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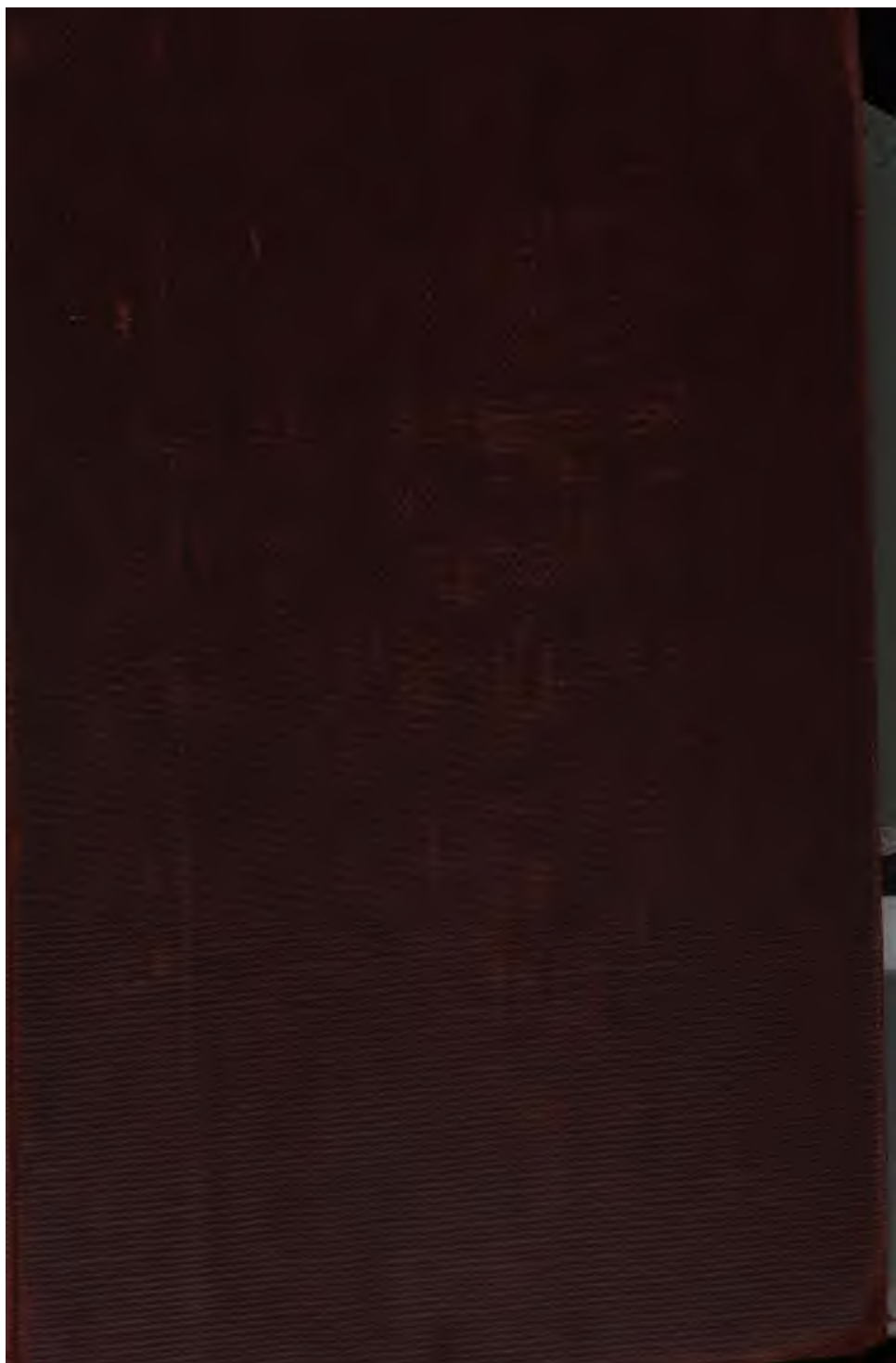
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THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA



OXFORD: HORACE HART  
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY



THE  
TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

BY

ELLA ISABEL HARRIS, PH.D. (YALE)

LONDON: HENRY FROWDE  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS WAREHOUSE  
AMEN CORNER, E.C.  
NEW YORK: 91 & 93 FIFTH AVENUE

1904

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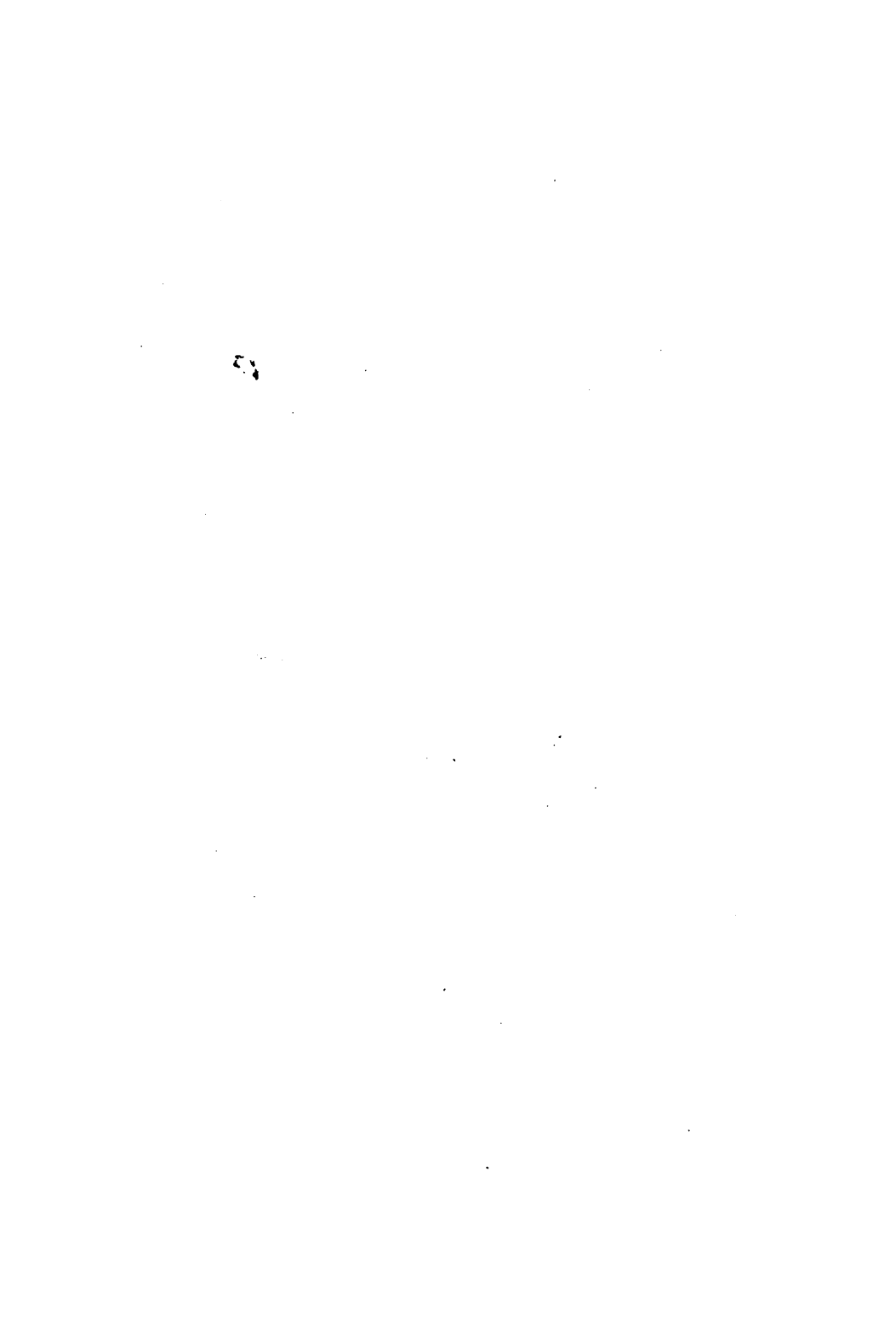
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TO PROFESSOR  
ALBERT STANBURROUGH COOK

WITH GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF WHAT IT OWES TO  
HIS CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND LITERARY INSIGHT,  
THIS TRANSLATION IS DEDICATED BY

THE TRANSLATOR



## PREFACE

THE student of the English drama finds constant allusion to the influence of Seneca upon the development of English tragedy, but he seldom has such command of Latin as will enable him freely to study Seneca in the original; and should he seek a first-hand knowledge of the Senecan plays and of the nature of their influence, a difficulty is at once presented by the fact that for many years there has been no English translation available, the old translations of 1581 and 1702 having been long out of print. It was my own sense of the need of a sufficiently literal and otherwise adequate translation of the Roman tragedies, while I was engaged in the study and teaching of the later drama, that occasioned the present translation.

In undertaking the work, I was at once met by the question of form. Should the translation be in prose or verse? If in verse, should any attempt be made to render the lyric measures of the choruses? The first question was easily answered, since blank verse has long been accepted as a fairly adequate rendering of the rhythm found in the dramatic portions of the tragedies, and has besides the advantage of being the poetic form most acceptable to English ears for



THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA





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# MAD HERCULES



*DRAMATIS PERSONÆ*

HERCULES.

AMPHITRYON.

LYCUS.

THESEUS.

JUNO.

MEGARA.

THE CHILDREN OF HERCULES.

CHORUS OF THEBANS.

SCENE: *Thebes.*

# MAD HERCULES

## ACT I

### SCENE I

*Juno, alone.*

THE Thunderer's sister, for that name alone  
Is left me, widowed, I am driven forth  
From heaven's heights and ever-faithless Jove;  
Forced from the sky, have giv'n to concubines  
My place, must dwell on earth while they hold heaven.  
High in the zenith of the icy north 6  
The star Arcturus guides the Argive fleet;  
There where the day grows long with early spring,  
The bull that bore away the Tyrian maid  
Shines o'er the waves; there the Atlantides, 10  
Aimlessly roaming, feared by ships at sea,  
Rise, and Orion, threatening with his sword,  
Affrights the gods; there golden Perseus gleams;  
There shines the constellation of the twins,  
The bright Tyndaridæ,—for birth of these 15  
The floating land stood still. And not alone  
Do Bacchus and his mother dwell with gods:  
Lest any place be free from infamy,  
The sky must wear the Gnosian maiden's crown.  
But these are ancient griefs that we lament; 20  
How often has the single land of Thebes,

Harsh and detested, full of impious ones,  
 Made me a stepdame! Jupiter permits  
 Victorious Alcmena to ascend  
 The skies and hold my place; the promised star     25  
 May be the habitation of her son,—  
 The world at his creation lost a day,  
 And Phœbus, bidden hold his light concealed  
 In ocean, slowly lit the western sky.  
 My hatred will not lightly die away,             30  
 Enduring anger stirs my wrathful soul;  
 Anger shall banish peace, my bitter rage  
 Shall wage eternal war. What war remains?  
 All fearful things the hostile earth brings forth,  
 Whatever dreadful, savage, harsh, or wild,         35  
 Or pestilential thing the sea or air  
 Creates, has been subdued and overthrown;  
 He conquers, waxes strong through ills, enjoys  
 Our anger, into glory turns our hate,  
 And I, in setting all too heavy tasks,             40  
 Increase his glory, prove him son of Jove.  
 Where with near torch the sun at rise and set  
 Touches at east and west the Ethiop's land,  
 Fame of his valor spreads, and all the world  
 Proclaim him god; already monsters fail.         45  
 A lighter task it is for Hercules  
 To do my bidding than for me to bid,—  
 With joy he undertakes to do my will.  
 What harsh or tyrannous decree can harm  
 This dauntless youth? The things he feared and slew  
 He bears as weapons, panoplied he comes         51  
 With hydra's spoil and lion's. Lands enough  
 Do not lie open, he has burst apart  
 Th' infernal monarch's portals, brought to light

The wealth of Hades' conquered king ; I saw, 55  
Myself I saw him at his father's feet  
Lay down the spoils he snatched from night, and death,  
And vanquished Dis. Why leads he not in chains  
Him who by lot was equal made with Jove ?  
Why rules he not in conquered Erebus ? 60  
Why lays he not the Stygian kingdom bare ?  
'Tis not enough that he returns again,  
The federation of the world of shades  
Is broken, from the lowest depths a path  
Leads upward for return, the secret ways 65  
Of cruel death are opened. Ah ! and he,  
Bold since he burst the prison of the shades,  
Now triumphs over me and proudly leads  
Through Argive towns the fierce black dog of hell.  
I've seen the day at sight of Cerberus 70  
Fail and the sun grow fearful, terror woke  
In me as well, I saw the threefold head  
Of Pluto's vanquished monster, and I feared  
Because I had commanded. But too long  
I linger, grieving over petty ills ; 75  
I needs must fear for heav'n, lest he who took  
Hell captive should be master of the skies,  
And snatch the scepter from his father's hand.  
He seeks no quiet pathway to the stars,  
As Bacchus did, through ruin he would make 80  
His way, would govern in an empty world.  
Tried strength he boasts, by bearing up the sky  
Learned that he might have gained it by his might :  
Upon his head he bore the world nor bent  
Beneath the burden of its mighty mass ; 85  
Lightly upon the neck of Hercules  
The vault of heaven rested, on his back



He bore th' unshaken stars, the sky, yea, bore  
 My weight down-pressing. To the realms above  
 He seeks a path. Up vengeance, up and strike— 90  
 Strike him who meditates such wondrous deeds ;  
 Join battle with him, with thine own hand strive,  
 Why delegate thy wrath ? Wild beasts may go,  
 Eurystheus, wearied, cease to give new toils.  
 Let loose the Titans who dared storm Jove's realm, 95  
 Lay wide the hollow peak of Sicily,  
 Let Doria, trembling underneath the blows,  
 Set free the buried monster—but him too  
 Alcides conquered ; dost thou seek to find  
 Alcides' peer ? There is none but himself. 100  
 Alcides now must war against himself.  
 From lowest depths of Tartarus called forth,  
 Come, Furies, from your flaming locks spread fire,  
 And wield with cruel hand your serpent scourge.  
 Go, proud one, seek thyself a seat in heaven 105  
 And scorn thy human lot. Dost thou believe  
 The gloomy shades and Styx are left behind ?  
 Here will I show thee hell ; will call again  
 Discord from where she lies in deepest gloom,  
 Beyond the place of exile of the damned, 110  
 Imprisoned in a mighty mountain cave ;  
 Will drag from lowest depths of Pluto's realm  
 Whatever there is left ; come, loathsome crime,  
 Impiety that drinks the blood of kin,  
 Fierce frenzy, fury armed against itself— 115  
 Here, here, I find my ministers of wrath.  
 Come then, ye nimble servitors of Dis,  
 Wave high your glowing torch ; Megæra, lead  
 Thy serpent-crowned and dreadful company ;  
 Snatch from the funeral pyre with baleful hand 120

A huge and glowing brand ; haste, seek revenge  
 For violated Styx ; inflame his heart ;  
 Impair his mind ; so, fiercer than the fires  
 Of Ætna's forge he'll rage. But thus to move  
 Alcides, stung with bitter rage and crazed, 125  
 First, Juno, thou must be thyself insane.  
 Why rav'st thou not ? Me first, me first o'erwhelm,  
 Ye sisters, overthrow my reason first,  
 That something worthy of a stepdame's wrath  
 I may at last attempt. My mind is changed, 130  
 With strength unbroken let him come again,  
 I pray, and see again, unharmed, his sons.  
 The day is come in which the hated strength  
 Of Hercules shall even make me glad.  
 Me he o'ercame, himself he shall o'ercome ; 135  
 Returned from hell shall long again for death.  
 I glory now that he is son of Jove ;  
 I will assist him, that with steady aim  
 His shafts may fly ; my hand shall hold the bow,  
 Myself will guide the weapons of his rage, 140  
 And Hercules, when going forth to war,  
 Shall have at length my aid ; the crime complete,  
 Then let his father to the skies admit  
 Those blood-stained hands. The war must be begun,  
 Day dawns and from his golden resting-place 145  
 Bright Titan comes.

