

## Iphigenia in Tauris

BY

Euripides

Translated by Robert Potter

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### CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

IPHIGENIA, daughter of Agamemnon

ORESTES, brother of IPHIGENIA

PYLADES, friend Of ORESTES

THOAS, King of the Taurians

HERDSMAN

MESSENGER

MINERVA

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

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

### IPHIGENIA

To Pisa, by the fleetest coursers borne,  
Comes Pelops, son of Tantalus, and weds  
The virgin daughter of Oenomaus:  
From her sprung Atreus; Menelaus from him,  
And Agamemnon; I from him derive  
My birth, his Iphigenia, by his queen,  
Daughter of Tyndarus. Where frequent winds  
Swell the vex'd Euripus with eddying blasts,  
And roll the darkening waves, my father slew me,  
A victim to Diana, so he thought,  
For Helen's sake, its bay where Aulis winds,  
To fame well known; for there his thousand ships,  
The armament of Greece, the imperial chief  
Convened, desirous that his Greeks should snatch  
The glorious crown of victory from Troy,  
And punish the base insult to the bed  
Of Helen, vengeance grateful to the soul  
Of Menelaus. But 'gainst his ships the sea  
Long barr'd, and not one favouring breeze to swell  
His flagging sails, the hallow'd flames the chief  
Consults, and Calchas thus disclosed the fates:-  
"Imperial leader of the Grecian host,  
Hence shalt thou not unmoor thy vessels, ere  
Diana as a victim shall receive  
Thy daughter Iphigenia: what the year  
Most beauteous should produce, thou to the queen  
Dispensing light didst vow to sacrifice:  
A daughter Clytemnestra in thy house

Then bore (*the peerless grace of beauty thus  
To me assigning*); her must thou devote  
The victim." Then Ulysses by his arts,  
Me, to Achilles as design'd a bride,  
Won from my mother. My unhappy fate  
To Aulis brought me; on the altar there  
High was I placed, and o'er me gleam'd the sword,  
Aiming the fatal wound: but from the stroke  
Diana snatch'd me, in exchange a hind  
Giving the Grecians; through the lucid air  
Me she conveyed to Tauris, here to dwell,  
Where o'er barbarians a barbaric king  
Holds his rude sway, named Thoas, whose swift foot  
Equals the rapid wing: me he appoints  
The priestess of this temple, where such rites  
Are pleasing to Diana, that the name  
Alone claims honour; for I sacrifice  
(*Such, ere I came, the custom of the state*)  
Whatever Grecian to this savage shore  
Is driven: the previous rites are mine; the deed  
Of blood, too horrid to be told, devolves  
On others in the temple: but the rest,  
In reverence to the goddess, I forbear.  
But the strange visions which the night now past  
Brought with it, to the air, if that may soothe  
My troubled thought, I will relate. I seem'd,  
As I lay sleeping, from this land removed,  
To dwell at Argos, resting on my couch  
Mid the apartments of the virgin train.  
Sudden the firm earth shook: I fled, and stood  
Without; the battlements I saw, and all  
The rocking roof fall from its lofty height  
In ruins to the ground: of all the house,  
My father's house, one pillar, as I thought,  
Alone was left, which from its cornice waved  
A length of auburn locks, and human voice  
Assumed: the bloody office, which is mine  
To strangers here, respecting, I to death,  
Sprinkling the lustral drops, devoted it  
With many tears. My dream I thus expound:-  
Orestes, whom I hallow'd by my rites,  
Is dead: for sons are pillars of the house;  
They, whom my lustral lavers sprinkle, die.  
I cannot to my friends apply my dream,  
For Strophius, when I perish'd, had no son.  
Now, to my brother, absent though he be,  
Libations will I offer: this, at least,  
With the attendants given me by the king,  
Virgins of Greece, I can: but what the cause  
They yet attend me not within the house,  
The temple of the goddess, where I dwell?

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

ORESTES

Keep careful watch, lest some one come this way.

PYLADES

I watch, and turn mine eye to every part.

ORESTES

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

PYLADES

Orestes, such my thought, and must be thine.

ORESTES

And this the altar wet with Grecian blood?

PYLADES

Crimson'd with gore behold its sculptured wreaths.

ORESTES

See, from the battlements what trophies hang!

PYLADES

The spoils of strangers that have here been slain.

ORESTES

Behooves us then to watch with careful eye.  
O Phoebus, by thy oracles again  
Why hast thou led me to these toils? E'er since,  
In vengeance for my father's blood, I slew  
My mother, ceaseless by the Furies driven,  
Vagrant, an outcast, many a bending course  
My feet have trod: to thee I came, of the  
Inquired this whirling frenzy by what means,  
And by what means my labours I might end.  
Thy voice commanded me to speed my course  
To this wild coast of Tauris, where a shrine  
Thy sister hath, Diana; thence to take  
The statue of the goddess, which from heaven  
(So say *the natives*) to this temple fell:  
This image, or by fraud or fortune won,  
The dangerous toil achieved, to place the prize  
In the Athenian land: no more was said;  
But that, performing this, I should obtain  
Rest from my toils. Obedient to thy words,  
On this unknown, inhospitable coast  
Am I arrived. Now, Pylades (*for thou  
Art my associate in this dangerous task*),  
Of thee I ask, What shall we do? for high  
The walls, thou seest, which fence the temple round.  
Shall we ascend their height? But how escape  
Observing eyes? Or burst the brazen bars?  
Of these we nothing know: in the attempt  
To force the gates, or meditating means

To enter, if detected, we shall die.  
Shall we then, ere we die, by flight regain  
The ship in which we hither plough'd the sea?

*PYLADES*

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

*ORESTES*

This length of sea we plough'd not, from this coast,  
Nothing effected, to return: but well  
Hast thou advised; the god must be obey'd.  
Retire we then where we may lie conceal'd;  
For never from the god will come the cause,  
That what his sacred voice commands should fall  
Effectless. We must dare. No toil to youth  
Excuse, which justifies inaction, brings.

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

*IPHIGENIA (singing)*

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

*CHORUS (singing)*

I come. What cares disturb thy rest?  
Why hast thou brought me to the shrine?  
Doth some fresh grief afflict thy breast?  
Why bring me to this seat divine?  
Thou daughter of that chief, whose powers  
Plough'd with a thousand keels the strand  
And ranged in arms shook Troy's proud towers  
Beneath the Atreidae's great command!

