my tears be shed, and now; for at the holy rites I may not weep. Sing with me, maidens, sing the praises of Artemis, whose temple faces Chalcis, where angry spearmen madly chafe, here in the narrow havens of Aulis, because of me. O Pelasgia, land of my birth, and Mycenae, my home!

CHORUS Is it on Perseus' citadel you call, that town Cyclopean workmen build

IPHIGENIA To be a light to Greece did you rear me, and so I say not No to death.

CHORUS you are right; no fear that fame will ever desert you!

IPHIGENIA Hail to you, bright lamp of day and light of Zeus! A different life, different lot is henceforth mine. Farewell I bid you, light beloved! (Exit IPHIGENIA.)

CHORUS Behold the maiden on her way, the destroyer of Troy's town and its Phrygians, with garlands twined about her head, and drops of lustral water on her, soon to besprinkle with her gushing blood the altar of a murderous goddess, what time her shapely neck is severed. For you fair streams of a father's pouring and lustral waters are in store, for you Achaea's host is waiting, eager to reach the citadel of Troy. But let us celebrate Artemis, the daughter of Zeus, queen among the gods, as if upon some happy chance. O lady revered, delighting in human sacrifice, send on its way to Phrygia's land the host of the Hellenes, to Troy's abodes of guile, and grant that Agamemnon may wreath his head with deathless fame, a crown of fairest glory for the spearmen of Greece. (Enter MESSENGER.)

MESSENGER Come forth, O Clytemnestra, daughter of Tyndareus, from the tent, to hear my news. (Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.)

CLYTEMNESTRA I heard your voice and am come in sad dismay and fearful dread, not sure but what you have arrived with tidings of some fresh trouble for me besides the present woe.

MESSENGER Nay, rather would I unfold to you a story strange and marvellous about your child.

CLYTEMNESTRA Delay not, then, but speak at once.

MESSENGER Dear mistress, you shall learn all clearly; from the outset will I tell it, unless my memory fail me somewhat and confuse my tongue in its account. As soon as we reached the grove of Artemis, the child of Zeus, and the meadows gay with flowers, where the Achaean troops were gathered, bringing your daughter with us, forthwith the Argive host began assembling; but when king Agamemnon saw the maiden on her way to the grove to be sacrificed, he gave one groan, and, turning away his face, let the tears burst from his eyes, as he held his robe before them. But the maid, standing close by him that begot her, spake on this wise, "O my father, here am I to do your bidding; freely I offer this body of mine for my country and all Greece, that ye may lead me to the altar of the goddess and sacrifice me, since this is Heaven's ordinance. Good luck be yours for any help that I afford! and may ye obtain the victor's gift and come again to the land of your fathers. So then let none of the Argives lay hands on me, for I will bravely yield my neck without a word." She spake; and each man marvelled, as he heard the maiden's brave, unflinching speech. But in the midst up stood Talthourbius—for his this duty was—and bade the host refrain from word or deed; and Calchas, the seer, drawing a sharp sword from out its scabbard laid it in a basket of beaten gold, crowning the maiden's head the while. Then the son of Peleus, taking the basket and with it lustral water in his hand, ran round the altar of the goddess uttering these words, "O Artemis, you child of Zeus, slayer of wild beasts, that wheel your dazzling light amid the gloom, accept this sacrifice, which we, the host of the Achaeans and king Agamemnon with us, offer to you, even pure blood from a beauteous maiden's neck; and grant us safe sailing for our ships and the sack of Troy's towers by our spears." Meantime the sons of Atreus and all the host stood looking on the ground, while the priest, seizing his knife, offered up a prayer and was closely scanning the maiden's throat to see where he should strike.

No slight sorrow filled my heart, as I stood by with bowed head; when lo! a sudden miracle! Each one of us distinctly heard the sound of a blow, but none saw the spot where the maiden vanished. Loudly the priest cried out, and all the host took up the cry at the sight of a marvel all unlooked for, due to some god's agency, and passing all belief, although it was seen; for there upon the ground lay a deer of size immense and very fair to see, gasping out her life, with whose blood the altar of the goddess was thoroughly bedewed.

Whereon spake Calchas thus—his joy you can imagine—"Ye captains of this leagued Achaean host, do you see this victim, which the goddess has set before her altar, a mountain roaming deer? This is more welcome to her by far than the maid, that she may not defile her altar by shedding noble blood. Gladly has she accepted it and is granting us a prosperous voyage for our attack on Troy. Wherefore take heart, sailors, each man of you, and away to your ships, for today must we leave the hollow bays of Aulis and cross the Aegean main." Then, when the sacrifice was wholly burned to ashes in the blazing flame, he offered such prayers as were meet, that the army might win return; but me Agamemnon sends to tell you this, and say what Heaven-sent luck is his, and how he has secured undying fame throughout the length of Greece. Now I was there myself and speak as an eye-witness; without a doubt your child flew away to the gods. A truce then to your sorrowing, and cease to be wroth with your husband; for God's ways with man are not what we expect, and those whom he loves, he keepeth safe; yea, for this day has seen your daughter dead and brought to life again.

(Exit MESSENGER.)

CHORUS What joy to hear these tidings from the messenger! He tells you your child is living still, among the gods.

CLYTEMNESTRA Which of the gods, my child, has stolen you? How am I to address you? How can I be sure that this is not an idle tale told to cheer me, to make me cease my piteous lamentation for you?

CHORUS Lo! king Agamemnon approaches, to confirm this story for you.

(Enter AGAMEMNON.)

AGAMEMNON Happy may we be counted, lady, as far as concerns our daughter; for she has fellowship with gods in very sooth. But you must take this tender babe and start for home, for the host is looking now to sail. Fare you well! it is long ere I shall greet you on my return from Troy; may it be well with you!

CHORUS Son of Atreus, start for Phrygia's land with joy and so return, I pray, after taking from Troy her fairest spoils.