## SCENE II

*Chorus of Thebans.*

The stars are shining only here and there  
 In heaven, their light is pale ; the conquered night  
 Collects at day's return her wandering fires,

Their shining ranks are closed by Lucifer ; 150  
 The icy constellation of the north,  
 The Wagoner calls back the light of day ;  
 Already leading forth his azure steeds,  
 From Cæta's summit Titan looks abroad ;  
 Already dewy morning stains with red 155  
 The brake that Theban mænads gave to fame,  
 And Phœbus' sister flies—but to return.  
 Hard toil arises bringing back all cares  
 And opening every door.  
 The shepherd, having sent his herd afield, 160  
 Gathers the grass still sparkling with the rime ;  
 The hornless bullock sports at liberty  
 About the open meadows, while the dams  
 Refill their empty udders ; aimlessly  
 In the soft herbage roams the wanton kid ; 165  
 The Thracian Philomela sits and sings  
 On topmost bough, exults to spread her wings  
 In the new sun, near to her querulous nest ;  
 The general chorus of the happy birds  
 With mingled voices greets the day's return. 170  
 When by the breeze the loosened sails are filled,  
 The sailor trusts his vessel to the winds,  
 Uncertain of his life. The fisher leans  
 Above the broken cliff and baits his hook,  
 Or waits with ready hand to seize the prey— 175  
 He feels the trembling fish upon his line.  
 Such tranquil peace is theirs who stainless live  
 Content at home with little. Boundless hopes  
 Wander through cities, and unmeasured fears.  
 At the proud portals, the stern gates of kings, 180  
 One sleepless waits ; one, covetous of gold,  
 And poor amid his hoarded wealth, collects

Unending riches ; popular applause,  
The common voice more fickle than the waves,  
Makes one man proud, puffed up with empty air ; 185  
Another, basely making merchandise  
Of brawling quarrels in the noisy courts,  
Sells wrath and empty words for gold. Few know  
Repose untroubled ; mindful of swift time,  
Few use the years that never will return. 190  
While fate permits, live happy ; life's swift course  
Is quickly run, and by the winged hours  
The circle of the flying years is turned ;  
The cruel sisters ply their wheel, nor turn  
Backward their thread ; uncertain of their lot, 195  
The race of men are borne by rapid fates  
To meet their death, and of their own will seek  
The Stygian waves. Alcides, strong of heart,  
Too soon thou soughtest out the mournful shade—  
The Parcæ come at the appointed hour, 200  
And none may linger when their voice commands,  
None stay the fatal day ; the urn receives  
The fleeting generations. Fair renown  
May bear one's name through many distant lands,  
And garrulous rumor praise him, to the skies 205  
Advance his glory ; in his lofty car  
Another rides ; me let my native land  
Conceal within a safe and unknown home.  
He who loves quiet lives to gray old age ;  
The lowly fortunes of a humble hearth, 210  
Although obscure, are certain. From the heights  
He falls who boasts a bolder heart. But see,  
Sad, with loose hair, leading her little ones,  
Comes Megara ; advancing slow with age,  
Alcides' father follows. 215

## ACT II

### SCENE I

*Amphitryon, Megara, The Children.*

*Amphitryon.* Great ruler of Olympus, Judge of earth,

Put to my heavy grief and misery  
At length an end. For me untroubled light  
Has never shined, one sorrow's end but marks  
A step to future ills, straightway new foes 220  
Are ready to be met. But late returned,  
His happy home just reached, another foe  
Must be subdued ; he finds no quiet hour,  
None free from toil save while he waits the word.  
Unfriendly Juno, even from the first, 225  
Pursued him ; was his infancy exempt ?  
He conquered monsters ere he knew their name ;  
Twin serpents lifted up their crested heads—  
The infant crept to meet them, with calm glance  
And gentle, gazed upon their fiery eyes ; 230  
With face serene he grasped their twisted folds  
And crushed with tender hand the swelling throats,  
And so essayed the Hydra. In the chase  
He took the swift wild beast of Mænalus,  
Whose head was beautiful with branching gold ; 235  
The lion, terror of Nemea, groaned,  
Crushed by the sinewy hand of Hercules ;  
The ghastly stables of the Thracian steeds—

Shall I recall them? Or the king who gave  
 Food to those horses? Or shall I recall 240  
 The wild Arcadian boar who from the heights  
 Of wooded Erymanthus caused the groves  
 Of Arcady to tremble? Or the bull,  
 The terror of a hundred Cretan towns?  
 Among the far Hesperian herds he slew 245  
 Tartessus' three-formed king and drove away  
 His booty from the farthest west—the slopes  
 Of Mount Cithæron pasture now those flocks.  
 When told to seek the land of summer suns  
 And torrid days, the sun-scorched realm, he rent 250  
 The hills apart; that barrier broken through,  
 He made a pathway for the raging seas.  
 Then the rich groves of the Hesperides  
 He rifled, from the sleepless dragon bore  
 The golden spoil; then Lerna's snake o'ercame 255  
 And forced it learn by fire the way to die.  
 The foul Stymphalian birds whose outspread wings  
 Obscured the sky, he sought among the clouds.  
 He was not conquered by the maiden queen  
 Who near Thermodon rules the virgin troops. 260  
 His hand, for every noble work prepared,  
 Shunned not the loathsome task of making clean  
 The stables of Augeas.—What avail  
 These labors? He is absent from a world  
 His hand preserved. The lands that claim him feel 265  
 The author of their peace is far away.  
 Crime, prosperous and happy, now is called  
 Virtue, the good must pay obedience  
 To evil doers, might makes right, and fear  
 Is stronger than the law. These eyes have seen 270  
 Children, avengers of their father's realm,

cf. Ben Jon's  
 "Calisto" III

Slain by a savage hand, the king himself,  
 Last son of Cadmus' noble house, I saw  
 Slain, and the crown that decked his royal head  
 Torn from him. Who has tears enough for Thebes? 275  
 Land that abounds in gods, what master now  
 Is it that makes thee fear? This gracious land,  
 Out of the fertile bosom of whose fields  
 The new-born soldiery with drawn swords sprang,  
 Whose walls Jove's son, Amphion, built,—he brought  
 The stones together by his tuneful songs; 281  
 Into whose city from the heavens came,  
 Not once alone, the father of the gods;  
 Which has received and borne, and may again  
 (May it not be unlawful so to speak) 285  
 Bear gods; this land beneath the shameful yoke  
 Of tyrants now is bent. O Cadmus' race,  
 Ophion's hapless seed, how fall'n ye are.  
 Ye fear a craven exile, one who comes,  
 Shorn of his land, and yet a scourge to ours; 290  
 And he who followed up the criminal  
 By land and sea, whose arm was strong to break  
 The cruel scepter's might, is now afar  
 In servitude and bears himself the yoke,  
 While Thebes, the land of Hercules, is ruled 295  
 By exiled Lycus. But not long he rules,  
 Alcides will return and find revenge;  
 Will suddenly arise to upper day;  
 Will find or make a path. Return, I pray,  
 Unharm'd, a conqueror to thy native Thebes. 300  
*Megara.* Come forth, my husband, banish with thy  
           hand  
 The scattered darkness. If no homeward way  
 Remains and if for thee the road is closed,

Yet break through earth and come, and with thee bring  
 What'er black night keeps hid. As thou hast stood  
 And through the Sundered mountains made a way 306  
 For ocean's flood, when thy resistless might  
 Laid open riven Tempe—here and there  
 The mountain parted yielding to thy breast,  
 And through its broken banks Thessalia's stream 310  
 Rushed onward in new channels—seeking thus  
 Thy parents, children, fatherland, break forth  
 And with thee bring the buried past; restore  
 Whatever eager time has borne away  
 In the swift passage of the many years. 315  
 Drive forth the people who, forgetting all,  
 Now fear the light; unworthy spoils are thine,  
 If nought but what was ordered thou shouldst bring.  
 Too long I chatter, knowing not our fate.  
 When comes the day that I may once again 320  
 Embrace thee, clasp thy hand, nor make complaint  
 Of thy forgetfulness and slow return?  
 O ruler of the gods, to thee shall fall  
 A hundred untamed bulls; to thee be paid,  
 Grain-giver, secret rites, to thee shall wave 325  
 The torches in Eleusis' silent groves;  
 Then shall I deem my brother lives again,  
 My father flourishes and holds his throne.  
 If thou art stayed by greater strength than thine,  
 Thee would we follow. Save by thy return 330  
 Or drag us with thee—thou wilt drag us down,  
 Nor any god lift up the weak again.  
*Amphitryon.* O sharer of our blood, with constancy  
 Keeping thy faith to great-souled Hercules,  
 Guarding his sons, take courage, have good hope! 335  
 He will return, and greater than before



As hitherto he came from easy tasks.

X *Megara.* The things the wretched wish too eagerly,  
They willingly believe.

*Amphitryon.* More oft they deem  
That trouble endless which too much they fear, 340  
And he who fears looks ever for the worst.

*Megara.* Buried, submerged, beneath the world  
shut in,  
What pathway has he to the upper day?

*Amphitryon.* The same he had when through the  
arid plain,  
The sands uncertain, and the stormy sea, 345  
And gulfs that twice withdrew and twice returned,  
He found a way when, taken unawares,  
He ran aground on Syrtes' shoals and left  
His stranded ships and crossed the sea on foot.

*Megara.* Unequal fortune rarely spares great worth;  
None can with safety long expose himself 351  
To frequent dangers; he who oft escapes  
At last must meet misfortune. But behold,  
Harsh Lycus comes, with threatening face, and mien  
Like to his spirit; in his alien hand 355  
He holds the scepter which that hand usurped.

## SCENE II

*Amphitryon, Lycus and his Followers, Megara,  
The Children.*

*Lycus.* As king, I hold the rich domain of Thebes,  
All lands the deep-soiled Phocian stretches bound,  
All that Ismenus waters, and whate'er  
Cithæron from her lofty summit sees. 360

Not by the land's old laws do I possess  
 My home, an idle heir ; no noble blood  
 Nor far-famed race of royal name is mine,  
 But splendid valor. He who boasts his race  
 Boasts glory not his own. Yet who usurps 365  
 A scepter holds it in a trembling hand ;  
 Safety is in the sword alone, it guards  
 That which is thine against the people's will.  
 A ruler who is king in alien lands  
 Scarce finds his throne secure. One thing there is 370  
 Can make our rule enduring : marriage made  
 With royal Megara, our newer line  
 May take its color from her royal race.  
 Nor do I deem that she will scorn our suit,  
 Yet should she, powerless yet firm, refuse, 375  
 The house of Hercules shall be destroyed.  
 What though the deed cause hatred and reproach  
 Among the people? He who rules needs first  
 The strength to bear a people's hate unmoved.  
 Chance gives the opportunity, make trial ! 380  
 For see she stands, in mourning garments veiled,  
 Beside the altars of the guardian gods,  
 While near her Hercules' true father waits.  
*Megara.* [*Aside.*] Scourge and destroyer of our  
 royal race,  
 What unknown evil dost thou now prepare? 385  
*Lycus.* O thou who bearest an illustrious name,  
 Kingly of lineage, for a moment hear  
 With patient kindliness my words. If hate  
 Must live eternal in the human heart,  
 If anger once conceived ne'er leaves the breast, 390  
 If happy and unhappy must alike  
 Bear arms, eternal wars would ruin all ;

The devastated fields would lie untill'd ;  
 And homes be burned, and nations find a grave  
 Beneath the ashes. 'Tis expedient 395  
 For conquerors to wish for peace restored,  
 'Tis needful for the conquered :—share our realm,  
 Accept my hand. With sternly fixed regard,  
 Why silent stand ?

*Megara.* And shall I touch the hand  
 My parents' blood has stained, the hand that slew 400  
 My brothers? Sooner will the sun go down  
 Behind the eastern sky, or rise again  
 From out the west, and sooner snow and fire  
 Make peaceful compact ; sooner Scylla join  
 Sicilia and Ausonia ; sooner far 405  
 Euripus with its swiftly changing tides  
 Shall wash with listless waves Eubœa's shores.  
 'Tis thou hast taken from me father, realm,  
 My brothers, home, and country ; what remains?  
 One thing remains more dear than home or realm, 410  
 Father or brothers—'tis my hate of thee.  
 It grieves me that I share it with the land,  
 Measured by hers, how small a thing is mine.  
 Rule arrogantly, govern with proud heart,  
 Th' avenging god pursues the proud man's steps. 415  
 I know the Theban realm, what need to speak  
 Of mothers who have dared and suffered crimes ;  
 Of double guilt, of him who mingled names  
 Of husband, son and father? Or to name  
 The brothers' hostile camp, their funeral pyres? 420  
 The haughty mother, child of Tantalus,  
 By sorrows burdened, stands a mournful stone  
 In Phrygian Sipylos, Cadmus still,  
 Lifting his head dreadful with serpents' crests,

Goes fleeing through Illyria's realm and leaves 425  
 The long trail of his dragging body's length.  
 Such precedents are thine, bear rule at will,  
 If but our realm's accustomed fate is thine.

*Lycus.* Thou ravest, cease thy savage words, and  
 learn

From thy Alcides how thou shouldst obey 430  
 A king's command. Though my victorious hand  
 Wield here a captured sceptre, though I rule  
 The lands my arms have conquered without fear  
 Of law, yet briefly in my own defence  
 I'd speak. In bloody war thy father died, 435  
 Thy brother fell? No bounds are kept by war,  
 Nor may the drawn sword's fury be restrained  
 Nor lightly tempered; war delights in blood.  
 He for his kingdom fought, while we were drawn  
 By base desire? We ask a war's results 440  
 And not its cause. But let remembrance die.  
 When arms are by the victor laid aside  
 'Tis meet the vanquished also bury hate.  
 We would not have thee do us reverence  
 With bended knee as sovereign; we rejoice 445  
 That with such great-souled courage thou hast borne  
 Thy ruin; thou art worthy of a king:  
 Be thou my queen.

*Megara.* Throughout my fainting limbs  
 An icy shudder runs, what sinful words  
 Assail my ears? I was not terrified 450  
 When peace was broken and the crash of war  
 Rang out around the city, that I bore  
 Fearless, but shudder at this marriage bed.  
 I feel myself a captive now indeed.  
 Let chains weigh down my limbs, let tardy death 455

Be brought by creeping famine, nought avails  
To overcome my firm fidelity—

Alcides, I will still be thine in death.

*Lycus.* A husband plunged in Hades gives thee  
strength ?

*Megara.* He went to hell that he might compass  
heaven. 460

*Lycus.* The burden of the earth's mass weighs him  
down.

*Megara.* No weight can weigh down him who bore  
the skies.

*Lycus.* I will compel thee.

*Megara.* Whom thou canst compel,  
Has not yet learned to die.

*Lycus.* What princely gift  
Can equal the new bridal I would give ? 465

*Megara.* Thy death or mine.

*Lycus.* Then die, demented one.

*Megara.* I haste to meet my husband.

*Lycus.* Is a slave  
Preferred by thee before our royal throne ?

*Megara.* How many kings that slave has brought  
to death !

*Lycus.* Why serves he then a king ? why bears the  
yoke ? 470

*Megara.* If tyranny were not, would valor be ?

*Lycus.* To conquer beasts and monsters then, thou  
think'st,

Is valorous ?

*Megara.* To conquer what all fear,  
Is valorous.

*Lycus.* The shades of Tartarus 474  
Press heavy on the boaster.

*Megara.* None have found  
The path from earth to heav'n an easy road.

*Lycus.* What father makes him hope a home in  
heaven ?

*Amphitryon.* Unhappy wife of Hercules, be still;  
'Tis mine to name the father and the race  
Of great Alcides. Since that mighty man's 480  
Illustrious deeds, since by his hand he made  
Peace in whatever land sees Titan's rise  
Or setting, since the gods were kept from harm,  
And Phlegra reddened by the giant's blood,  
Is not his father yet made manifest ? 485  
We have pretended Jove ? Believe the hate  
Of Juno.

*Lycus.* Why dost thou profane great Jove ?  
The race of mortals cannot wed with gods.