*IPHIGENIA (singing)*

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

*CHORUS (singing)*

To thee thy faithful train  
The Asiatic hymn will raise,  
A doleful, a barbaric strain,  
Responsive to thy lays,  
And steep in tears the mournful song,-  
Notes, which to the dead belong;  
Dismal notes, attuned to woe

By Pluto in the realms below:  
No sprightly air shall we employ  
To cheer the soul, and wake the sense of joy.

*IPHIGENIA (singing)*

The Atreidae are no more;  
Extinct their sceptre's golden light;  
My father's house from its proud height  
Is fallen: its ruins I deplore.  
Who of her kings at Argos holds his reign,  
Her kings once bless'd? But Sorrow's train  
Rolls on impetuous for the rapid steeds  
Which o'er the strand with Pelops fly.  
From what atrocious deeds  
Starts the sun back, his sacred eye  
Of brightness, loathing, turn'd aside?  
And fatal to their house arose,  
From the rich ram, Thessalia's golden pride,  
Slaughter on slaughter, woes on woes:  
Thence, from the dead ages past,  
Vengeance came rushing on its prey,  
And swept the race of Tantalus away.  
Fatal to thee its ruthless haste;  
To me too fatal, from the hour  
My mother wedded, from the night  
She gave me to life's opening light,  
Nursed by affliction's cruel power.  
Early to me, the Fates unkind,  
To know what sorrow is assign'd:  
Me Leda's daughter, hapless dame,  
First blooming offspring of her bed  
(*A father's conduct here I blame*),  
A joyless victim bred;  
When o'er the strand of Aulis, in the pride  
Of beauty kindling flames of love,  
High on my splendid car I move,  
Betrothed to Thetis' son a bride:  
Ah, hapless bride, to all the train  
Of Grecian fair preferr'd in vain!  
But now, a stranger on this strand,  
'Gainst which the wild waves beat,  
I hold my dreary, joyless seat,  
Far distant from my native land,  
Nor nuptial bed is mine, nor child, nor friend.  
At Argos now no more I raise  
The festal song in Juno's praise;  
Nor o'er the loom sweet-sounding bend,  
As the creative shuttle flies;  
Give forms of Titans fierce to rise;  
And, dreadful with her purple spear,  
Image Athenian Pallas there:  
But on this barbarous shore

The unhappy stranger's fate I moan,  
The ruthless altar stain'd with gore,  
His deep and dying groan;  
And, for each tear that weeps his woes,  
From me a tear of pity flows.  
Of these the sad remembrance now must sleep:  
A brother dead, ah me! I weep:  
At Argos him, by fate oppress'd,  
I left an infant at the breast,  
A beauteous bud, whose opening charms  
Then blossom'd in his mother's arms;  
Orestes, born to high command,  
The imperial sceptre of the Argive land.

*LEADER OF THE CHORUS*

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

*(A HERDSMAN enters.)*

*HERDSMAN*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

And what of terror doth thy tale import?

*HERDSMAN*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

Whence are the strangers? from what country named?

*HERDSMAN*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

Didst thou not hear what names the strangers bear?

*HERDSMAN*

One by the other was call'd Pylades.

*IPHIGENIA*

How is the stranger, his companion, named?

*HERDSMAN*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*HERDSMAN*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

And what concern have herdsmen with the sea?

*HERDSMAN*

To wash our herds in the salt wave we came.

*IPHIGENIA*

To what I ask'd return: how seized you them?  
Tell me the manner; this I wish to know:  
For slow the victims come, nor hath some while  
The altar of the goddess, as was wont,  
Been crimson'd with the streams of Grecian blood.

*HERDSMAN*

Our herds, which in the forest feed, we drove  
Amid the tide that rushes to the shore,  
'Twixt the Symplegades: it was the place,  
Where in the rifted rock the chafing surge  
Hath hallow'd a rude cave, the haunt of those  
Whose quest is purple. Of our number there  
A herdsman saw two youths, and back return'd  
With soft and silent step; then pointing, said,  
"Do you not see them? These are deities  
That sit there." One, who with religious awe  
Revered the gods, with hands uplifted pray'd,  
His eyes fix'd on them,—"Son of the sea-nymph  
Leucothoe, guardian of the labouring bark,  
Our lord Palaemon, be propitious to us!  
Or sit you on our shores, bright sons of Jove,  
Castor and Pollux? Or the glorious boast  
Of Nereus, father of the noble choir  
Of fifty Nereids?" One, whose untaught mind  
Audacious folly harden'd 'gainst the sense  
Of holy awe, scoff'd at his prayers, and said,-  
"These are wreck'd mariners, that take their seat  
In the cleft rock through fear, as they have heard  
Our prescribed rite, that here we sacrifice  
The stranger." To the greater part he seem'd  
Well to have spoken, and we judg'd it meet  
To seize the victims, by our country's law  
Due to the goddess. Of the stranger youths,  
One at this instant started from the rock:  
Awhile he stood, and wildly toss'd his head,  
And groan'd, his loose arms trembling all their length,  
Convulsed with madness; and a hunter loud  
Then cried,—"Dost thou behold her, Pylades?  
Dost thou not see this dragon fierce from hell  
Rushing to kill me, and against me rousing  
Her horrid vipers? See this other here,  
Emitting fire and slaughter from her vests,  
Sails on her wings, my mother in her arms  
Bearing, to hurl this mass of rock upon me!  
Ah, she will kill me! Whither shall I fly?"  
His visage might we see no more the same,  
And his voice varied; now the roar of bulls,