*Amphitryon.* Yet such the origin of many gods.

*Lycus.* Had they been slaves before they grew to  
gods ? 490

*Amphitryon.* The Delian shepherded Admetus'  
sheep.

*Lycus.* But wandered not an exile through all  
lands.

*Amphitryon.* Upon a wandering island was he  
born,  
His mother's self a wandering fugitive. 494

*Lycus.* Did beasts or monsters make Apollo fear ?

*Amphitryon.* The dragon stained Apollo's earliest  
shafts.

*Lycus.* Thou knowest not the ills Alcides bore  
While yet an infant ?

*Amphitryon.* From his mother's womb  
By lightning torn, young Bacchus later stood

Beside his father, thunder-bearing Jove ; 500  
 And did not he who guides the moving stars  
 And makes the clouds to tremble lie concealed,  
 A child, within a cave on Ida's cliff?  
 Such high nativity costs heavy price,  
 And to be born of gods brings countless ills. 505

*Lycus.* Know, whom thou seest wretched is but  
 man.

*Amphitryon.* Call not him wretched whom thou  
 seest brave.

*Lycus.* And can we call him brave who put aside  
 His lion's skin and club to please a girl?  
 Who shone in vestments of Sidonian dye? 510  
 Shall we call brave the man whose bristling hair  
 Dripped nard, whose hands so famed for warlike  
 deeds

Struck gentle music from the tambourine?  
 Who wreathed his warlike forehead with strange  
 crowns?

*Amphitryon.* Young Bacchus did not blush to let  
 his hair 515

Flow loose and in disorder, did not blush  
 To move with step unsteady, while his robe,  
 Bright with barbaric gold, behind him trailed.  
 The brave refresh themselves from heavy toil.

*Lycus.* Eurytus' ruined house gives proof of this,  
 And bands of maidens sacrificed like sheep— 521  
 No Juno, no Eurystheus ordered this,  
 These labors are his own.

*Amphitryon.* Thou knowest not all :  
 It was indeed his work that Eryx fell,  
 By his own gauntlets slain, and that to him 525  
 The Libyan Antæus soon was joined ;

That altars dripping blood of slaughtered guests )  
 Drank, too, Busiris' blood so justly due ;  
 These are Alcides' labors, 'twas his work 529  
 That Cycnus, whom no sword might wound or slay,  
 Was forced though free from wounds to suffer death :  
 The triple monster, Geryon, by his hand  
 Was conquered ; thou shalt share the fate of these,  
 Though they ne'er sinned against the marriage bed.

*Lycus.* Whate'er for Jove is lawful is for kings 535  
 As lawful ; thou hast given Jove a wife,  
 Thou shalt give to the king. This truth, not new,  
 With thee for teacher, let thy son's wife learn :  
 Her husband willing even, she may take  
 A better husband. But if she refuse 540  
 With steadfastness the proffered marriage torch,  
 She shall be forced to bear me noble seed.

*Megara.* O shades of Creon, O ye household gods  
 Of Labdacus, O impious marriage torch  
 Of Ædipus, give ye the wonted fate 545  
 To such a marriage ! O ye bloody wives  
 Of King Ægyptus' sons, be present now !  
 Of the Danaïdes one failed to act,  
 Let me fill up the measure of their crimes,

*Lycus.* Since still unbendingly thou dost refuse 550  
 Our offered marriage, threatenest thy king,  
 Thou shalt be made to feel a scepter's power.  
 Embrace the altars—no divinity  
 Shall snatch thee from me, not if Hercules  
 Could come, a victor, through the riven earth. 555  
 [To his followers] Heap wood and let the temples burn  
 and fall

On those who suppliant seek them, let one pyre  
 Consume both wife and children with its flames.



*Amphitryon.* The father of Alcides asks of thee  
One favor which beseems me well to ask : 560  
Let me be first to die.

*Lycus.* The king who bids  
That all should suffer punishment of death  
Has yet to learn to tyrannize ; seek out  
Another vengeance, let the wretched live,  
The happy die. While grow the funeral pyres 565  
With high-heaped wood, I will, with votive gifts,  
Go honor him who rules the angry seas.

*Amphitryon.* O thou of gods most strong, of heavenly  
powers  
Ruler and king, whose thunder makes men fear,  
Restrain the cruel king's ungodly hand. 570  
Why thus in vain entreat the gods? O son,  
Hear me in whatsoever place thou art!  
Why groans the earth? Why tremble suddenly  
The temples? We are heard. It is, it is  
The sounding step of Hercules. 575

## SCENE III

*Chorus.*

O Fortune, envious ever of the brave,  
How ill thou meetest recompense to deed!  
Eurystheus rules in rest and quietness ;—  
Alcmena's son, whose hand sustained the skies,  
Must war with many monsters : he cut off 580  
The Hydra's fruitful neck ; and, when to sleep  
The dragon guardian of the precious fruit  
Had yielded up his ever-watchful eyes,  
He bore from the beguiled Hesperides

The golden apples ; he has visited 585  
The wandering Scythians in their changing homes,  
And peoples, dwellers in their native lands ;  
His foot has trod the frozen straits and seas  
Silent on silent shores—there waves rise not  
On the hard waters, for where ships have moved 590  
With all sail set, a solid path is trod  
By dwellers in Sarmatia, and the sea  
That changes with the ever-changing year  
Bears lightly sometimes horses, sometimes ships.  
He overcame the maiden queen who leads 595  
The virgin clans to war, who girds her loins  
With golden baldrick ; from her body took  
Rich spoil, the armor of her snowy breast ;—  
She paid him honor on her bended knee.  
By what hope driven headlong down to hell, 600  
Daring to tread the way without return,  
Saw'st thou Sicilian Proserpina's realm  
There neither northern blasts nor western winds  
Blow up the waters into swelling waves ;  
The shining of the twin Tyndarides 605  
Brings there to timorous sailors no relief ;  
The sea lies languid there with gloomy depths,  
And when with hungry teeth pale death bears down  
The countless people to the land of shades,  
One rower for so many is enough. 610  
Would thou mightst bind the laws of the harsh Styx,  
The distaff of the fates that turns not back !  
When thou on Nestor's Pylos madest war,  
The king who rules those many peoples fought  
With thee, against thee in his baleful hand 615  
Advanced his triple-pointed spear—he fled  
At but a wound, death's ruler feared to die.

Seize with strong hand thy fate, let in the light  
To Hades' mournful depths, to upper day  
Through pathless stretches force an easy road.      620  
With songs and supplications, Orpheus once  
Prevailed upon the cruel king of shades :  
He sought his wife Eurydice, the art  
That moved birds, woods, and rocks, delayed the streams,  
And caused the beasts to listen, calmed hell's self      625  
With unaccustomed music, and sweet sound  
Reëchoed clearly through the silent land.  
The Thracian women mourned Eurydice,  
And churlish gods wept unaccustomed tears,  
The stern-browed judges, who relentlessly      630  
Arraign the criminal and bring to light  
Old crimes, sat weeping for Eurydice,  
Until at length the arbiter of death  
Said : ' We are conquered, rise to upper day,  
I make but one condition ; thou, O wife,      635  
Follow thy husband ; look not thou behind  
To see thy wife, O husband, till thou seest  
The sky and day, and gates of Tænarus  
Are reached.' But true love cannot brook delay,  
By hasting to possess, he lost the gift.      640  
The castle that was conquered by a song,  
That castle strength can conquer.

## ACT III

### SCENE I

*Hercules, Theseus.*

*Hercules.* O thou who governest the gracious light,  
Heaven's ornament ; who in thy flying car,  
Running alternate courses, liftest up 645  
Thy brilliant head above the world, forgive,  
Phœbus, forgive, if aught thou seest amiss ;  
Commanded so to do, I bring to light  
The secrets of the world. Thou, heaven's judge  
And father, hide behind thy thunderbolt 650  
Thy face. O thou whose scepter rules the sea,  
Seek now its depths. Ye gods who from the skies  
Look down on earth, avert your glances now.  
Fearing pollution from the vision strange,  
Look heavenward, shun so ominous a sight ; 655  
These two alone may look upon the crime :  
She who commanded, he who brought to pass.  
Earth offers space too small for Juno's hate  
To find my labor and my chastisement.  
I saw the kingdom to the sun unknown, 660  
And inaccessible to all, the realm  
Obscure, where Pluto reigns ; and, so fate willed,  
Subdued it. Chaos of eternal night,  
And whatsoe'er is worse than night, I saw,—  
The melancholy gods and death itself. 665

Death scorned, I come again, what more remains?  
 Hell I have seen and shown; if aught is left,  
 Give other labors. Long thou leavest my hands  
 Idle. What wouldst thou should be overcome?  
 But why does hostile soldiery surround 670  
 The temple? Why does fear of arms beset  
 The sacred portals?

## SCENE II

*Hercules, Theseus, Amphytryon, Megara, The Children.*

*Amphytryon.* Does hope deceive my sight, or does  
 he come  
 Earth's vanquisher, the glory of the Greeks?  
 Leaves he the gloomy, sad, and silent realm? 675  
 Is this my son? My limbs are numb with joy!  
 O son, the sure though tardy help of Thebes,  
 Do I indeed embrace thee, once again  
 Come forth to upper air? Or does a shade  
 Beguile me? Is it thou? I recognize 680  
 Thy breast, thy shoulders, and thy noble hands,  
 Thy heavy club!

*Hercules.* My father, whence this woe?  
 These mourning garments of my wife? Whence comes  
 This doleful raiment of my sons? What loss  
 Weighs down our house?

*Amphytryon.* The father of thy wife 685  
 Is dead, and Lycus now usurps the throne,  
 Death seeks thy sons, thy father, and thy wife.

*Hercules.* Ungrateful land, did no one come to aid  
 The house of Hercules? The world I saved  
 Looked on at such a crime? Why waste the day 690

In mourning? Slay the foe! I can endure  
 This stain—Alcides' latest foe shall be  
 This Lycus! Theseus, friend, I go to drink  
 His hostile blood; remain thou here with these,  
 Lest sudden violence should threaten them. 695  
 The battle calls me; father, wife, defer  
 Your loved embraces; Lycus shall announce  
 To Dis that I have safely come again.

## SCENE III

*Theseus, Amphitryon, Megara, The Children.*

*Theseus.* Put by thy grief, O queen, and thou who  
 seest

Thy son returned, restrain thy falling tears; 700  
 Lycus shall pay the debt to Creon due—  
 Shall pay? Nay pays.—Too slow the words, has  
 paid!

*Amphitryon.* Whatever favoring god will hear our  
 prayer,

Bring now assistance to our fallen house.  
 O great-souled comrade of my mighty son, 705  
 His deeds of valor tell; what weary path  
 Led downward to the gloomy land of shades,  
 And how the Tartarean dog has borne  
 His heavy chains.

*Theseus.* Thou bidst me call to mind  
 Those deeds that make me, though secure, afraid. 710  
 I hardly yet feel certain of my life;  
 Light blinds my sight, my weakened eyes scarce bear  
 The unaccustomed day.

*Amphitryon.* O Theseus, quench

Whate'er of fear still lingers in thy heart,  
 Rob not thyself of labor's richest fruit ; 715  
 Most sweet it is to call to mind those things  
 Most hardly suffered. Tell me thy dread fate.

*Theseus.* Ye, I invoke, ye gods who rule the  
 world,

And thee, the ruler of the realm of shades,  
 And thee whom, snatched from Enna, all in vain 720  
 Thy mother sought. O grant that I may speak  
 Truly of hidden things concealed in earth.

A well-known mountain lifts from Sparta's plains.  
 Its summits, where the heavy-wooded heights  
 Of Tænarus stretch downward to the sea ; 725

Here lies the entrance to the hated home  
 Of Dis, the great cliff yawns, and open lies  
 With gaping jaws, the terrible abyss ;  
 Through caverns limitless it shows to all 729

A pathway broad. At first not dark with shade—  
 A slender gleam from sunlight left behind,  
 A doubtful brightness from the troubled day,  
 Falls gently inward and deceives the eye—  
 So shines the light of dawn or failing day 734

With night commingled ; here the boundless fields  
 Of empty space begin to open out,  
 Toward which haste ever all the human race.  
 Nor is the journey hard, the path itself  
 Leads on. As many times the tide impels  
 Unwilling ships, so here the flying air 740  
 And greedy chaos urge advance ; retreat  
 Scarce ever do the constant shades permit.

Within the bosom of the vast abyss  
 Unruffled Lethe glides with placid shoals  
 And banishes all care ; the languid stream 745

Winds ever as Mæander's sluggish waves  
 Flow onward, or recede, or stand in doubt  
 Whether to seek their source or seek the sea.  
 Here lies the slow Cocytus' ugly fen,  
 Here the sad owl laments, the vulture here, 750  
 Here sounds the horned owl's ill-fated cry,  
 The gloomy foliage bristles with dark leaves ;  
 Under the overhanging yew dull Sleep  
 Dwells, and sad Hunger lies with sickly jaws,  
 And tardy Shame hides here her conscious face ; 755  
 Alarm, and Fear, and dark and crushing Grief,  
 Black Sorrow, trembling Sickness, steel-girt War,  
 Follow, and, hidden at the end of all,  
 Age with his staff assists his trembling steps. 759  
*Amphitryon.* And is no fruitful land of Ceres there,  
 Or Bacchus ?

*Theseus.* There no happy fields grow green,  
 No ripe grain trembles in the gentle breeze,  
 No trees stretch out their boughs weighed down with  
 fruit,  
 The sterile wastes of those sad depths are drear,  
 Eternally untilled that loathsome land ; 765  
 The air is moveless, black night ever broods  
 Above a moveless world ; the whole is dark  
 With mourning, and the land of Death is worse  
 Than Death himself.

*Amphitryon.* And what of him who reigns  
 Within the gloomy place ? Upon what seat 770  
 Sits he enthroned to give his people laws ?

*Theseus.* In an obscure recess of Tartarus  
 There lies a plain, dense vapors shut it in  
 With heavy gloom ; here flow from single source  
 Two rivers ; one is calm, its silent flood 775



Bears down the sacred waters of the Styx,  
 By this the gods make oath ; but Acheron  
 Is hurried on with tumult wild and loud,  
 And in its course it carries rocks away,  
 Here is no path for backward-turning boats. 780  
 This double stream surrounds the royal seat  
 Of Dis, a darksome wood conceals his home.  
 The tyrant's threshold is a mighty cave ;  
 Here lies the path the shades must take, and here  
 His kingdom's gates. An open place is here, 785  
 Where Pluto sits in cruel majesty  
 And to the new-come souls points out the way ;  
 His brow is dark, but shows a kingliness  
 Like that of Jove, his brother, and declares  
 His noble race ; his face is that of Jove, 790  
 But when he thunders. Of the fearful realm  
 The ruler is himself the greater part,  
 His glance gives fear to those whom others fear.

*Amphitryon.* And is it true that in the lower world  
 A tardy justice shall be measured out, 795  
 That guilty men shall pay the penalty  
 They owe for crimes forgotten by themselves ?  
 Who is this judge of truth, this arbiter  
 Of justice ?

*Theseus.* One inquisitor alone  
 Sits not to measure from that lofty seat 800  
 Late justice to the trembling criminal.  
 Minos of Gnosus sits in judgment there,  
 And Rhadamanthus, and that one whose son  
 Was Thetis' husband. Whatsoever wrong  
 A man has done he suffers ; here the crime 805  
 Finds out its author, and the criminal  
 Is overtaken by his own ill deeds.

I saw fierce kings in prison, saw the backs  
 Of helpless tyrants by plebeians torn.  
 Who greatly governs, and, though lord of life, 810  
 Preserves his hands unstained, and mildly holds  
 A bloodless empire, nor puts men to death,  
 He, having lived a long and blessed life,  
 Seeks heaven, or, happy in the happy groves  
 Of fair Elysium, shall again be judge. 815  
 Ye who are kings abstain from human blood,  
 Your crimes, but greater, shall return on you.