The howl of dogs now uttering, mimic sounds  
Sent by the maddening Furies, as they say.  
Together thronging, as of death assured,  
We sit in silence; but he drew his sword,  
And, like a lion rushing mid our herds,  
Plunged in their sides the weapon, weening thus  
To drive the Furies, till the briny wave  
Foam'd with their blood. But when among our herds  
We saw this havoc made, we all 'gan rouse  
To arms, and blew our sounding shells to alarm  
The neighbouring peasants; for we thought in fight  
Rude herdsmen to these youthful strangers, train'd  
To arms, ill match'd; and forthwith to our aid  
Flock'd numbers. But, his frenzy of its force  
Abating, on the earth the stranger falls,  
Foam bursting from his mouth: but when he saw  
The advantage, each adventured on and hurl'd  
What might annoy him fallen: the other youth  
Wiped off the foam, took of his person care,  
His fine-wrought robe spread over him; with heed  
The flying stones observing, warding of  
The wounds, and each kind office to his friend  
Attentively perform'd. His sense return'd;  
The stranger started up, and soon perceived  
The tide of foes that roll'd impetuous on,  
The danger and distress that closed them round.  
He heaved a sigh; an unremitting storm  
Of stones we pour'd, and each incited each:  
Then we his dreadful exhortation heard:-  
"Pylades, we shall die; but let us die  
With glory: draw thy sword, and follow me."  
But when we saw the enemies advance  
With brandish'd swords, the steep heights crown'd with wood  
We fell in flight: but others, if one flies,  
Press on them; if again they drive these back,  
What before fled turns, with a storm of stones  
Assaulting them; but, what exceeds belief,  
Hurl'd by a thousand hands, not one could hit  
The victims of the goddess: scarce at length,  
Not by brave daring seized we them, but round  
We closed upon them, and their swords with stones  
Beat, wily, from their hands; for on their knees  
They through fatigue had sunk upon the ground:  
We bare them to the monarch of this land:  
He view'd them, and without delay to the  
Sent them devoted to the cleansing vase,  
And to the altar. Victims such as these,  
O virgin, wish to find; for if such youths  
Thou offer, for thy slaughter Greece will pay,  
Her wrongs to thee at Aulis well avenged.

*LEADER*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*(The HERDSMAN departs.)*

O my unhappy heart! before this hour  
To strangers thou wast gentle, always touch'd  
With pity, and with tears their tears repaid,  
When Grecians, natives of my country, came  
Into my hands: but from the dreams, which prompt  
To deeds ungentle, showing that no more  
Orestes views the sun's fair light, whoe'er  
Ye are that hither come, me will you find  
Relentless now. This is the truth, my friends:  
My heart is rent; and never will the wretch,  
Who feels affliction's cruel tortures, bear  
Good-will to those that are more fortunate.  
Never came gale from Jove, nor flying bark,  
Which 'twixt the dangerous rocks of the Euxine sea  
Brought Helen hither, who my ruin wrought,  
Nor Menelaus; that on them my foul wrongs  
I might repay, and with an Aulis here  
Requite the Aulis there, where I was seized,  
And, as a heifer, by the Grecians slain:  
My father too, who gave me birth, was priest.  
Ah me! the sad remembrance of those ills  
Yet lives: how often did I stroke thy cheek,  
And, hanging on thy knees, address thee thus:-  
"Alas, my father! I by thee am led  
A bride to bridal rites unblest and base:  
Them, while by thee I bleed, my mother hymns,  
And the Argive dames, with hymeneal strains,  
And with the jocund pipe the house resounds:  
But at the altar I by thee am slain;  
For Pluto was the Achilles, not the son  
Of Peleus, whom to me thou didst announce  
The affianced bridegroom, and by guile didst bring  
To bloody nuptials in the rolling car."  
But, o'er mine eyes the veil's fine texture spread,  
This brother in my hands who now is lost,  
I clasp'd not, though his sister; did not press  
My lips to his, through virgin modesty,  
As going to the house of Peleus: then  
Each fond embrace I to another time  
Deferr'd, as soon to Argos to return.  
If, O unhappy brother, thou art dead,  
From what a state, thy father's envied height

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

*(She enters the temple.)*

*CHORUS (singing)*

Ye rocks, ye dashing rocks, whose brow  
Frowns o'er the darken'd deeps below;  
Whose wild, inhospitable wave,  
From Argos flying and her native spring,  
The virgin once was known to brave,  
Tormented with the brize's maddening sting,  
From Europe when the rude sea o'er  
She pass'd to Asia's adverse shore;  
Who are these hapless youths, that dare to land,  
Leaving those soft, irriguous meads,  
Where, his green margin fringed with reeds,  
Eurotas rolls his ample tide,  
Or Dirce's hallow'd waters glide,  
And touch this barbarous, stranger-hating strand,  
The altars where a virgin dews,  
And blood the pillar'd shrine imbrues?  
Did they with oars impetuous sweep  
*(Rank answering rank)* the foamy deep,  
And wing their bark with flying sails,  
To raise their humble fortune their desire;  
Eager to catch the rising gales,  
Their bosoms with the love of gain on fire?  
For sweet is hope to man's fond breast;  
The hope of gain, insatiate guest,  
Though on her oft attends Misfortune's train;  
For daring man she tempts to brave  
The dangers of the boisterous wave,  
And leads him heedless of his fate  
Through many a distant barbarous state.  
Vain his opinions, his pursuits are vain!  
Boundless o'er some her power is shown,  
But some her temperate influence own.  
How did they pass the dangerous rocks

Clashing with rude, tremendous shocks?  
How pass the savage-howling shore,  
Where once the unhappy Phineus held his reign,  
And sleep affrighted flies its roar,  
Steering their rough course o'er this boisterous main,  
Form'd in a ring, beneath whose waves  
The Nereid train in high arch'd caves  
Weave the light dance, and raise the sprightly song,  
While, whispering in their swelling sails,  
Soft Zephyrs breathe, or southern gales  
Piping amid their tackling play,  
As their bark ploughs its watery way  
Those hoary cliffs, the haunts of birds, along,  
To that wild strand, the rapid race  
Where once Achilles deign'd to grace?  
O that from Troy some chance would bear  
Leda's loved daughter, fatal fair  
*(The royal virgin's vows are mine)*  
That her bright tresses roll'd in crimson dew,  
Her warm blood flowing at this shrine  
The altar of the goddess might imbrue;  
And Vengeance, righteous to repay  
Her former mischiefs, seize her prey!  
But with what rapture should I hear his voice,  
If one this shore should reach from Greece,  
And bid the toils of slavery cease!  
Or might I in the hour of rest  
With pleasing dreams of Greece be bless'd;  
So in my house, my native land rejoice;  
In sleep enjoy the pleasing strain  
For happiness restored again

*(IPHIGENIA enters from the temple.)*

**IPHIGENIA**

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

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

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

*(Guards lead in ORESTES and PYLADES, bound.)*

**IPHIGENIA**

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

*(The guards release ORESTES and PYLADES.)*

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

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

If aught of pleasure that may give thee, he.

*IPHIGENIA*

A native of what Grecian state, declare.

*ORESTES*

What profit knowing this wouldst thou obtain?

*IPHIGENIA*

And are you brothers, of one mother born?