*Amphitryon.* And is a place ordained where guilty  
 men

Are prisoned, where, as rumor says, keen pain  
 Of ceaseless fetters punishes base souls? 820

*Theseus.* Ixion turns upon his flying wheel;  
 A stone weighs down the neck of Sisyphus;  
 In mid stream Tantalus, dry-lipped, pursues  
 The waves—the river reaches to his chin  
 And gives him hope, although so oft deceived,— 825  
 Upon his lips the water perishes,  
 Fruit fails him; Tityos affords a feast  
 Forever to the vultures, and in vain  
 The sad Danaïdes lift up full urns;  
 The impious Cadmean women raging roam, 830  
 And Phineas ever from his food must keep  
 The eager Harpies.

*Amphitryon.* Of my son's brave fight  
 Tell me. Does he bring back a willing gift,  
 Or spoils of war?

*Theseus.* A savage cliff o'erhangs  
 The stagnant shallows, where the waves move not, 835  
 And where the lazy waters ever sleep;  
 An old man hideous in mien and dress

Waits here and ferries o'er the silent stream  
 The trembling shades ; his unkempt beard hangs low,  
 His filthy robe is gathered in a knot, 840  
 His hollow cheeks are soiled ; the ferryman  
 With his long pole himself propels the boat ;  
 Steering the vessel emptied of its freight  
 Shoreward, he seeks again the waiting shades ;  
 The throng receding, Hercules demands 845  
 A way ; hard Charon cries : ' Where goest thou,  
 Bold one ? Thy swift feet stay.' Alcmena's son  
 Staid not, he seized the pole, and overcame  
 The ferryman, and stepped into the boat ;  
 The skiff, for many ample, under one 850  
 Succumbed and settling heavily, each side  
 The reeling vessel drank the Lethe's waves.  
 Then conquered monsters fear, the Centaur grim,  
 The Lapithæ, inflamed with war and wine ;  
 And Lerna's Hydra hides its fruitful heads 855  
 And seeks the Stygian fen's remotest part.  
 Then came to view the home of hungry Dis,  
 The Stygian dog affrights the manes here,  
 Lifts up with dreadful noise his threefold neck, 859  
 And guards the realm ; snakes lick his head, his hair  
 Is bristling vipers, and a hissing snake  
 Forms his long tail, his rage is as his form.  
 He hears the sound of steps, his shaggy hair  
 Of waving adders stands erect, with ears  
 Lifted, he listens to the sound, no steps 865  
 But those of shades his ears are wont to catch.  
 As Jove's son nearer comes, within the cave  
 The dog sits doubtful and not unafraid,  
 Then with his baying wild he terrifies  
 The silent place, the threatening serpents hiss, 870

The dreadful clangor of his awful voice  
 Sent forth from triple mouths makes happy shades  
 To tremble. From his shoulder taking then  
 The lion's skin, the hero shields himself  
 With this protection from the hissing mouths ; 875  
 In his victorious hand his mighty club  
 He lifts, now here, now there, with ceaseless blows  
 He whirls it, strikes again ; the conquered dog  
 Gives o'er his threats and, wearied, hangs his heads,  
 And leaves the whole wide cavern free. Each lord  
 Sitting upon his throne is filled with fear, 881  
 And bids Alcides lead away the dog.  
 Me, too, at his request they give to him.  
 Then patting with his hand the monster's necks,  
 He binds him with an adamantine chain. 885  
 The dog, that dark realm's watchful guard, forgets  
 His wonted fierceness, droops his timorous ears,  
 And owns a master, quietly endures  
 To be led forth, and with submissive mien  
 Obeys, and strikes his flanks with serpent tail. 890  
 But when he reached the mouth of Tænarus  
 And the strange glow of unaccustomed light  
 Upon his eyelids shone, the conquered one  
 Resumed his former wrath and shook his chains  
 Raging ; he almost dragged his victor back, 895  
 And drew him down, and forced him to the ground.  
 Alcides sought my aid, with doubled strength  
 We two bore up to earth the angry dog,  
 That struggled in an unavailing war.  
 But when he saw the day, and gazed upon 900  
 The sunlight's clear expanse, he closed his eyes,  
 Shut out the hated sun, and backward turned,  
 Bent earthward his three necks, then hid his head

Within Alcides' shadow. But there comes,  
 With many shouts, a throng of citizens, 905  
 They wear the laurel on their brows and sing  
 The praises of most glorious Hercules.

## SCENE IV

*Chorus of Thebans.*

Eurystheus, born too soon into the world,  
 Commanded Hercules to pierce earth's depths—  
 The number of his labors lacked alone 910  
 This deed: to spoil the dark realm's king. He dared  
 To enter those black portals where the path  
 Leads downward to the distant land of shades,  
 A gloomy way with dreadful forests dark,  
 But filled with thronging people. As the crowd 915  
 Pass through the city eager for the games  
 At the new theater; as they rush to see  
 Elean Jove when the fifth summer brings  
 The sacred feast; as when the time returns  
 Of lengthening nights, and, coveting sweet sleep, 920  
 The balance holds the sun's car in the sea,  
 The people haste to Ceres' sacred rites,  
 And priests of Athens from the city pass  
 To render to the goddess of the night  
 Worship and honor, so the silent throng 925  
 Move onward through the plain; some slow with age,  
 And sad and sated with their length of days;  
 Some, younger, seem to hither come in haste,  
 Virgins who have not known the marriage yoke,  
 And youths with flowing hair, and little ones 930  
 Who scarcely yet can lisp their mother's name,—

To these is given to carry through the gloom  
 Light, that they less may fear ; all others walk  
 In darkness, sadly. How then feels the soul  
 When light is gone and one must know himself 935  
 Buried beneath the world's weight? Chaos harsh,  
 Base shadows, the dun color of the night,  
 Reign there, the leisure of a silent world,  
 And empty gloom.

May old age bear us late to that dark land, 940  
 Too late none ever found the place from whence,  
 When found, none ever may return again.

What profit then to hasten cruel fate?  
 The wide earth's restless throngs shall seek the shades  
 And sail the still Cocytus ; all things move, 945  
 O Death, from east and west toward thee alone ;  
 Oh, come not ! Let us be prepared for thee !  
 Though late thou comest, yet ourselves we haste,  
 The very hour of birth begin to die.

Thebes' happy day has come ; O grateful ones, 950  
 Before the altars kneel, slay victims meet,  
 Ye men and maids the happy chorus join,  
 And let the rich earth from the ploughshare rest.  
 Peace by the hand of Hercules is made  
 Between Aurora's land and Hesperus' 955  
 And that where shadows are not, where the sun  
 Moves ever in the zenith.

Alcides' hand has conquered every land  
 That Thetis waters with her wide waves' sweep.  
 The streams of Tartarus are overpassed, 960  
 The lower world subdued, and he returns.  
 No fear remains, nought lies beyond that land.  
 Priests, crown your heads with holy poplar wreaths

## ACT IV

### SCENE I

*Hercules, Theseus, Amphitryon, Megara, The Children.*

*Hercules.* [*Coming from the palace of Lycus.*]  
Felled by my conquering hand lies Lycus, dead ;  
Whatever comrades have in life been his 965  
Shall be the tyrant's comrades still in death.  
Victorious now, I pay the sacred rites  
To thee, my father, and the holy gods,  
And heap the altars with the victims slain.  
To thee, my help and stay, I make my prayers, 970  
O warlike Pallas, in whose stern left hand  
The ægis threatens, turning men to stone.  
Lord of Lycurgus and the crimson sea,  
Be present, bearing in thy hand the spear  
Wound with green vines! And ye, twin deities, 975  
Phœbus and Phœbus' sister,—she more skilled  
In archery, as he in melody!  
And thou my brother, whatsoever one  
Inhabits heaven, not of Juno born!  
Drive hither well-fed herds ; the Indian spice 980  
And odorous woods from Araby heap high  
Upon the altars, let rich perfumes rise.  
The poplar binds our hair, crown thou thyself,  
O Theseus, with thy country's olive leaves.  
O Thunderer, we lift our hands to thee! 985  
Thebes' builders, and grim Zethus' wooded caves,

And Dirce's noble fountain, and the home  
Of Tyre's king who came as pilgrim here,  
Protect. [*To the servants.*] Put incense now upon the  
flame.

*Amphitryon.* First, son, make clean thy hands that  
drip with blood 990  
Of slaughtered foes.

*Hercules.* O would that I might pour  
Libations to the gods of that loathed blood !  
No liquor more acceptable could wet  
The altars ; hardly might one sacrifice  
To Jove a worthier victim or more rich 995  
Than this, an evil king.

*Amphitryon.* Lift up thy voice  
And pray thy father that he end at last  
Thy labors, to the wearied give repose.

*Hercules.* Prayersworthy of myself and Jove I make.  
The sky and earth and ocean keep their place, 1000  
Unhindered in their course th' eternal stars  
Move onward, peace profound be over all ;  
For tillage only be the iron used,  
The sword be sheathed, no storm disturb the sea,  
No lightning from an angry Jove flash forth, 1005  
No river swollen with the winter's snows  
Lay bare the fields. All poisons die, no plant  
With noxious juice be swelled, no tyrant harsh  
Rule. If there yet lurk anywhere a crime,  
Let it make haste ; if any monster wait, 1010  
Let it be mine. But what has come to pass ?  
The morn is darkened, Phœbus moves obscured,  
Although the sky is cloudless ; who is this  
Who makes the day flee backward to its rise ?  
Whence comes it night's black head is lifted up, 1015



And stars are shining in the midday sky?  
 See where in heaven our earliest labor shines,  
 He flames with wrath, is ready to attack—  
 Some constellation he will seize, he stands 1019  
 Threatening and from his mouth he belches flame.  
 Whatever stars the melancholy fall  
 Or frozen winter in her chilly course  
 Brings back, he covers in a single bound,  
 Seeking the bull, the bringer of the spring,  
 Whose neck he breaks.

*Amphitryon.* What sudden ill is this? 1025

My son, why wanders so thy angry glance?  
 Why scan with troubled eyes the faithless heavens?

*Hercules.* The conquered earth and swelling floods  
 give place,

Th' infernal realms have felt our force, the sky  
 Is free—a labor worthy Hercules. 1030

To the high spaces of the heavenly world  
 I fly, my father promises a star.—  
 What if he now refuse? Earth has not room  
 For Hercules and gives him back at length  
 To the celestial ones. Behold, in vain 1035

The entire number of the gods invites  
 And opens wide the doors of heaven, if one  
 Refuse me entrance. Wilt thou then unbar  
 The gates of heaven for me? Or shall I drag  
 The portals of the stubborn world away? 1040

Why hesitate? Resistless, I will loose  
 The chains of Saturn and against the might  
 Of an unduteous father will set free  
 That father's father; I will lead to war  
 The raging Titans, rocks and trees I'll bring, 1045  
 The Centaur's mountain in my right hand seize,

By hill on hill will make a path to heaven ;  
 Already on his Pelion Chiron sees  
 Great Ossa piled, Olympus placed above  
 Shall make a third step and shall reach the sky, 1050  
 Or I will hurl it there.

*Amphitryon.* Be far the thought !

A little calm thy great heart's forceful rage.

*Hercules.* Behold the dreaded giants come in arms,  
 And Tityos leaves the shades ; how near the stars  
 He stands with empty, lacerated breast ; 1055  
 Cithæron totters, high Pallene shakes,  
 And Tempe fails, One tears up Pindus' ridge,  
 One seizes Cæta, horribly he threatens.

The flaming furies smite with sounding lash,  
 More near, more near they press their burning torch  
 Into my face, and wild Tisiphone, 1061  
 Her head encircled with its serpent crown,  
 Fills up with torch opposed the empty door  
 Behind the ravished dog. [*He sees his children.*]

But see where lurk

The offspring of the hostile king, base seed 1065  
 Of Lycus ; to your hated father now  
 This right hand gives you back ; swift shaft, fly forth,  
 So are Herculean weapons fitly used.

*Amphitryon.* Where blindly strikes his rage ? His  
 mighty bow

Is bent, the quiver opened, and the shaft 1070  
 Flies singing forth, it passes through the neck  
 And leaves the wound. [*Megara flies with the other  
 child.*]

*Hercules.* From every hiding place  
 I'll search the other out. Why make delay ?  
 A greater war is mine : to overthrow

Mycene, that by my hand smitten down 1075  
 The Cyclops' rocks may fall. Thither I go,  
 To break the doors and tear away the posts,  
 The stricken house shall fall. It open lies,  
 I see the wicked father's son concealed.

*Amphitryon.* Lo, stretching toward his knees be-  
 seeching hands, 1080

The child with piteous voice entreats,—base crime,  
 Of aspect sad and awful. His right hand  
 Seizes the kneeling child and whirls him round  
 Six times, then hurls him far, the child's head strikes,  
 The roof is moistened with the scattered brains. 1085  
 Ill-fated Megara, like one insane,  
 To hiding flies, protecting on her breast  
 Her youngest born.

*Hercules.* Though thou shouldst fly to seek  
 The bosom of the Thunderer, this hand  
 Would bear thee thence.

*Amphitryon.* [*To Megara.*] Oh whither, wretched  
 one? 1090

What hiding dost thou seek? No place is safe  
 From angry Hercules. Embrace his knees,  
 With soft entreaty strive to soothe his wrath.

*Megara.* Spare, husband, spare, I pray thee!  
 Recognize

Thy Megara! This child reflects thy form 1095  
 And features, see his little hands stretched forth?

*Hercules.* I have thee, stepdame; give me my  
 revenge!

From thy loathed yoke free troubled Jove; but first,  
 Before the mother, slay the wretched child. 1099

*Megara.* What wouldst thou, wilt thou slay thy son?  
*Amphitryon.* The child

Before his father's glance is terrified,  
 Fear slays him and he dies without a wound ;  
 Now 'gainst the wife the heavy club is raised,  
 Her bones are crushed, nor does her headless trunk  
 exist.

None live. Oh gray-beard, too long lived, 1105  
 Dost dare see this? If mourning irks, death's near.  
 Sink in my heart thy dart, and wet thy club  
 With my blood ; him whom falsely they proclaim  
 Thy father, slay ; remove this shameful thing  
 That stains thy fame, lest longer it should dim 1110  
 Thy glory.

*Chorus.* Wouldst thou fling thyself, old man,  
 Across the path of death? Insane with grief,  
 Where goest thou? Fly, hide thyself afar,  
 And spare the hand of Hercules this crime.

*Hercules.* 'Tis well, the base king's brood are all  
 cut off. 1115

Those vowed to thee, O wife of mighty Jove,  
 Are slain. A free gift, worthy thee, is brought,  
 And other victims still shall Argives give.

*Amphitryon.* My son, a worthy gift is not yet made,  
 Complete the sacrifice, the victim kneels 1120  
 Before the altar, see he waits thy hand  
 With lowered head. I freely give myself,  
 Slay me. But what is this? His eyes' fierce glance  
 Wanders, and drowsiness makes dim his sight.  
 Do I behold the hand of Hercules 1125  
 Tremble? His eyelids droop with sleep, his head  
 Sinks wearied on his breast, his knees give way,  
 He falls upon the earth like some great tree,  
 The glory of the woods, or mighty crag  
 That sinks into the sea. Dost thou still live 1130

Or does the rage that hurled thine own to death  
 Give thee as well to Lethe? It is sleep,  
 He breathes—may calm be granted him a space,  
 That vigor, conquered by disease, return  
 In dreamless sleep to soothe his troubled breast. 1135  
 Slaves, take his weapons, lest he wake and rave.

## SCENE II

*Chorus.*

The heavens mourn, and heaven's great father mourns,  
 The fertile earth, and the unstable sea's  
 Unstable waves ; thou mournest most of all  
 Who floodest earth and ocean with thy rays 1140  
 And with thy brightness puttest night to flight,  
 Alcides saw with thee thy rise, he saw  
 Thy setting, Titan, knew thy two abodes.  
 Ye heaven-dwellers, from these tumults wild  
 Set free his spirit, turn his darkened mind 1145  
 To better things. Thou vanquisher of ills,  
 Sweet sleep, the soul's repose, the better part  
 Of human life, Astræa's winged child,  
 Mild brother of harsh Death, confusing oft  
 The true and false, at once the best and worst 1150  
 Foreteller of events, the wanderer's peace,  
 Rest after day, companion of the night,  
 Who comest to the slave as to the king,  
 Who teachest man, afraid of death, to learn  
 By slow degrees to know death's last long night, 1155  
 O gently, softly soothe the wearied one,  
 Let heavy languor on the vanquished lie ;  
 By slumber let his dauntless limbs be bound,

Leave not his savage breast before he finds  
Again his former mind. 1160

See, on the ground he lies, his wild heart filled  
With dreadful dreams, his trouble not yet eased ;  
Accustomed on his heavy club to lean  
His wearied head, he throws his arms about  
And with his empty right hand seeks in vain 1165  
Its weight. The fever's tide has not yet ebbed,  
But surges as the waves by storm wind vexed  
Surge to and fro and their long anger keep,  
Tumultuous even when the wind has ceased.  
Depart, tempestuous madness, from his soul ; 1170  
Return, O valor, gentleness, and health.  
Better, perhaps, a mind by madness stirred,  
Insanity alone can prove him free  
From guilty stain. Most nearly pure is he  
Who sins and knows it not. 1175

Now, smitten by Herculean palms, his breast  
Resounds, and blows from his all-conquering hand  
Fall upon shoulders that once bore the world.  
The heavens hear his heavy groans, the queen  
Of the dark realm, and tameless Cerberus, 1180  
Who lurks within his cave's depths, bound in chains ;  
Chaos re-echoes with the mournful cries  
And the great deeps that now uncovered lie.  
Not lightly does he smite his mighty breast  
By such calamity weighed down, three realms 1185  
Echo the blows. Now give him cruel wounds,  
Thou weapon, ornament long hung about  
His neck,—thou quiver strong, and gallant shaft ;  
Thou club, strong oak, with thy hard knots oppress  
His breast, O serve him now, ye well-known arms,  
In this his bitter need. 1191

O boys, O children of a luckless race,  
By the sad path thy father knew go hence ;  
Ye have not, sharer of your father's fame, 1194  
Wrecked vengeance on hard kings with harsher war,  
Nor, brave with hand and cæstus, learned to bend  
Your supple members in the Argive games ;  
Ye have but dared to balance the light shafts  
From Scythian quivers, and with certain aim  
To send them, and to shoot the flying stag. 1200  
Go, shadows, to the Stygian portals go,  
Ye innocents who on life's threshold fall,  
By crime and by a father's madness slain !  
Go, seek the wrathful monarch !

## ACT V

### SCENE I

*Hercules, Amphytrion, Theseus.*

*Hercules.* [*Awaking and looking around in wonder.*]

What place is this? What realm? What clime  
of earth? 1205

Where am I? Underneath the eastern sky,  
Or the cold constellation of the bear,  
Or where the waters of the western seas  
Wash up against the limits of the land?  
What air is this I breathe? on what soil rest 1210  
My wearied limbs? 'Tis true, I have returned!  
Why prostrate lie those bloody bodies there?  
Has not my mind put by the shapes of hell?  
Although returned does hell's sad throng still move  
Before my eyes? It shames me to confess:— 1215  
I fear! I know not what my soul forebodes  
Of heavy ill. My father, where art thou?  
Where are my sons, my wife? Why is my side  
Bare of the lion's spoil? Whither has fled  
My lion's skin that served as cloak and couch? 1220  
Where are my bow and arrows? Who could take  
My weapons from me and I still alive?  
What man could bear away such spoil nor fear  
The sleeping Hercules? May I but see 1224  
That man! Thou strong one, come; my father Jove,



Leaving his heaven, has begotten thee  
 At whose creation longer than at mine  
 The night endured. But what is this I see?  
 My sons lie bathed in blood, my wife is dead!  
 Does Lycus reign and Hercules returned? 1230  
 Ye who beside Ismenus' waters dwell,  
 Or in Athenian meadows, or the realm  
 Of Trojan Pelops by two oceans wet,  
 Help; show the author of these savage deeds;  
 My anger else will kindle against all, 1235  
 I count him foe who shows me not my foe.  
 Alcides' vanquisher, wouldst thou be hid?  
 Come forth; though thou seekst vengeance for the steeds  
 Of bloody Thrace, or Geryon's slaughtered flocks,  
 Or Libya's lord, I do not shun the fight. 1240  
 I stand defenceless, with my weapons armed  
 Thou mayest fall upon me weaponless.  
 But why do Theseus and my father shun  
 My glance? Why hide their faces? Stay your tears,  
 Speak, who has slain my all? What, father, dumb? 1245  
 Yet speak thou, Theseus, Theseus, faithful friend.  
 Each, silent, hides his face and weeps; what shame  
 Is mine? Has Argos tyrant, has the line  
 Of Lycus overwhelmed us with such woe?  
 By thine own self and by thy honored name, 1250  
 To me propitious ever, by the fame  
 Of my great deeds, speak, who o'erthrew my house?  
 Whose prey am I?

*Amphitryon.* Unspoken be these ills.

*Hercules.* Shall I lack vengeance?

*Amphitryon.* Vengeance oft recoils.

*Hercules.* Who ever bore unmoved such wrongs as  
 mine? 1255

*Amphitryon.* Who stood in fear of heavier wrongs  
than these.

*Hercules.* O father, can aught worse than this be found?

*Amphitryon.* Thou knowest but a part of all thy woe.

*Hercules.* Have pity, father; supplicating hands  
I stretch—but what is this? He turns away; 1260  
Here surely crime lies hid. Whence comes this blood?  
What shaft is that with children's murder wet?  
Alas! My own, in Hydra's venom dipped!  
I need not ask what hand could bend that bow,  
Or draw the bowstring that reluctant yields 1265  
To me. My father, speak, is mine the crime?  
He speaks not, it is mine.

*Amphitryon.* The grief is thine,  
The crime thy stepdame's, thou art free from fault.

*Hercules.* Now send thy thunders from all parts of  
heaven,

O great progenitor; forgetting me, 1270  
Avenge thy grandsons, though with tardy hand.  
The starry heavens roar, the sky shoots flame.  
To Caspian cliffs bound fast, let eager birds  
Upon my body feed. Why now lies bare  
Prometheus' rock, the steep and woodless height 1275  
Of Caucasus, where birds and beasts of prey  
Are fed? Let the Symplegades which close  
The Scythian waters stretch across the deep  
Each way my fast bound hands, and when recurs  
Th' alternate change, when the two rocks unite 1280  
And at the blow the sea in foam is flung  
To heaven, I shall lie between the rocks!  
Why, building high a pile of heaped-up wood,  
Should not this blood-stained form be burned with fire?  
Thus, thus, it must be done; to realms below 1285

I will give back Alcides.

*Amphitryon.* Ah, not yet  
Does madness leave him or his raving cease,  
But all his raging burns against himself.

*Hercules.* Grim country of the Furies, prison house  
Of hell-abiders, long decreed abode 1295  
Of guilty throngs, if place of banishment  
Lies hid beyond the shades of Erebus,  
Unknown to Cerberus and me, O earth,  
There hide me. I will lurk beyond the bounds  
Of Tartarus. O heart, too fiercely tried! 1295  
Who worthily might mourn for you, my sons,  
Scattered through all the house? My tearless eyes  
Have not the power to weep these heavy ills.  
Give back my bow, my arrows; give my club.  
For thee, my sons, I break my shaft, for thee 1300  
Destroy my bow; this heavy club shall burn  
An offering to thy shades; this quiver, full  
Of Hydra-poisoned arrows, shall be laid  
Upon thy funeral pile; the arms that slew  
Shall pay the penalty. You, too, shall burn, 1305  
O most unfortunate and cruel hands.

*Amphitryon.* Who ever called an act of madness  
crime?

*Hercules.* Great madness often gains the height of  
crime.

*Amphitryon.* Now, Hercules, thou needest all thy  
strength;  
Bear patiently this heavy weight of woe. 1310

*Hercules.* Frenzy has not so quenched my sense of  
shame

That I can see all peoples flee my face.  
My weapons, Theseus! Give me back, I pray,

In haste my stolen arms ; if I am sane,  
 Give back my spear ; if madness holds me yet, 1315  
 Fly, father, for I take the road to death.

*Amphitryon.* I pray thee by the sacred bond of blood,  
 And by the holy name that binds us twain—  
 Father or foster-father as you will—

By these gray hairs that call for reverence, 1320  
 Spare a bereft old man, weighed down with years.

Thou only pillar of a falling house,  
 One star of the afflicted, live for me.

I never yet have reaped thy labor's fruit,  
 But ever have I feared unfriendly seas, 1325

Or savage monsters, or some cruel king,  
 Or one proved faithless to the holy gods.

Ever the father of an absent son,  
 I long to see thee, touch thee, know thee mine. 1329

*Hercules.* Why longer should my spirit see the light?  
 Nought now remains, my hand has banished all :

Intelligence and weapons, wife and sons,  
 My glory and my strength, my madness too.

There is no healing for a soul defiled,  
 The criminal must be by death made whole. 1335

*Amphitryon.* Thou'lt slay thy father.

*Hercules.* Nay, but, lest I should,  
 I slay myself.

*Amphitryon.* Before thy father's eyes ?

*Hercules.* Through me such crime is even now well  
 known.

*Amphitryon.* Remember rather deeds that all must  
 praise,

And seek forgiveness for a single crime. 1340

*Hercules.* Shall he give pardon to himself, who found  
 Pardon for none? I did my much-praised deeds

Obedient to command, this deed is mine.  
 Have pity, father, whether thou art moved  
 By fatherly compassion, my sad fate, 1345  
 Or by my loss of innocence : give back  
 My weapons, let my hand avenge my fate.

*Theseus.* Thy father's prayers have surely force  
 enough,

Yet be by my entreaties also moved.  
 Rise, meet this new attack and overcome. 1350  
 As thou art wont. Take courage, never yet  
 By evil was thy great heart put to shame.  
 Thou needest all thy valor, Hercules ;  
 Prevent the anger of great Hercules. 1354

*Hercules.* If yet I live, I have done grievous wrong ;  
 But if I die, I have endured such wrong.  
 I haste to cleanse the land ; before my eyes,  
 But now, a monster hovered, harsh and wild,  
 Unholy, cruel ; up, my hand, begin  
 This heavy labor, greater than them all. 1360  
 Dost stand inactive, brave in thy attack  
 On boys alone and trembling motherhood ?  
 Unless my arms are given back to me,  
 The woods of Thracian Pindus I will fell,  
 And burn Cithæron's ridge and Bacchus' grove, 1365  
 My funeral pyre ; or all the Theban homes,  
 The citizens, the temples of the gods,  
 Above my body I will heap, will lie  
 Entombed beneath a city overthrown ;  
 And if the ruined walls should prove too light 1370  
 For my strong shoulders, and the seven gates  
 Too lightly rest, in the world's heart, I'll hide,  
 Pressed down beneath the burden of the earth.

*Amphitryon.* I give the weapons back.

*Hercules.* Those words become  
The father of Alcides. Lo, this lad 1375  
Was smitten by this arrow.

*Amphitryon.* Juno sent  
That arrow by thy hand.

*Hercules.* I see it now!

*Amphitryon.* Behold, his heart, o'erwhelmed with  
misery,  
Swells in his troubled breast.

*Hercules.* The shaft is meet!

*Amphitryon.* Lo, now of thine own will thou doest  
sin 1380

And consciously.

*Hercules.* What then wouldst thou command?

*Amphitryon.* We ask for nothing, all our grief is full.  
Thou only canst preserve my son for me;  
Thou canst not take him from me. Fear is gone,  
Thou canst not make me wretched, glad thou mayest.  
Whatever thou shouldst do, resolve to act 1386  
As knowing that thy fate and glory stand  
At parting of the ways: live thou or die,  
This spirit, wearied both by time and fate,  
Trembles upon my lips to quickly pass.— 1390  
So slowly does one give a father life?  
I will not longer bear delay, but thrust  
The fatal iron in my breast—this crime  
Will be the crime of no mad Hercules.

*Hercules.* O father, spare me, spare, call back thy  
hand. 1395

Succumb, my valor, hear a father's words;  
Add to thy other labors this one more,  
Herculean,—let me live! O Theseus, friend,  
Lift up my stricken father from the ground,

My guilty hands must shun that sacred head. 1400

*Amphitryon.* I clasp thy hands most gladly ; I  
will go

Leaning on this ; embracing this, my heart  
Will put away its sorrows.

*Hercules.* Whither fly ?

Where hide myself ? In what land lie concealed ?

What Nile, or Tanais, or Persian flood, 1405

Or fiercely flowing Tigris, or wild Rhine,

Or Tagus, or Iberis' turgid stream,

That flows with wealth, can wash this right hand clean ?

Might cold Mæotis, pour its icy flood

Upon me, or the ocean through my hands 1410

Flow ever, still they'd show the stain of blood.

O murderer, whither flee ? To east or west ?

There is no place of exile, earth rejects

And all the stars flee from me ; Titan saw

With milder face the hell dog Cerberus. 1415

O Theseus, faithful friend, seek out for me

Some secret, far-remote abiding place ;

Since, looking on another's guilt, thou still

Canst love the guilty, show me now, I pray,

The gratitude thou owest : take me back 1420

To hell's dark shades, endue me in thy chains,

That place will hide me. But that knows me, too !

*Theseus.* One land awaits thee, there will Mars  
restore

The weapons to thy hands made clean from blood.

That land, Alcides, calls thee which is wont 1425

To make unspotted the immortal gods.

THE DAUGHTERS OF TROY



*DRAMATIS PERSONÆ*

AGAMEMNON.

ULYSSES.

PYRRHUS.

CALCHAS.

TALTHYBIUS.

ASTYANAX.

HECUBA.

ANDROMACHE.

HELEN.

POLYXENA.

AN OLD MAN.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS OF TROJAN WOMEN.

SCENE: *Troy.*

# THE DAUGHTERS OF TROY

## ACT I

### SCENE I

*Hecuba.* Let him who puts his trust in kingly  
crown,  
Who rules in prince's court with power supreme  
Who, credulous of heart, dreads not the gods,  
But in his happy lot confides, behold  
My fate and Troy's. Never by clearer proof       5  
Was shown how frail a thing is human pride.  
Strong Asia's capital, the work of gods,  
Is fallen ; and she beneath whose banners fought  
The men who drink the Tanais' cold stream  
That flows by sevenfold outlet to the sea,       10  
And those who see the new-born day where blends  
Tigris' warm waters with the blushing strait,  
Is fallen ; her walls and towers, to ashes burned,  
Lie low amid her ruined palaces.  
The royal courts take fire ; far and near       15  
Smolders the home of King Assaracus.  
But flames stay not the eager conqueror's hand  
From plundering Troy. The sky is hid with smoke ;  
And day, as though enveloped in black cloud,  
Is dark with ashes. Eager for revenge,       20  
The victor stands and measures her slow fall ;

Forgets the long ten years ; deploras her fate ;  
 Nor yet believes that he has vanquished her,  
 Although he sees her conquered in the dust.  
 The pillagers are busy with the spoil ; 25  
 A thousand ships will hardly bear it hence.