*ORESTES*

Brothers by friendship, lady, not by birth.

*IPHIGENIA*

To thee what name was by thy father given?

*ORESTES*

With just cause I Unhappy might be call'd.

*IPHIGENIA*

I ask not that; to fortune that ascribe.

*ORESTES*

Dying unknown, rude scoffs I shall avoid.

*IPHIGENIA*

Wilt thou refuse? Why are thy thoughts so high?

*ORESTES*

My body thou mayst kill, but not my name.

*IPHIGENIA*

Wilt thou not say a native of what state?

*ORESTES*

The question naught avails, since I must die.

*IPHIGENIA*

What hinders thee from granting me this grace?

*ORESTES*

The illustrious Argos I my country boast.

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

Dost thou an exile fly, or by what fate?

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

Wilt thou then tell me what I wish to know?

*ORESTES*

Whate'er is foreign to my private griefs.

*IPHIGENIA*

To my dear wish from Argos art thou come.

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

It is so: you have heard no false reports.

*IPHIGENIA*

Is Helena with Menelaus return'd?

*ORESTES*

She is; and one I love her coming rues.

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

At Sparta with her former lord she dwells.

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

I from her nuptials have my share of grief.

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

How briefly all things dost thou ask at once!

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

He perish'd at Mycenae such the fame.

*IPHIGENIA*

Goddess revered! But doth Ulysses live?

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

Perish the wretch, nor see his country more!

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

But doth the son of sea-born Thetis live?

*ORESTES*

He lives not: vain his nuptial rites at Aulis.

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

But who art thou, inquiring thus of Greece?

*IPHIGENIA*

I am from thence, in early youth undone.

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

The royal Agamemnon, son of Atreus.

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

Dead! By what adverse fate? O wretched me!

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

The glories of his former state I mourn.

*ORESTES*

Dreadfully murdered by a woman's hand.

*IPHIGENIA*

How wretched she that slew him, he thus slain!

*ORESTES*

Now then forbear: of him inquire no more.

*IPHIGENIA*

This only: lives the unhappy monarch's wife?

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

To avenge on her his noble father slain.

*IPHIGENIA*

An ill, but righteous deed, how justly done!

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

Hath Agamemnon other offspring left?

*ORESTES*

He left one virgin daughter, named Electra.

*IPHIGENIA*

Of her that died a victim is aught said?

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

Unhappy she! the father too who slew her!

*ORESTES*

For a bad woman she unseemly died.

*IPHIGENIA*

At Argos lives the murdered father's son?

*ORESTES*

Nowhere he lives, poor wretch! and everywhere.

*IPHIGENIA*

False dreams, farewell; for nothing you import.

*ORESTES*

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

*LEADER*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

ORESTES

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

IPHIGENIA

I: to atone the goddess is my charge.

ORESTES

A charge unenvied, virgin, and unblest'd.

IPHIGENIA

Necessity constrains: I must obey.

ORESTES

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

IPHIGENIA

No: but thy locks to sprinkle round is mine.

ORESTES

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

IPHIGENIA

To some within the temple this belongs.

ORESTES

What tomb is destined to receive my corse?

IPHIGENIA

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

ORESTES

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

IPHIGENIA

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

Declaring those whom he thought dead alive,  
Shall bear him an assured and solid joy.

*(She enters the temple.)*

CHORUS *(chanting)*

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

ORESTES

This asks no pity, strangers: but farewell.

CHORUS *(chanting)*

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

PYLADES

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

CHORUS *(chanting)*

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

ORESTES

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

PYLADES

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

ORESTES

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

PYLADES

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

ORESTES

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

PYLADES

That thou shouldst die, and I behold this light,  
Were base: with thee I sail'd, with thee to die

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

#### ORESTES

Speak more auspicious words: 'tis mine to bear  
Ills that are mine; and single when the wo,  
I would not bear it double. What thou say'st  
Is vile and infamous, would light on me,  
Should I cause thee to die, who in my toils  
Hast borne a share: to me, who from the gods  
Suffer afflictions which I suffer, death  
Is not unwelcome: thou art happy, thine  
An unpolluted and a prosperous house;  
Mine impious and unblest'd: if thou art saved,  
And from my sister (*whom I gave to thee,  
Betroth'd thy bride*) art blest'd with sons, my name  
May yet remain, nor all my father's house  
In total ruin sink. Go then, and live:  
Dwell in the mansion of thy ancestors:  
And when thou comest to Greece, to Argos famed  
For warrior-steeds, by this right hand I charge the  
Raise a sepulchral mound, and on it place  
A monument to me; and to my tomb  
Her tears, her tresses let my sister give;  
And say, that by an Argive woman's hand  
I perish'd, to the altar's bloody rites  
A hallow'd victim. Never let thy soul  
Betray my sister, for thou seest her state,  
Of friends how destitute, her father's house  
How desolate. Farewell. Of all my friends,  
Thee have I found most friendly, from my youth  
Train'd up with me, in all my sylvan sports  
Thou dear associate, and through many toils  
Thou faithful partner of my miseries.  
Me Phoebus, though a prophet, hath deceived,  
And, meditating guile, hath driven me far  
From Greece, of former oracles ashamed;  
To him resign'd, obedient to his words,  
I slew my mother, and my meed is death.

#### PYLADES

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

ORESTES

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

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

IPHIGENIA *(to the guards)*

Go you away, and in the shrine prepare  
What those, who o'er the rites preside, require.

*(The guards go into the temple.)*

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

ORESTES

What wouldst thou then? What is thy anxious thought?

IPHIGENIA

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

ORESTES

And wilt thou in return give him thy oath?

IPHIGENIA

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

ORESTES

To send him from this barbarous shore alive.

IPHIGENIA

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

ORESTES

But will the monarch to these things assent?

IPHIGENIA

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

ORESTES

Swear then; and thou propose the righteous oath.

IPHIGENIA

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

*PYLADES*

Well, to thy friends this letter I will give.

*IPHIGENIA*

Thee will I send safe through the darkening rocks.

*PYLADES*

What god dost thou invoke to attest thy oath?

*IPHIGENIA*

Diana, at whose shrine high charge I hold.

*PYLADES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*PYLADES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

Then never, while I live,  
May I revisit my loved Argos more!

*PYLADES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

If honour owes it, this will touch us both.

*PYLADES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*PYLADES*

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

*IPHIGENIA (reading)*

This message to Orestes, to the son  
Of Agamemnon, bear:-She, who was slain

At Aulis, Iphigenia, sends thee this:  
She lives, but not to those who then were there.

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

What shall I say? Where are we, Pylades?

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

Ye gods!

*IPHIGENIA*

In my cause why invoke the gods?

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*PYLADES*

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

*(PYLADES hands the letter to ORESTES.)*

*ORESTES*

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

*LEADER OF THE CHORUS*

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

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

Thy brother, O unhappy! is not there.

*IPHIGENIA*

Thee did the Spartan Tyndarus bring forth?

*ORESTES*

And from the son of Pelops' son I sprung,

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

In the rich texture didst thou not inweave it?

*IPHIGENIA*

O thou most dear! Thou windest near my heart.

*ORESTES*

And image in the web the averted sun?

*IPHIGENIA*

In the fine threads that figure did I work.

*ORESTES*

For Aulis did thy mother bathe thy limbs?

*IPHIGENIA*

I know it, to unlucky spousals led.

*ORESTES*

Why to thy mother didst thou send thy locks?

*IPHIGENIA*

Devoted for my body to the tomb.

*ORESTES*

What I myself have seen I now as proofs  
Will mention. In thy father's house, hung high

Within thy virgin chambers, the old spear  
Of Pelops, which he brandish'd when he slew  
Oenomaus, and won his beauteous bride,  
The virgin Hippodamia, Pisa's boast.

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

And hold I thee, my sister, long deem'd dead?  
Grief mix'd with joy, and tears, not taught by woe  
To rise, stand melting in thy eyes and mine.

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

May we together from this hour be bless'd!

*IPHIGENIA*

An unexpected pleasure, O my friends,  
Have I received; yet fear I from my hands  
Lest to the air it fly. O sacred hearths  
Raised by the Cyclops! O my country, loved  
Mycenae! Now that thou didst give me birth,  
I thank thee; now I thank thee, that my youth  
Thou trainedst, since my brother thou has train'd,  
A beam of light, the glory of his house.

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

Alas, the lovers there!

*IPHIGENIA*

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

ORESTES

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

IPHIGENIA (*chanting*)

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

LEADER

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

PYLADES

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

ORESTES

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

IPHIGENIA

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

ORESTES

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

IPHIGENIA

Whence then is he? and from what father sprung?

ORESTES

From Phocis: Strophius is his father named.

IPHIGENIA

By Atreus' daughter to my blood allied?

*ORESTES*

Nearly allied: my only faithful friend.

*IPHIGENIA*

He was not then, me when my father slew.

*ORESTES*

Childless was Strophius for some length of time.

*IPHIGENIA*

O thou, the husband of my sister, hail

*ORESTES*

More than relation, my preserver too.

*IPHIGENIA*

But to thy mother why that dreadful deed?

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

But for what cause did she her husband slay?

*ORESTES*

Of her inquire not: thou wouldst blush to hear.

*IPHIGENIA*

The eyes of Argos now are raised to thee.

*ORESTES*

There Menelaus is lord; I, outcast, fly.

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

Not so: the Furies fright me from the land.

*IPHIGENIA*

The madness this, which seized thee on the shore?

*ORESTES*

I was not first beheld unhappy there.

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

And ruthless make me champ the bloody bit.

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

Commanded by Apollo's voice, I come.

*IPHIGENIA*

With what intent? if that may be disclosed.

*ORESTES*

I will inform thee, though to length of speech  
This leads. When vengeance from my hands o'ertook  
My mother's deeds-foul deeds, which let me pass  
In silence-by the Furies' fierce assaults  
To flight I was impell'd: to Athens then  
Apollo sent me, that, my cause there heard,  
I might appease the vengeful powers, whose names  
May not be utter'd: the tribunal there  
Is holy, which for Mars, when stain'd with blood,  
Jove in old times establish'd. There arrived,  
None willingly received me, by the gods  
As one abhorr'd; and they, who felt the touch  
Of shame, the hospitable board alone  
Yielded; and though one common roof beneath,  
Their silence showing they disdain'd to hold  
Converse with me, I took from them apart  
A lone repast; to each was placed a bowl  
Of the same measure; this they filled with wine,  
And bathed their spirits in delight. Unmeet  
I deem'd it to express offence at those  
Who entertain'd me, but in silence grieved,  
Showing a cheer as though I mark'd it not,  
And sigh'd for that I shed my mother's blood.  
A feast, I hear, at Athens is ordain'd  
From this my evil plight, ev'n yet observed,  
In which the equal-measured bowl then used  
Is by that people held in honour high.  
But when to the tribunal on the mount  
Of Mars I came, one stand I took, and one  
The eldest of the Furies opposite:  
The cause was heard touching my mother's blood,  
And Phoebus saved me by his evidence:  
Equal, by Pallas number'd, were the votes  
And I from doom of blood victorious freed  
Such of the Furies as there sat, appeased  
By the just sentence, nigh the court resolved  
To fix their seat; but others, whom the law  
Appeased not, with relentless tortures still  
Pursued me, till I reach'd the hallow'd soil  
Of Phoebus: stretch'd before his shrine, I swore  
Foodless to waste my wretched life away,  
Unless the god, by whom I was undone,  
Would save me: from the golden tripod burst  
The voice divine, and sent me to this shore,  
Commanding me to bear the image hence,  
Which fell from Jove, and in the Athenian land  
To fix it. What the oracular voice assign'd  
My safety, do thou aid: if we obtain  
The statue of the goddess, I no more  
With madness shall be tortured, but this arm  
Shall place thee in my bark, which ploughs the waves  
With many an oar, and to Mycenae safe

Bear thee again. Show then a sister's love,  
O thou most dear; preserve thy father's house,  
Preserve me too; for me destruction waits,  
And all the race of Pelops, if we bear not  
This heaven-descended image from the shrine.

*LEADER*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

For strangers full of peril were the attempt.

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

I could not: yet thy promptness I approve.

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

That in the shades of night we may escape?

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

Within are sacred guards; we 'scape not them.

*ORESTES*

Ruin then waits us: how can we be saved?

*IPHIGENIA*

I think I have some new and safe device.

*ORESTES*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

Thy sufferings for my purpose I will use,-

*ORESTES*

To form devices quick is woman's wit.

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

If to aught good, avail thee of my ills.

*IPHIGENIA*

Unmeet then at this shrine to offer thee.