Witness, ye adverse deities ; and ye,  
 My country's ashes, and thou, Phrygia's king,  
 Buried beneath the ruins of thy realm ;  
 Thou, too, great shade, whose life was all in all 30  
 To Troy ; my numerous offspring, lesser shades ;—  
 Whatever ills have happened ; whatsoever  
 Apollo's raving priestess, to whose word  
 The god denied belief, has prophesied,  
 I first foresaw, ere yet my fated child 35  
 Was born, nor hid my fear, but prophesied  
 Vainly, before Cassandra spoke in vain.  
 Alas, 'twas not the crafty Ithacan,  
 Nor the companions of his night attack,  
 Nor Sinon false, who flung into your midst 40  
 Devouring flame ; the glowing torch was mine !  
 Aged, and sick of life, why weep for Troy ?  
 Unhappy one, recall more recent woes ;  
 The fall of Troy is now an ancient grief !  
 I've seen the murder of a king—base crime ! 45  
 And, at the altar's foot incurred, I've seen  
 A baser crime, when Æacus' fierce son,  
 His left hand in the twisted locks, bent back  
 That royal head, and drove the iron home  
 In the deep wound ; freely it was received, 50  
 And buried deep, and yet drawn forth unstained,  
 So sluggish is the blood of frozen age.  
 This old man's cruel death at the last mete  
 Of human life, and the immortal gods

sc. II]     *THE DAUGHTERS OF TROY*                     57

Witnesses of the deed, and fallen Troy's                     55  
Fair altars, cannot stay the savage hand.  
Priam, the father of so many kings,  
Has found no grave, and in the flames of Troy  
No funeral pyre, and yet the wrathful gods  
Are not appeased ; behold, the lot is cast                     60  
That gives to Priam's daughters and his sons  
A master ; and I go to servitude.  
One would have Hector's wife, one Helenus',  
And one Antenor's ; nor are wanting those  
Who long for thee, Cassandra ; me alone                     65  
They shun, and I alone affright the Greeks.  
    Why rest from lamentations, captive ones ?  
Make moan, and smite your breasts, pay funeral  
    rites ;  
Let fatal Ida, home of doom-fraught judge,  
Reëcho now your sorrowful lament.                     70

SCENE II

*Hecuba, Chorus of Trojan Women.*

*Chorus.* You bid those weep who are not new to  
grief ;  
Our lamentations have not ceased to rise  
From that day when the Phrygian stranger sought  
Grecian Amyclæ, and the sacred pine  
Of Mother Cybele, through Grecian seas                     75  
A pathway cut. Ten times the winter snows  
Have whitened Ida—Ida stripped of trees  
To furnish Trojan dead with funeral pyres—  
Ten times the trembling reaper has gone forth  
To cut the bearded grain from Ilium's fields,                     80

Since any day has seen us free from tears.  
 New sorrows ask new mourning. Hasten now  
 Your lamentations, beat upon your breasts ;  
 We, the ignoble crowd, will follow still  
 Our mistress, we are not untaught in tears. 85

*Hecuba.* O faithful ones,  
 Companions of my grief, unbind your hair ;  
 About your shoulders let it flow defiled  
 With Troy's hot ashes ; fill your hands with these,  
 This much of Troy you are allowed to take. 90  
 Come with bare breasts, loose robes, and naked  
 limbs ;

Why veil your modest bosoms, captive ones ?  
 Gird up your flowing tunics, free your hands  
 For fierce and frequent beating of your breasts.  
 So I am satisfied, I recognize 95  
 My Trojan followers ; again I hear  
 Their wonted lamentations. Weep indeed ;  
 We weep for Hector.

*Chorus* We unbind our hair,  
 So often torn in wild laments, and strew  
 Troy's glowing ashes on our heads ; permit 100  
 Our loosened robe to drop from shoulders bare ;  
 Our naked bosoms now invite our blows.  
 O sorrow, show thy power ; let Ilium's shores  
 Give back the blows, nor from her hollow hills  
 Faint Echo sound the closing words alone, 105  
 But let her voice repeat each bitter groan,  
 And air and ocean hear. With cruel blows  
 Smite, smite, nor be content with faint laments :  
 We weep for Hector.

*Hecuba.* For thee our hands have torn our naked  
 arms 110

And bleeding shoulders ; Hector, 'tis for thee  
 We beat our brows and lacerate our breasts ;  
 The wounds inflicted in thy funeral rites  
 Shall gape and flow with blood once more. Thou wast  
 The pillar of thy land, her fates' delay, 115  
 The prop of wearied Phrygians, and the wall  
 Of Troy ; by thee supported, firm she stood,  
 Ten years upheld. With thee thy country fell,  
 Her day of doom and Hector's were the same.  
 Weep now for Priam, smite for him your breasts ; 120  
 Hector has tears enough.

*Chorus.* Ruler of Phrygia, twice a captive made,  
 Receive our tears, receive our wild laments.  
 Whilst thou wast king, Troy suffered many woes ;  
 Twice by Greek weapons were her walls assailed ; 125  
 Twice were they made a target for the darts  
 Of Hercules ; and when that kingly band,  
 Hecuba's offspring, had been offered up,  
 With thee, their sire, the funeral rites were stayed ;  
 An offering to great Jove, thy headless trunk 130  
 Lies on Sigeum's plain.

*Hecuba.* Women of Troy,  
 For others shed your tears ; not Priam's death  
 I weep ; say rather all, thrice happy he !  
 Free he descended to the land of shades,  
 Nor will he ever bear on conquered neck 135  
 The Grecian yoke ; nor the Atridæ see ;  
 Nor look on shrewd Ulysses ; nor, a slave,  
 Carry the trophies on his neck to grace  
 A Grecian triumph ; feel his sceptered hands  
 Bound at his back ; nor add a further pomp 140  
 To proud Mycenæ, forced in golden chains  
 To follow Agamemnon's royal car.

*Chorus.* Thrice happy Priam! as a king he went  
Into the land of spirits; wanders now  
Through the safe shadows of Elysian Fields,       145  
In happiness among the peaceful shades,  
And seeks for Hector. Happy Priam say!  
Thrice happy he, who, dying in the fight,  
Bears with him to destruction all his land.

## ACT II

### SCENE I

*Talthybius, Chorus of Trojan Women.*

*Talthybius.* O long delay, that holds the Greeks  
in port 150

Whether they seek for war or for their homes.

*Chorus.* Say what the reason of the long delay,  
What god forbids the Greeks the homeward road?

*Talthybius.* I tremble, and my spirit shrinks with  
fear;

Such prodigies will hardly find belief. 155

I saw them, I myself; Titan had touched

The mountain summits, dayspring conquered night,

When, on a sudden, with a muttered groan,

Earth trembled, and laid bare her lowest depths;

The forests, the high wood and sacred grove 160

Thundered with mighty ruin; Ida's cliffs

Fell from her summit; nor did earth alone

Tremble, the ocean also recognized

Her own Achilles, and laid bare her depths;

In the torn earth a gloomy cavern yawned; 165

A way was opened up from Erebus

To upper day; the tomb gave up its dead;

The towering shade of the Thessalian chief

Leaped forth as when, preparing for thy fate,

O Troy, he put to flight the Thracian host, 170

And struck down Neptune's shining, fair-haired son;



Or as when, breathing battle 'mid the host,  
 He choked the rivers with the fallen dead,  
 And Xanthus wandered over bloody shoals  
 Seeking slow channels ; or as when he stood 175  
 In his proud car, a victor, while he dragged  
 Hector and Troy behind him in the dust.

His wrathful voice rang out along the shore :  
 Ye cravens, go, refuse the honors due  
 My manes. Let the thankless ships set sail 180  
 Upon my seas. Not lightly Greece has felt  
 Achilles' wrath ; that wrath shall heavier fall.  
 Polyxena, betrothed to me in death,  
 Must die a sacrifice at Pyrrhus' hand,  
 And moisten with her blood my tomb. He spake, 185  
 Exchanged the day for night, and sought again  
 The realm of Dis. He took the riven path ;  
 Earth closed above him, and the tranquil sea  
 Lay undisturbed, the raging wind was still,  
 Softly the ocean murmured, Tritons sang 190  
 From the blue deep their hymeneal chant.

## SCENE II

*Agamemnon, Pyrrhus.*

*Pyrrhus.* When, homeward turning, you would  
 fain have spread  
 Your happy sails, Achilles was forgot.  
 By him alone struck down, Troy fell ; her fall,  
 Ev'n at his death, was but so long delayed 195  
 As she stood doubtful whither she should fall ;  
 Haste as you will to give him what he asks,  
 You give too late. Already all the chiefs

Have carried off their prizes ; what reward  
 Of lesser price have you to offer him 200  
 For so great valor ? Does he merit less ?  
 He, bidden shun the battle and enjoy  
 A long and peaceful age, outnumbering  
 The many years of Pylos' aged king,  
 Put off the false disguise of woman's dress 205  
 His mother gave, and stood confessed a man  
 Electing war. When haughty Telephus  
 Refused him entrance to the rugged coast  
 Of rocky Mysia, with his royal blood  
 He stained Achilles' hand, but found that hand 210  
 Gentle as strong. When Thebes was overcome  
 Eëtion, its conquered ruler, saw  
 His realm made captive. With like slaughter fell  
 Little Lyrnessus, built at Ida's foot ;  
 Brisëis' land was captured ; Chryse, too, 215  
 The cause of royal strife, was overthrown ;  
 And well-known Tenedos, and Sciro's isle  
 That, rich with fertile pastures, nourishes  
 The Thracian herd, and Lesbos that divides  
 The Ægean straits, Cilla to Phœbus dear, 220  
 Yes, and whatever land Cæcus laves  
 Swollen by rains of spring. Such overthrow  
 Of nations, such distress, so many towns  
 O'erwhelmed in such a whirlpool would have been  
 To any other, glory, honor, fame,— 225  
 Achilles is but on the march ; so sped  
 My father, and so great the war he waged  
 While he made ready for his great campaign.  
 Though I were silent of his other deeds,  
 Would it not be enough that Hector died ? 230  
 My father conquered Ilium ; as for you,

You have but torn it down. I joy to speak  
 The noble deeds of my illustrious sire :  
 How Hector's father saw him prostrate fall ;  
 How Memnon in his uncle's sight was slain,       235  
 Whose mother shuns the light, with pallid cheek  
 Mourning his fate ; and at his own great deeds  
 Achilles trembles, and, a victor, learns  
 That death may touch the children of a god.  
 The Amazons' harsh queen, thy final fear,       240  
 Last yielded. Wouldst thou honor worthily  
 His mighty arms, then yield him what he will,  
 Though he should ask a virgin from the land  
 Of Argos or Mycenæ. Dost thou doubt ;  
 Changing so soon, art loth to offer up       245  
 A maiden, Priam's child, to Peleus' son ?  
 Thy child to Helen was a sacrifice,  
 'Tis not an unaccustomed gift I ask.

*Agamemnon.* To have no power to check the  
                   passions' glow  
 Is ever found a fault of youthful blood ;       250  
 That which in others is the zeal of youth,  
 In Pyrrhus is his father's fiery heart.  
 Thus mildly once I stood the savage threats  
 Of Æacus' fierce son ; most patiently       254  
 He bears, who is most strong. With slaughter harsh  
 Why sprinkle our illustrious leader's shade ?  
 Learn first how much the conqueror may do,  
 The conquered suffer. 'Tis the mild endure,  
 But he who harshly rules, rules not for long.  
 The higher Fortune doth exalt a man,       260  
 Increasing human power, so much the more—  
 Fearing the gods who too much favor him,  
 And not unmindful of uncertain fate—

He should be meek. In conquering, I have learned  
How in a moment greatness is o'erthrown. 265

Has triumph over Troy too soon made proud ?  
We stand, we Greeks, in that place whence Troy fell.  
Imperious I have been, and borne myself  
At times too proudly ; Fortune's gifts correct  
In me the pride they oft in others rouse. 270

Priam, thou mak'st me proud, but mak'st me fear.  
What can I deem my scepter, but a name  
Made bright with idle glitter ; or my crown,  
But empty ornament ? A sudden chance  
May rob me of them, needing not, perhaps, 275

A thousand ships nor ten years' war. I own  
(May I do this, O Argive land, nor wound  
Thy honor ?) I have troubled Phrygia  
And wished her conquered ; but I would have stayed  
The hand that crushed and laid her in the dust. 280

A foe enraged and victory gained by night  
Will never check their raging, at command ;  
Whatever cruel or unworthy deed  
Appeared in any, anger was the cause—  
Anger and darkness and the savage sword 285  
Made glad with blood and seeking still for more.

All that yet stands of ruined Troy shall stand,  
Enough of punishment—more than enough—  
Has been exacted, that a royal maid  
Should fall, and, offered as a sacrifice 290

Upon a tomb, should crimson with her blood  
The ashes, and this hateful crime be called  
A marriage—I will never suffer it.  
Upon my head would rest the guilt of all ;  
He who forbids not crime when he has power, 295  
Commands it.

*Pyrrhus.* Shall Achilles' shade receive  
No prize ?

*Agamemnon.* Ah yes, for all shall tell his praise,  
And unknown lands shall sing his glorious name ;  
And if his shade would take delight in blood  
Poured forth upon his ashes, let us slay 300  
Rich sacrifice of Phrygian sheep. No blood  
Shall flow to cause a sorrowing mother's tears.  
What fashion this, by which a living soul  
Is sacrificed to one gone down to hell ?  
Think not to soil thy father's memory 305  
With such revenge, commanding us to pay  
Him reverence with blood.

*Pyrrhus.* Harsh king of kings !  
So arrogant while favoring fortune smiles,  
So timid when aught threatens ! Is thy heart  
So soon inflamed with love and new desire ; 310  
And wilt thou always bear from us the spoil ?  
I'll give Achilles back, with this right hand,  
His victim, and, if thou withholdest her,  
I'll give a greater, one more meet to be  
The gift of Pyrrhus. All too long our hand 315  
Has ceased from slaughter, Priam seeks his peer.

*Agamemnon.* That was, indeed, the worthiest war-  
like act  
Of Pyrrhus : with relentless hand he slew  
Priam, whose suppliant prayer Achilles heard.

*Pyrrhus.* We know our father's foes were suppliants,  
But Priam made his prayer himself, whilst thou, 321  
Not brave to ask, and overcome with fear,  
Lurked trembling in thy tent, and sought as aid  
The intercessions of the Ithacan  
And Ajax.

*Agamemnon.* That thy father did not fear,      325  
 I own ; amid the slaughter of the Greeks  
 And burning of the fleet, forgetting war,  
 He idly lay, and with his plectrum touched  
 Lightly his lyre.

*Pyrrhus.*                      Mighty Hector then  
 Laughed at thy arms but feared Achilles' song ;      330  
 Amid the universal fear, deep peace  
 Reigned through Thessalia's fleet.

*Agamemnon.*                      There was in truth  
 Deep peace for Hector's father in that fleet.

*Pyrrhus.* To grant kings life is kingly.

*Agamemnon.*                      Why didst thou  
 With thy right hand cut short a royal life?      335

*Pyrrhus.* Mercy gives often death instead of life.

*Agamemnon.* Mercy seeks now a virgin for the  
 tomb ?

*Pyrrhus.* Thou deemst it crime to sacrifice a maid ?

*Agamemnon.* More than their children, kings  
 should love their land.      339

*Pyrrhus.* No law spares captives or denies revenge.

*Agamemnon.* What law forbids not, honor's self  
 forbids.

*Pyrrhus.* To victors is permitted what they will.

*Agamemnon.* He least should wish to whom is  
 granted most.)

*Pyrrhus.* And this thou say'st to us, who ten long  
 years      344

Have borne thy heavy yoke, whom Pyrrhus freed ?

*Agamemnon.* Does Scyros breed such pride ?

*Pyrrhus.*                                      No guilty stain

Of brother's blood is there.

*Agamemnon.*                      Shut in by waves—

*Pyrrhus.* Nay, but the seas are kin. I know thy house—

Yea, Atreus' and Thyestes' noble line!

*Agamemnon.* Son of Achilles ere he was a man,  
And of the maid he ravished secretly— 351

*Pyrrhus.* Of that Achilles, who, by right of race,  
Through all the world holds sway, possesses still  
The ocean through his mother, and the shades  
Through Æacus, through Jupiter the sky. 355

*Agamemnon.* Achilles, who by Paris' hand was slain.

*Pyrrhus.* One whom not even the gods fought openly.

*Agamemnon.* To curb thy insolence and daring words

I well were able, but my sword can spare  
The conquered.

[*To some of the soldiers, who surround him.*]

Call the gods' interpreter, 360  
We'll rule us by his council.