*ORESTES*

What cause alleged? I reach not thine intent.

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

How is the image thus more promptly gain'd?

*IPHIGENIA*

Thee I will hallow in the ocean waves.

*ORESTES*

The statue we would gain is in the temple.

*IPHIGENIA*

That, by thy touch polluted, I would cleanse.

*ORESTES*

Where? On the watery margin of the main?

*IPHIGENIA*

Where thy tall bark secured with cables rides.

*ORESTES*

And who shall bear the image in his hands?

*IPHIGENIA*

Myself; profaned by any touch, but mine.

*ORESTES*

What of this blood shall on my friend be charged?

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*ORESTES*

In secret this, or to the king disclosed?

*IPHIGENIA*

With his assent; I cannot hide it from him.

*ORESTES*

My bark with ready oars attends thee near.

*IPHIGENIA*

That all be well appointed, be thy charge.

*ORESTES*

One thing alone remains; that these conceal  
Our purpose: but address them, teach thy tongue  
Persuasive words: a woman hath the power  
To melt the heart to pity: thus perchance  
All things may to our warmest wish succeed.

*IPHIGENIA*

Ye train of females, to my soul most dear,  
On you mine eyes are turn'd, on you depends  
My fate; with prosperous fortune to be bless'd,  
Or to be nothing, to my country lost,  
Of a dear kinsman and a much-loved brother  
Deprived. This plea I first would urge, that we  
Are women, and have hearts by nature form'd  
To love each other, of our mutual trusts  
Most firm preservers. Touching our design,  
Be silent, and assist our flight: naught claims  
More honour than the faithful tongue. You see  
How the same fortune links us three, most dear  
Each to the other, to revisit safe  
Our country, or to die. If I am saved,  
That thou mayst share my fortune, I to Greece  
Will bring thee safe: but thee by this right hand,  
Thee I conjure, and thee; by this loved cheek  
Thee, by thy knees, by all that in your house  
Is dearest to you, father, mother, child,  
If you have children. What do you reply?

Which of you speaks assent? Or which dissents?  
But be you all assenting: for my plea  
If you approve not, ruin falls on me,  
And my unhappy brother too must die.

*LEADER*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*(To ORESTES and PYLADES)*

To enter now the temple be thy part,  
And thine: for soon the monarch of the land  
Will come, inquiring if the strangers yet  
Have bow'd their necks as victims at the shrine.  
Goddess revered, who in the dreadful bay  
Of Aulis from my father's slaughtering hand  
Didst save me; save me now, and these: through thee,  
Else will the voice of Phoebus be no more  
Held true by mortals. From this barbarous land  
To Athens go propitious: here to dwell  
Beseems thee not; thine be a polish'd state!

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

*CHORUS (singing)*

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

And, to their spears a prey, their oars  
Brought me to these barbaric shores!  
For gold exchanged, a traffic base,  
No vulgar slave, the task is mine,  
Here at Diana's awful shrine,  
Who loves the woodland hind to chase,  
The virgin priestess to attend,  
Daughter of rich Mycenae's lord;  
At other shrines her wish to bend,  
Where bleeds the victim less abhorr'd:  
No respite to her griefs she knows;  
Not so the heart inured to woes,  
As train'd to sorrow's rigid lore:  
Now comes a change; it mourns no more:  
But lo long bliss when ill succeeds,  
The anguish'd heart for ever bleeds.  
Thee, loved virgin, freed from fear  
Home the Argive bark shall bear:  
Mountain Pan, with thrilling strain,  
To the oars that dash the main  
In just cadence well agreed,  
Shall accord his wax-join'd reed:  
Phoebus, with a prophet's fire  
Sweeping o'er his seven-string'd lyre,  
And his voice attuning high  
To the swelling harmony,  
Thee shall guide the wild waves o'er  
To the soft Athenian shore.  
Leaving me, thy oars shall sweep  
Eager o'er the foaming deep:  
Thou shalt catch the rising gales  
Swelling in thy firm-bound sails;  
And thy bark in gallant pride  
Light shall o'er the billows glide.  
Might I through the lucid air  
Fly where rolls yon flaming car,  
O'er those loved and modest bowers,  
Where I pass'd my youthful hours,  
I would stay my weary flight,  
Wave no more my pennons light,  
But, amid the virgin band,  
Once my loved companions, stand:  
Once mid them my charms could move,  
Blooming then, the flames of love;  
When the mazy dance I trod,  
While with joy my mother glow'd;  
When to vie in grace was mine,  
And in splendid robes to shine;  
For, with radiant tints impress'd,  
Glow'd for me the gorgeous vest;  
And these tresses gave new grace,  
As their ringlets shade my face.

*(THOAS and his retinue enter.)*

THOAS

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

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

She comes, and will inform thee, king, of all.

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

THOAS

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

IPHIGENIA

There in the portal, monarch, stay thy step.

THOAS

What of strange import in the shrine hath chanced?

IPHIGENIA

Things ominous: that word I, holy, speak.

THOAS

To what is tuned thy proem? Plainly speak.

IPHIGENIA

Not pure the victims, king, you lately seized.

THOAS

What show'd thee this? Or speak'st thou but thy thought?

IPHIGENIA

Back turn'd the sacred image on its base.

THOAS

Spontaneous turn'd, or by an earthquake moved?

IPHIGENIA

Spontaneous, and, averted, closed its eyes.

THOAS

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

IPHIGENIA

That, and naught else; for horrible their deeds.

THOAS

What, have they slain some Scythian on the shore?

IPHIGENIA

They came polluted with domestic blood.

THOAS

What blood? I have a strong desire to know.

IPHIGENIA

They slew their mother with confederate swords.

*THOAS*

O Phoebus! This hath no barbarian dared.

*IPHIGENIA*

All Greece indignant chased them from her realms.

*THOAS*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

To the pure air, from stain of blood removed.

*THOAS*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

I learn'd it as the statue started back.

*THOAS*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

Now with sweet blandishments they soothe my soul.

*THOAS*

Some glozing tale from Argos telling thee?

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*THOAS*

That thou mayst save them for their pleasing news?

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*THOAS*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

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

*THOAS*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

The law ordain'd in reverence we must hold.

*THOAS*

Are then thy lavers ready, and the sword?

*IPHIGENIA*

First I would cleanse them with ablutions pure.

*THOAS*

In fountain waters, or the ocean wave?

*IPHIGENIA*

All man's pollutions doth the salt sea cleanse.

*THOAS*

More holy to the goddess will they bleed.

*IPHIGENIA*

And better what I have in charge advance.

*THOAS*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

This requires solitude: more must I do.

*THOAS*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

The image of the goddess I must cleanse.

*THOAS*

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

*IPHIGENIA*

I could not else have borne it from its base.

*THOAS*

Just is thy provident and pious thought;  
For this by all the state thou art revered.

*IPHIGENIA*

Know'st thou what next I would?

*THOAS*

'Tis thine thy will  
To signify.

*IPHIGENIA*

Give for these strangers chains.

*THOAS*

To what place can they fly?

*IPHIGENIA*

A Grecian knows  
Naught faithful.

*THOAS*

Of my train go some for chains.

*(Some attendants go out.)*

*IPHIGENIA*

Let them lead forth the strangers.

*THOAS*

Be it so,

*IPHIGENIA*

And veil their faces.

*THOAS*

From the sun's bright beams?

*IPHIGENIA*

Some of thy train send with me.

*THOAS*

These shall go,  
Attending thee.

*IPHIGENIA*

One to the city send.

*THOAS*

With what instructions charged?

*IPHIGENIA*

That all remain  
Within their houses.

*THOAS*

That the stain of blood  
They meet not?

*IPHIGENIA*

These things have pollution in them.

*THOAS*

Go thou, and bear the instructions.

*(An attendant departs.)*

*IPHIGENIA*

That none come  
In sight,

*THOAS*

How wisely careful for the city!

*IPHIGENIA*

Warn our friends most.

*THOAS*

This speaks thy care for me.

*IPHIGENIA*

Stay thou before the shrine.

*THOAS*

To what intent?

*IPHIGENIA*

Cleanse it with lustral fires.

*THOAS*

That thy return  
May find it pure?

*IPHIGENIA*

But when the strangers come  
Forth from the temple,-

*THOAS*

What must I then do?

*IPHIGENIA*

Spread o'er thine eyes a veil.

*THOAS*

That I receive not  
Pollution?

*IPHIGENIA*

Tedious if my stay appear,-

*THOAS*

What bounds may be assign'd?

*IPHIGENIA*

Deem it not strange.

*THOAS*

At leisure what the rites require perform.

*IPHIGENIA*

May this lustration as I wish succeed!

*THOAS*

Thy wish is mine.

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

*IPHIGENIA (chanting)*

But from the temple, see,  
The strangers come, the sacred ornaments,  
The hallow'd lambs-for I with blood must wash  
This execrable blood away,-the light  
Of torches, and what else my rites require  
To purify these strangers to the goddess.  
But to the natives of this land my voice  
Proclaims, from this pollution far remove,  
Art thou attendant at the shrine, who liftest  
Pure to the gods thy hands, or nuptial rites  
Dost thou prepare, or pregnant matron; hence,  
Begone, that this defilement none may touch.  
Thou, daughter of Latona and high Jove,  
O royal virgin, if I cleanse the stain  
Of these, and where I ought with holy rites  
Address thee, thou shalt hold thy residence  
In a pure mansion; we too shall be bless'd.  
More though I speak not, goddess, unexpress'd,  
All things to thee and to the gods are known.

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

*CHORUS (singing)*

Latona's glorious offspring claims the song,  
Born the hallow'd shades among,  
Where fruitful Delos winds her valleys low;  
Bright-hair'd Phoebus, skill'd to inspire  
Raptures, as he sweeps the lyre,  
And she that glories in the unerring bow.  
From the rocky ridges steep,  
At whose feet the hush'd waves sleep,  
Left their far-famed native shore,

Them the exulting mother bore  
To Parnassus, on whose heights  
Bacchus shouting holds his rites;  
Glittering in the burnish'd shade,  
By the laurel's branches made,  
Where the enormous dragon lies,  
Brass his scales, and flame his eyes,  
Earth-born monster, that around  
Rolling guards the oracular ground;  
Him, while yet a sportive child,  
In his mother's arms that smiled,  
Phoebus slew, and seized the shrine  
Whence proceeds the voice divine:  
On the golden tripod placed,  
Throne by falsehood ne'er disgraced,  
Where Castalia's pure stream flows,  
He the fates to mortal shows.  
But when Themis, whom of yore  
Earth, her fruitful mother, bore,  
From her hallow'd seat he drove,  
Earth to avenge her daughter strove,  
Forming visions of the night,  
Which, in rapt dreams hovering light,  
All that Time's dark volumes hold  
Might to mortal sense unfold,  
When in midnight's sable shades  
Sleep the silent couch invades:  
Thus did Earth her vengeance boast.  
His prophetic honours lost,  
Royal Phoebus speeds his flight  
To Olympus, on whose height  
At the throne of Jove he stands,  
Stretching forth his little hands,  
Suppliant that the Pythian shrine  
Feel no more the wrath divine;  
That the goddess he appease;  
That her nightly visions cease.  
Jove with smiles beheld his son  
Early thus address his throne,  
Suing with ambitious pride  
O'er the rich shrine to preside;  
He, assenting, bow'd his head.  
Straight the nightly visions fled;  
And prophetic dreams no more  
Hover'd slumbering mortals o'er:  
Now to Phoebus given again,  
All his honours pure remain;  
Votaries distant regions send  
His frequented throne to attend:  
And the firm decrees of fate  
On his faithful voice await.

*(A MESSENGER enters.)*

MESSENGER

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

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

Wherefore? at thy command if I must speak.

MESSENGER

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

LEADER

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

MESSENGER

Whither? for what is doing he should know.

LEADER

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

MESSENGER

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

LEADER

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

MESSENGER

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

*(Shouting)*

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

*(THOAS and his attendants enter from the temple.)*

THOAS

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

MESSENGER

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

THOAS

With what intent? or what advantage sought?

*MESSENGER*

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

*THOAS*

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

*MESSENGER*

To save Orestes: this too will amaze thee.

*THOAS*

Whom? What Orestes? Clytemnestra's son?

*MESSENGER*

Him at the altar hallow'd now to bleed.