[*A few of the soldiers go out, Calchas comes in.*]

### SCENE III

*Agamemnon, Pyrrhus, Calchas.*

*Agamemnon.* [*To Calchas.*] Thou, who hast freed  
the anchors of the fleet,  
Ended the war's delay, and by thy arts  
Canst open heaven, to whom the secret things  
Revealed in sacrifice, in shaken earth, 365  
And star that draws through heaven its flaming length.  
Are messengers of fate, whose words have been

To me the words of doom, speak, Calchas, tell  
 What thing the god commands, and govern us  
 By thy wise counsels.

*Calchas.*             Fate a pathway grants     370  
 To Grecians only at the wonted price.  
 A virgin must be slain upon the tomb  
 Of the Thessalian leader, and adorned  
 In robes like those Thessalian virgins wear  
 To grace their bridals, or Ionian maids,     375  
 Or daughters of Mycene; and the bride  
 Shall be by Pyrrhus to his father brought—  
 So is she rightly wed. Yet not alone  
 Is this the cause that holds our ships in port,  
 But blood must flow, and nobler blood than thine, 380  
 Polyxena. Whom cruel fate demands—  
 Grandchild of Priam, Hector's only son—  
 Hurl'd headlong from Troy's wall must meet his  
                                   death;  
 Then shall our thousand sails make white the strait.

SCENE IV

*Chorus of Trojan Women.*

Is it true, or does an idle story     385  
 Make the timid dream that after death,  
 When the loved one shuts the wearied eyelids,  
 When the last day's sun has come and gone,  
 And the funeral urn has hid the ashes,  
 He shall still live on among the shades?     390  
 Does it not avail to bear the dear one  
 To the grave? Must misery still endure  
 Longer life beyond? Does not all perish



When the fleeting spirit fades in air  
 Cloudlike? When the funeral fire is lighted 395  
 'Neath the body, does no part remain?

Whatsoe'er the rising sun or setting  
 Sees; whatever ebbing tide or flood  
 Of the ocean with blue waters washes,  
 Time with Pegasean flight destroys. 400  
 As the sweep of whirling constellations,  
 As the circling of their king the sun  
 Speed the ages, as, obliquely turning,  
 Hecate hastes, so all must seek their fate;  
 He who touches once the gloomy water 405  
 Sacred to the gods, exists no more.

As the sordid smoke from smoldering embers  
 Swiftly dies, or as a heavy cloud,  
 That the north wind scatters, ends its being  
 So the soul that rules us slips away; 410  
 After death is nothing; death is nothing  
 But the last mete of a swift-run race,  
 Then let eager souls their hopes relinquish,  
 Fearful find the end of fear. Believe  
 Eager time and the abyss engulf us; 415  
 Death is fatal to the flesh, nor spares  
 Spirit even; Tænarus, the kingdom  
 Of the gloomy monarch, and the door  
 Where sits Cerberus and guards the portal,  
 Are but empty rumors, senseless names, 420  
 Fables vain, like dreams that trouble sleep.  
 Ask you whither go we after death?  
 Where they lie who never have been born.

## ACT III

### SCENE I

*Andromache, An Old Man.*

*Andromache.* Why tear your hair, my Phrygian  
followers,  
Why beat your breasts and mar your cheeks with  
tears? 425  
The grief is light that has the power to weep.  
Troy fell for you but now, for me long since  
When fierce Achilles urged at speed his car,  
And dragged behind his wheel my very self ;  
The axle, made of wood from Pelion's groves, 430  
Groaned heavily, and under Hector's weight  
Trembled. O'erwhelmed and crushed, I bear un-  
moved  
Whate'er befalls, for I am stunned with grief.  
I would have followed Hector long ago,  
And freed me from the Greeks, but this my son 435  
Held me, subdued my heart, forbade my death,  
Compelled me still to ask the gods a boon,  
Added a longer life to misery.  
He took away my sorrow's richest fruit—  
To know no fear. All chance of better things 440  
Is snatched away, and worse are yet to come ;  
'Tis wretchedness to fear where hope is lost.  
*Old Man.* What sudden fear assails thee, troubled  
one?

*Andromache.* From great misfortunes, greater ever  
spring ;

Troy needs must fill the measure of her woes. 445

*Old Man.* Though he should wish, what can the  
god do more ?

*Andromache.* The entrance of the bottomless abyss  
Of gloomy Styx lies open ; lest defeat  
Should lack enough of fear, the buried foe  
Comes forth from Dis. Can Greeks alone return ? 450  
Death certainly is equal ; Phrygians feel  
This common fear ; but me alone a dream  
Of dreadful night has terrified.

*Old Man.* What dream

*Andromache.* The sweet night's second watch was  
hardly passed,

The Seven Stars were turning from the height ; 455

At length there came an unaccustomed calm

To me afflicted ; on my eyes there stole

Brief sleep, if that dull lethargy be sleep

That comes to grief-worn souls ; when, suddenly,

Before my eyes stood Hector, not as when 460

He bore against the Greeks avenging fire,

Seeking the Argive fleet with Trojan torch ;

Nor as he raged with slaughter 'gainst the Greeks,

And bore away Achilles' arms—true spoil,

From him who played Achilles' part, nor was 465

A true Achilles. Not with flame-bright face

He came, but marred with tears, dejected, sad,

Like me, and all unkempt his loosened hair ;

Yet I rejoiced to see him. Then he said,

Shaking his head : ' O faithful wife, awake ! 470

Bear hence thy son and hide him, this alone

Is safety. Weep not ! Do you weep for Troy ?

Would all were fallen! Hasten, seek some place  
Of safety for the child.' Then I awoke,  
Cold horror and a trembling broke my sleep. 475  
Fearful, I turned my eyes now here, now there.  
Me miserable, careless of my son,  
I sought for Hector, but the fleeting shade  
Slipped from my arms, eluded my embrace.  
O child, true son of an illustrious sire ; 480  
Troy's only hope ; last of a stricken race ;  
O offspring of an all too noble house,  
Too like thy father! Such my Hector's face,  
Such was his gait, his manner, so he held  
His mighty hands, and so his shoulders broad, 485  
So threatened with bold brow when shaking back  
His heavy hair! Oh, born too late for Troy,  
Too soon for me, will ever come that time,  
That happy day, when thou shalt build again  
Troy's walls, lead back again her scattered hosts, 490  
Avenging and defending mightily,  
And give again a name to Troy's fair land?  
But, mindful of my fate, I dare not wish ;  
Let us but live, for life is all that slaves  
Can hope. Alas, what safety can I find, 495  
Where hide thee? That high citadel, god-built,  
World-famous, to the envious exposed,  
Is dust, her streets flame-swept, and naught remains  
Of all the mighty city, not so much  
As where to hide an infant. Oh, what place 500  
Of safety can I find? The mighty tomb,  
Reared to my husband—this the foe must fear.  
His father, Priam, in his sorrow built,  
With no ungenerous hand, great Hector's tomb ;  
I trust him to his father. Yet I fear 505

The baleful omen of the place of tombs,  
And a cold sweat my trembling members bathes.

*Old Man.* The safe may choose, but we must seize  
defence.

*Andromache.* We may not hide him without heavy  
fear

Lest some betray him.

*Old Man.* Cover up the trace 510

Of our device.

*Andromache.* And if the foe should ask?

*Old Man.* In the destruction of the land he died,—  
It oft has saved a man that he was deemed  
Already dead.

*Andromache.* No other hope is left.

He bears the heavy burden of his name; 515

If he must come once more into their power

What profits it to hide him?

*Old Man.* Victors oft

Are savage only in the first attack.

*Andromache.* [*To Astyanax.*] What distant, path-  
less land will keep thee safe,

Or who protect thee, give thee aid in fear? 520

O Hector, now as ever guard thine own,

Preserve the secret of thy faithful wife,

And to thy trusted ashes take thy child!

My son, go thou into thy father's tomb.

What, do you turn and shun the safe retreat? 525

I recognize thy father's strength of soul,

Ashamed of fear. Put by thy inborn pride,

Thy courage; take what fortune has to give.

See what is left of all the Trojan host:

A tomb, a child, a captive! We must yield 530

To our misfortunes. Dare to enter now

Thy buried father's sacred resting-place ;

If fate is kind thou hast a safe retreat,

If fate refuse thee aid, thou hast a grave.                     534

*Old Man.* The sepulcher will safely hide thy son ;

Go, lest thy fears betray thee and so him,

*Andromache.* One's fear is lightlier borne when  
near at hand,

But elsewhere will I go, since that seems best.

*Old Man.* Restrain thy words, speak not, but curb  
thy fear,

This way the Grecian leader bends his steps.                     540

## SCENE II

*Andromache, Ulysses with a retinue of warriors.* [*The  
old man withdraws.*]

*Ulysses.* Coming a messenger of cruel fate,

I pray you deem not mine the bitter words

I speak, for this is but the general voice

Of all the Greeks, too long from home detained

By Hector's child : him do the fates demand.                     545

The Greeks can hope for but a doubtful peace,

Fear will compel them still to look behind

Nor lay aside their armor, while thy child,

Andromache, gives strength to fallen Troy.

So prophesies the god's interpreter ;                     550

And had the prophet Calchas held his peace,

Hector had spoken ; Hector and his son

I greatly fear : those sprung of noble race

Must needs grow great. With proudly lifted head

And haughty neck, the young and hornless bull                     555

Leads the paternal herd and rules the flock ;

And when the tree is cut, the tender stalk

Soon rears itself above the parent trunk,  
 Shadows the earth, and lifts its boughs to heaven ;  
 The spark mischance has left from some great fire 560  
 Renews its strength ; like these is Hector's son.  
 If well you weigh our act, you will forgive,  
 Though grief is harsh of judgment. We have spent  
 Ten weary winters, ten long harvests spent  
 In war ; and now, grown old, our soldiers fear, 565  
 Even from fallen Troy, some new defeat.  
 'Tis not a trifling thing that moves the Greeks,  
 But a young Hector ; free them from this fear ;  
 This cause alone holds back our waiting fleet,  
 This stops the ships. Too cruel think me not, 570  
 By lot commanded Hector's son to seek ;  
 I would have sought Orestes, equally,  
 Suffer with patience what your conqueror bore.

*Andromache.*

Alas, my son,

Would that thou wert within thy mother's arms !  
 Would that I knew what fate encompassed thee, 575  
 What region holds thee, torn from my embrace !  
 Although my breast were pierced with hostile spears,  
 My hands bound fast with wounding chains, my sides  
 By biting flame were girdled, not for this  
 Would I put off my mother-guardianship ! 580  
 What spot, what fortune holds thee now, my son ?  
 Art thou a wanderer in an unknown land,  
 Or have the flames of Troy devoured thee ?  
 Or does the conqueror in thy blood rejoice ?  
 Or, slain by some wild beast, perhaps thou liest 585  
 On Ida's summit, food for Ida's birds ?

*Ulysses.* No more pretend. Thou mayst not so  
 deceive

Ulysses ; I have ere this overcome





*Andromache.* Unwillingly

I give the Grecians joy, but I must give. 615  
 Ulysses, anguish must confess its pain ;  
 Rejoice, O sons of Atreus ; carry back  
 As thou art wont, Ulysses, to the host  
 The joyous news: great Hector's son is dead.

*Ulysses.* How prove it to the Greeks ?

*Andromache.* Fall on me else

The greatest ill the victor can inflict : 621  
 Fate free me by an easy, timely death,  
 And hide me underneath my native soil,  
 Lightly on Hector lie his country's earth  
 As it is true that, hidden from the light, 625  
 Deep in the tomb, among the shades he rests.

*Ulysses.* Accomplished then the fate of Hector's  
 race ;

A joyous message of established peace

I take the Greeks. [*He turns to go, then hesitates.*]

Ulysses, wouldst thou so ? 629

The Greeks will trust thee, for thou trustest—whom ?

A mother. Would a mother tell this lie

Nor fear the augury of dreaded death ?

They fear the auguries, who fear naught else.

She swears it with an oath—yet, falsely sworn,

What has she worse to fear ? Now call to aid 635

All that thou hast of cunning, stratagem,

And guile, the whole Ulysses ; truth dies not.

Watch well the mother ; see—she mourns, she weeps,

She groans, turns every way her anxious steps,

Listens with ear attentive ; more she fears 640

Than sorrows ; thou hast need of utmost care.

[*To Andromache.*] For other mothers' loss 'tis right  
 to grieve ;

Thee, wretched one, we must congratulate  
 That thou hast lost a son whose fate had been  
 To die, hurled headlong from the one high tower 645  
 Remaining of the ruined walls of Troy,

*Andromache.* [*Aside.*] Life fails, I faint, I fall, an  
 icy fear

Freezes my blood.

*Ulysses.* [*Aside.*] She trembles; here the place  
 For my attack; she is betrayed by fear;  
 I'll add worse fear. [*To his followers.*]

Go quickly; somewhere lies, 650

By mother's guile concealed, the hidden foe—

The last remaining foe of our Greek race.

Go, seek him, drag him hither. [*After a pause as  
 though the child were found.*] It is well;

The child is taken; hasten, bring him me.

[*To Andromache.*] Why do you look around and seem  
 to fear? 655

The boy is dead.

*Andromache.* Would fear were possible!  
 Long have I feared. The mind must oft unlearn  
 The lesson learned.

*Ulysses.* Since by a happier fate  
 Snatched hence, the lad forestalls the sacrifice,  
 The lustral offering from the walls of Troy 660  
 And may not now obey the seer's command,  
 Thus saith the prophet: this may be atoned,  
 And Grecian ships at last may find return,  
 If Hector's tomb be leveled with the ground,  
 His ashes scattered on the sea; the tomb 665  
 Must feel my hand, since Hector's child escapes  
 His destined death.

*Andromache.* [*Aside.*] Alas, what shall I do?

A double fear distracts me ; here my son,  
 And there my husband's sacred sepulcher,  
 Which conquers? O inexorable gods, 670  
 O manes of my husband—my true gods,  
 Bear witness ; in my son 'tis thee I love,  
 My Hector, O that he may live to bear  
 His father's image !—Shall the sacred dust  
 Be cast upon the waves? Nay, better death.— 675  
 Canst thou, a mother, bear to see him die,—  
 To see him from Troy's tower downward hurled?  
 I can and will, that Hector, after death,  
 Be not the victor's sport. The boy can feel  
 The pain, where death has made the father safe. 680  
 Decide, which one to give to punishment.  
 Ungrateful, why in doubt? Thy Hector's here!  
 'Tis false, each one is Hector ; this one lives,  
 Perchance th' avenger of his father's death.  
 I cannot save them both, what shall I do? 685  
 Oh, save the one whom most the Grecians fear!  
*Ulysses.* I will fulfil the oracle, will raze  
 The tomb to its foundations.  
*Andromache.* What you sold  
 To us?  
*Ulysses.* I'll do it, level with the dust  
 The sepulcher.  
*Andromache.* I call the faith of heaven, 690  
 Achilles' faith, to aid ; come, Pyrrhus, save  
 Thy father's gift.  
*Ulysses.* The tomb shall instantly  
 Be leveled with the plain.  
*Andromache.* This crime alone  
 The Greeks had shunned ; ye've sacked the holy fanes  
 Even of favoring gods, but spared the tomb. 695

I will not suffer it, unarmed I'll stand  
 Against your armored host ; rage gives me strength,  
 And as the savage Amazon opposed  
 The Grecian army, or the Mænad wild,  
 Armed with the thyrsus, by the god possessed, 700  
 Wounds herself in her madness, feeling not  
 The pain, and scatters terror through the grove,  
 So will I rush into your midst and die  
 Defending the dear ashes of my dead. [*She places  
 herself before the grave.*]

*Ulysses.* [*Angrily to the shrinking soldiers.*]  
 Why pause? A woman's wrath and feeble noise 705  
 Alarms you so? Do quickly my command.  
 [*The soldiers go toward the grave, Andromache  
 throws herself upon them.*]

*Andromache.* The sword must first slay me.—Ah,  
 woe is me,  
 They drive me back. Hector, come forth the  
 tomb ;  
 Break through the fate's delay, and overwhelm  
 The Grecian chief—thy shade would be enough ! 710  
 He shakes the weapon, hurls the fire-brand ;  
 Greeks, see you Hector? Or do I alone  
 Perceive him?

*Ulysses.* I will lay it in the dust.