*THOAS*

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

*MESSENGER*

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

*THOAS*

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

*MESSENGER*

When to the shore we came, where station'd rode  
The galley of Orestes, by the rocks  
Conceal'd to us, whom thou hadst sent with her  
To hold the strangers' chains, the royal maid  
Made signs that we retire, and stand aloof,  
As if with secret rites she would perform  
The purposed expiation: on she went,  
In her own hands holding the strangers' chains  
Behind them: not without suspicion-this,  
Yet by thy servants, king, allow'd. At length,  
That we might deem her in some purpose high  
Employ'd, she raised her voice, and chanted loud  
Barbaric strains, as if with mystic rites  
She cleansed the stain of blood. When we had sat  
A tedious while, it came into our thought,  
That from their chains unloosed, the stranger youths  
Might kill her, and escape by flight: yet fear  
Of seeing what we ought not, kept us still  
In silence; but at length we all resolved  
To go, though not permitted, where they were.  
There we behold the Grecian bark with oars  
Well furnish'd, wing'd for flight; and at their seats,

Grasping their oars, were fifty rowers; free  
From chains beside the stern the two youths stood  
Some from the prow relieved the keel with poles;  
Some weigh'd the anchors up; the climbing ropes  
Some hasten'd, through their hands the cables drew,  
Launch'd the light bark, and gave her to the main.  
But when we saw their treacherous wiles, we rush'd  
Heedless of danger, seized the priestess, seized  
The halsers, hung upon the helm, and strove  
To rend the rudder-bands away. Debate  
Now rose:—"What mean you, sailing o'er the seas,  
The statue and the priestess from the land  
By stealth conveying? Whence art thou, and who,  
That bear'st her, like a purchased slave, away?"  
He said, "I am her brother; be of this  
Inform'd; Orestes, son of Agamemnon:  
My sister, so long lost, I bear away,  
Recover'd here." But naught the less for that  
Held we the priestess, and by force would lead  
Again to thee: hence dreadful on our cheeks  
The blows; for in their hands no sword they held,  
Nor we; but many a rattling stroke the youths  
Dealt with their fists, against our sides and breasts  
Their arms fierce darting, till our batter'd limbs  
Were all disabled: now with dreadful marks  
Disfigured, up the precipice we fly,  
Some bearing on their heads, some in their eyes  
The bloody bruises: standing on the heights,  
Our fight was safer, and we hurl'd at them  
Fragments of rocks; but, standing on the stern,  
The archers with their arrows drove us thence;  
And now a swelling wave roll'd in, which drove  
The galley towards the land. The sailors fear'd  
The sudden swell: on his left arm sustain'd,  
Orestes bore his sister through the tide,  
Mounted the bark's tall side, and on the deck  
Safe placed her, and Diana's holy image,  
Which fell from heaven; from the midship his voice  
He sent aloud:—"Ye youths, that in this bark  
From Argos plough'd the deep, now ply your oars,  
And dash the billows till they foam: those things  
Are ours, for which we swept the Euxine sea.  
And steer'd our course within its clashing rocks."  
They gave a cheerful shout, and with their oars  
Dash'd the salt wave. The galley, while it rode  
Within the harbour, work'd its easy way;  
But having pass'd its mouth, the swelling flood  
Roll'd on it, and with sudden force the wind  
Impetuous rising drove it back: their oars  
They slack'd not, stoutly struggling 'gainst the wave;  
But towards the land the refluent flood impell'd  
The galley: then the royal virgin stood,

And pray'd: "O daughter of Latona, save me,  
Thy priestess save; from this barbaric land  
To Greece restore me, and forgive my thefts:  
For thou, O goddess, dost thy brother love,  
Deem then that I love those allied to me."  
The mariners responsive to her prayer  
Shouted loud paeans, and their naked arms,  
Each cheering each, to their stout oars apply.  
But nearer and yet nearer to the rock  
The galley drove: some rush'd into the sea,  
Some strain'd the ropes that bind the loosen'd sails.  
Straight was I hither sent to thee, O king,  
To inform thee of these accidents. But haste,  
Take chains and gyves with thee: for if the flood  
side not to a calm, there is no hope  
Of safety to the strangers. Be assured,  
That Neptune, awful monarch of the main,  
Remembers Troy; and, hostile to the race  
Of Pelops, will deliver to thy hands,  
And to thy people, as is meet, the son  
Of Agamemnon; and bring back to the  
His sister, who the goddess hath betray'd,  
Unmindful of the blood at Aulis shed.

*LEADER*

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

*THOAS*

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

*(MINERVA appears above.)*

*MINERVA*

Whither, O royal Thoas, dost thou lead  
This vengeful chase? Attend: Minerva speaks.  
Cease thy pursuit, and stop this rushing flood  
Of arms; for hither, by the fateful voice  
Of Phoebus, came Orestes, warn'd to fly  
The anger of the Furies, to convey  
His sister to her native Argos back,  
And to my land the sacred image bear.

Thoas, I speak to thee: him, whom thy rage  
Would kill, Orestes, on the wild waves seized,  
Neptune, to do me grace, already wafts  
On the smooth sea, the swelling surges calm'd.  
And thou, Orestes (*for my voice thou hear'st,*  
*Though distant far*), to my commands attend:  
Go, with the sacred image, which thou bear'st,  
And with thy sister: but when thou shalt come  
To Athens built by gods, there is a place  
On the extreme borders of the Attic land,  
Close neighbouring to Carystia's craggy height,  
Sacred; my people call it Alae: there  
A temple raise, and fix the statue there,  
Which from the Tauric goddess shall receive  
Its name, and from thy toils, which thou, through Greece  
Driven by the Furies' maddening stings, hast borne;  
And mortals shall in future times with hymns  
The Tauric goddess there, Diana, hail.  
And be this law establish'd; when the feast  
For thy deliverance from this shrine is held,  
To a man's throat that they apply the sword,  
And draw the blood, in memory of these rites,  
That of her honours naught the goddess lose.  
Thou, Iphigenia, on the hallow'd heights  
Of Brauron on this goddess shalt attend  
Her priestess, dying shalt be there interr'd,  
Graced with the honours of the gorgeous vests  
Of finest texture, in their houses left  
By matrons who in childbed pangs expired.  
These Grecian dames back to their country lead,  
I charge thee; justice this return demands,  
For I saved thee, when on the mount of Mars  
The votes were equal; and from that decree  
The shells in number equal still absolve.  
But, son of Agamemnon, from this land  
Thy sister bear; nor, Thoas, be thou angry.

#### THOAS

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

#### MINERVA

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

*(MINERVA vanishes.)*

*CHORUS (chanting)*

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