*Andromache.* [*Aside.*] What have I done? To ruin  
 I have brought  
 Father and son together ; yet, perchance, 715  
 With supplications I may move the Greeks.  
 The tomb's vast weight will presently destroy  
 Its hidden treasure ; O my wretched child,  
 Die anywhere the Fates decree but here.  
 Oh, may the father not o'erwhelm the son, 720

The son fall not upon his father's dust !

[*She casts herself at the feet of Ulysses.*

Ulysses, at thy feet a suppliant

I fall, and with my right hand clasp thy knees ;

Never before a suppliant, here I ask

Thy pity on a mother ; hear my prayer 725

With patience ; on the fallen lightly press,

Since thee the gods lift up to greater heights !

The gifts thou grant'st the wretched are to fate

A hostage ; so again thou mayst behold

Thy wife ; and old Laertes' years endure 730

Until once more he see thee ; so thy son

Receive thee home, outrun thy fairest hopes

In his good fortune, and his age exceed

Laertes', and his gifts outnumber thine.

Have pity on a mother to whose grief 735

Naught else remains of comfort.

*Ulysses.* Bring forth the boy, then thou mayst ask  
for grace.

*Andromache.* Come hither from thy hiding-place,  
my son,

Thy wretched mother's lamentable theft.

### SCENE III

*Ulysses, Andromache, Astyanax.*

*Andromache.* Ulysses, this is he who terrifies 740

The thousand keels, behold him. Fall, my son,

A suppliant at the feet of this thy lord,

And do him reverence ; nor think it base,

Since Fortune bids the wretched to submit.

Forget thy royal race, the power of one 745

Renowned through all the world ; Hector forget ;

Act the sad captive on thy bended knee,

And imitate thy mother's tears, if yet  
 Thou feelest not thy woes. [*To Ulysses.*] Troy saw  
 long since

The weeping of a royal child : the tears 750

Of youthful Priam turned aside the threats  
 Of stern Alcides ; he, the warrior fierce  
 Who tamed wild beasts, who broke the gates of Dis,  
 And opened up the dark way back to earth,  
 Was conquered by his youthful foeman's tears. 755

'Take back,' he said, 'the reins of government,  
 Receive thy father's kingdom, but maintain  
 Thy scepter with a better faith than he ;'  
 So fared the captives of this conqueror ;  
 Study the gentle wrath of Hercules ! 760

Or do the arms alone of Hercules  
 Seem pleasing to thee ? Of as noble race  
 As Priam's, at thy feet a suppliant lies,  
 And asks of thee his life ; let fortune give  
 To whom she will Troy's kingdom. 765

*Ulysses.* Indeed the mother's sorrow moves me  
 much !

Our Grecian mothers' sorrow moves me more,  
 To cause whose bane this child would grow a man.

*Andromache.* These ruins of a land to ashes burned  
 Could he arouse ? Or could these hands build Troy ?  
 Troy has no hope, if such is all remains. 771

We Trojans can no longer cause thee fear.  
 Does recollection of his father rouse  
 Pride ? In the dust that father's form was dragged.  
 With Troy in ruins, even his father's self 775  
 Had lost that courage which great ills o'ercome.  
 If vengeance is your wish, what worse revenge  
 Than to this noble neck to fit the yoke ?

Make him a slave. Who ever yet denied  
This bounty to a king?

*Ulysses.* The seer forbids, 780  
'Tis not Ulysses who denies the boon.

*Andromache.* Artificer of fraud, plotter of guile,  
Whose warlike valor never felled a foe ;  
By the deceit and guile of whose false heart  
E'en Greeks have fallen, dost thou make pretence 785  
Of blameless god or prophet? 'Tis the work  
Of thine own heart. Thou, who by night mak'st war,  
Now dar'st at last one deed in open day—  
A brave boy's death.

*Ulysses.* My valor to the Greeks  
Is known, and to the Phrygians too well known. 790  
We may not waste the day in idle talk—  
Our ships weigh anchor.

*Andromache.* Grant a brief delay,  
While I, a mother, for my son perform  
The last sad office, satiate my grief,  
My mother's sorrow, with a last embrace. 795

*Ulysses.* I would that I might pity! What I may,  
Time and delay, I grant thee ; let thy tears  
Fall freely ; weeping ever softens grief.

*Andromache.* O pledge of love, light of a fallen  
house,  
Last of the Trojan dead, fear of the Greeks, 800  
Thy mother's empty hope, for whom I prayed—  
Fool that I was—that thou mightst have the years  
Of Priam, and thy father's warlike soul,  
The gods despise my vows ; thou ne'er shalt wield  
A scepter in the kingly halls of Troy, 805  
Mete justice to thy people, nor shalt send  
Thy foes beneath thy yoke, nor put to flight

The Greeks, drag Pyrrhus at thy chariot wheels,  
 Nor ever in thy slender hands bear arms ;  
 Nor wilt thou hunt the dwellers in the wood,     810  
 Nor on high festival, in Trojan games,  
 Lead swiftly on a band of noble youth,  
 Nor round the altars with swift-moving steps,  
 That the reëchoing of the twisted horn  
 Makes swifter, honor with accustomed dance     815  
 The Phrygian temples. Oh, most bitter death !

*Ulysses.* Great sorrow knows no limit, cease thy  
 moans !

*Andromache.* How narrow is the time we seek for  
 tears !

Grant me a short delay : that with these hands  
 His living eyes be bound. My little one,     820  
 Thou diest, but feared already by thy foes ;  
 Thy Troy awaits thee ; go, in freedom go,  
 To meet free Trojans.

*Astyanax.* Mother, pity me !

*Andromache.* Why hold thy mother's hands and  
 clasp her neck,  
 And seek in vain a refuge ? The young bull,     825  
 Thus fearful, seeks his mother when he hears  
 The roaring of the lion ; from her side  
 By the fierce lion driv'n, the tender prey  
 Is seized, and crushed, and dragged away ; so thee  
 Thy foeman snatches from thy mother's breast.     830  
 Child, take my tears, my kisses, my torn locks ;  
 Thus laden with remembrances of me  
 Go to thy father, bear him these few words  
 Of my complaint : ' If still thy spirit keeps  
 Its former cares, if died not on the flames     835  
 Thy former love, why leave Andromache



To serve the Grecians? Hector, cruel one,  
 Dost thou lie cold and vanquished in the grave?  
 Achilles came again.' Take then these tears,  
 These locks, for these are all that now remain 840  
 Since Hector's death, and take thy mother's kiss  
 To give thy father; leave thy robe for me,  
 Since it has touched his tomb and his dear dust;  
 I'll search it well so any ashes lurk  
 Within its folds.

*Ulysses.* Weep no more; bear him hence; 845  
 Too long he stays the sailing of the fleet.

## SCENE IV

*Chorus of Trojan Women.*

What country calls the captives? Tempe dark?  
 Or the Thessalian hills? or Phthia's land  
 Famous for warriors? Trachin's stony plains,  
 Breeders of cattle? or the great sea's queen, 850  
 Iolchos? or the spacious land of Crete  
 Boasting its hundred towns? Gortyna small?  
 Or sterile Tricca? or Mothone crossed  
 By swift and frequent rivers? She who lies  
 Beneath the shadow of the Cætean woods, 855  
 Who sent the hostile bow not once alone  
 Against the walls of Troy?  
 Or Olenos whose homes lie far apart?  
 Or Pleuron, hateful to the virgin god?  
 Or Trœzen on the ocean's curving shore? 860  
 Or Pelion, mounting heavenward, the realm  
 Of haughty Prothous? There in a vast cave  
 Great Chiron, teacher of the savage child,

Struck with his plectrum from the soundings strings  
 Wild music, stirred the boy with songs of war.     865  
 Perchance Carystus, for its marbles famed,  
 Calls us ; or Chalcis, lying on the coast  
 Of the unquiet sea whose hastening tide  
 Beats up the strait ; Calydna's wave-swept shore ;  
 Or stormy Gonoëssa ; or the isle     870  
 Of Peparethus, near the seaward line  
 Of Attica ; Enispe, smitten oft  
 By Boreas ; or Eleusis, revered  
 For Ceres' holy, secret mysteries ?  
 Or shall we seek great Ajax' Salamis ?     875  
 Or Calydon, the home of savage beasts ?  
 Or countries that the Titaëssus laves  
 With its slow waters ? Scarphe, Pylos old,  
 Or Bessas, Pharis, Pisa, Elis famed  
 For the Olympian games ?     880  
 It matters not what tempest drives us hence,  
 Or to what land it bears us, so we shun  
 Sparta, the curse alike of Greece and Troy ;  
 Nor Argos seek, nor cruel Pelop's home,  
 Mycenæ, and Neritus hemmed within     885  
 Narrower limits than Zacynthus small,  
 Nor treacherous cliffs of rocky Ithaca.  
 O Hecuba, what fate, what land, what lord  
 Remains for thee ? In whose realm meetst thou death ?

## ACT IV

### SCENE I

*Helen, Hecuba, Andromache, Polyxena.*

*Helen* [*soliloquizing*]. Whatever sad and joyless  
marriage bond 890

Holds slaughter, lamentations, bloody war,  
Is worthy Helen. Even to fallen Troy  
I bring misfortune, bidden to declare  
The bridal that Achilles' son prepares  
For his dead father, and to lend my robe 895  
And Grecian ornaments. By me betrayed,  
And by my fraud, must Paris' sister die.  
So be it, this were happier lot for her ;  
A fearless death must be a longed-for death.  
Why shrink to do his bidding? On the head 900  
Of him who plots the crime remains the guilt.

[*Aloud to Polyxena.*]

Thou noble daughter of Troy's kingly house,  
A milder god on thy misfortune looks  
Prepares for thee a happy marriage day.  
Not Priam nor unfallen Troy could give 905  
Such bridal, for the brightest ornament  
Of the Pelasgian race, the man who holds  
The kingdom of the wide Thessalian land,  
Would make thee his by lawful marriage bonds.  
Great Tethys, and the ocean goddesses, 910  
And Thetis, gentle nymph of swelling seas,

Will call thee theirs ; when thou art Pyrrhus' bride  
 Peleus will call thee kin, as Nereus will.  
 Put off thy robe of mourning, deck thyself  
 In gay attire ; unlearn the captive's mien,      915  
 And suffer skilful hands to smooth thy hair  
 Now so unkempt. Perchance fate cast thee down  
 From thy high place to seat thee higher still ;  
 To their great profit some have been enslaved.

*Andromache.* This one ill only lacked to fallen  
 Troy :      920

Pleasure, while Pergamus still smoking lies !  
 Fit hour for marriage ! Dare one then refuse ?  
 When Helen would persuade, who doubtful weds ?  
 Thou curse ! Two nations owe to thee their fall !  
 Seest thou the royal tomb, these bones that lie      925  
 Unburied, scattered over all the field ?  
 Thy bridal is the cause. All Asia's blood,  
 All Europe's flows for thee, whilst thou, unstirred,  
 Canst see two husbands fighting, nor decide  
 Which one to wish the victor ! Go, prepare      930  
 The marriage bed ; what need of wedding torch  
 Or nuptial lights, when burning Troy provides  
 The fires for these new bridals ? Celebrate,  
 O Trojan women, honor worthily  
 The marriage feast of Pyrrhus. Smite your breasts,  
 And weep aloud.

*Helen.* Soft comfort is refused      936  
 By deep despair, which loses reason, hates  
 The very sharers of its grief. My cause  
 I yet may plead before this hostile judge,  
 Since I have suffered heavier ills than she.      940  
 Andromache mourns Hector openly,  
 Hecuba weeps for Priam, I, alone,

In secret, weep for Paris. Is it hard,  
 Grievous, and hateful to bear servitude?  
 For ten long years I bore the captive's yoke. 945  
 Is Ilium laid low, her household gods  
 Cast down? To lose one's land is hard indeed—  
 To fear it worse. Your sorrow friendship cheers,  
 Me conquerors and conquered hate alike.  
 For thee there long was doubt whom thou shouldst  
 serve, 950  
 My master drags me hence without the chance  
 Of lot. Was I the bringer of the war?  
 Of so great Teucrian carnage? Think this true  
 If first a Spartan keel thy waters cut ;  
 But if of Phrygian oars I was the prey, 955  
 By the victorious goddess as a prize  
 Given for Paris' judgment, pardon me !  
 An angry judge awaits me, and my cause  
 Is left to Menelaus. Weep no more,  
 Andromache, put by thy grief. Alas, 960  
 Hardly can I myself restrain my tears.

*Andromache.* How great the ill that even Helen  
 weeps !

Why does she weep? What trickery or crime  
 Plots now the Ithacan? From Ida's top,  
 Or Troy's high tower, will he cast the maid 965  
 Upon the rocks? Or hurl her to the deep  
 From the great cliff which, from its riven side,  
 Out of the shallow bay, Sigeon lifts?  
 What wouldst thou cover with deceitful face?  
 No ill were heavier than this: to see 970  
 Pyrrhus the son-in-law of Hecuba  
 And Priam. Tell the penalty thou bringst.  
 Take from defeat at least this evil,—fraud.

Thou seest thou dost not find us loth to die.

*Helen.* Would that Apollo's prophet bade me take  
The long delay of my so hated life ;      976

Or that, upon Achilles' sepulcher,  
I might be slain by Pyrrhus' cruel hand,  
The sharer of thy fate, Polyxena,  
Whom harsh Achilles bids them give to him—      980  
To offer to his manes, as his bride  
In the Elysian Fields.

[*Polyxena shows great joy, Hecuba sinks fainting  
to the ground.*

*Andromache.* See with what joy a noble woman  
meets

Death-sentence, bids them bring the royal robe,  
And fitly deck her hair. She deemed it death      985  
To be the bride of Pyrrhus, but this death  
A bridal seems. The wretched mother faints,  
Her sinking spirit fails ; unhappy one,  
Arise, lift up thy heart, be strong of soul !  
Her life hangs by a thread—how slight a chance      990  
Would make her happy!—But she breathes, she  
lives,

Death flies the wretched.

*Hecuba.* Lives Achilles still  
To vex the Trojans? Still pursues his foes?  
Light was the hand of Paris ; but the tomb  
And ashes of Achilles drink our blood.      995

Once I was circled by a happy throng  
Of children, by their kisses weary made,  
Parted my mother love amongst them all.  
She, now, alone is left ; for her I pray,  
Companion, solace, healer of my grief,      1000  
The only child of Hecuba, her voice

Alone may call me mother! Bitter life,  
 Pass from me, slip away, spare this last blow!  
 Tears overflow my cheeks—a storm of tears  
 Falls from my eyes!

*Andromache.* We are the ones should weep,  
 We, Hecuba, whom, scattered here and there, 1006  
 The Grecian ships shall carry far away.  
 The maid will find at least a sepulcher  
 In the dear soil of her loved native land.

*Helen.* Thy own lot known, yet more thou'lt envy  
 hers. 1010

*Andromache.* Is any portion of my lot unknown?

*Helen.* The fatal urn has given thee a lord.

*Andromache.* Whom call I master? Speak, who  
 bears me hence

A slave?

*Helen.* Lot gave thee to the Scyrian king.

*Andromache.* Happy Cassandra, madness spared  
 thee this, 1015

Madness and great Apollo's aid.

*Helen.* The prince  
 Of kings claims her.

*Hecuba.* Rejoice, rejoice, my child;  
 Cassandra envies thee thy bridals, thine  
 Andromache desires. Is there one  
 Seeks Hecuba for bride?

*Helen.* Thou fall'st a prey 1020  
 To the unwilling Ithacan.

*Hecuba.* Alas,  
 What raging, cruel, unrelenting god  
 Gives kings by lot to be the prey of kings?  
 What god unfriendly thus divides the spoil?  
 What cruel arbiter forbids us choose 1025

Our masters? With Achilles' arms unites  
Great Hector's mother? To Ulysses' lot!  
Conquered and captive am I now indeed,  
Beset by all misfortunes! 'Tis my lord  
Puts me to shame, and not my servitude! 1030  
Isle small and sterile, by rough seas enclosed,  
Thou wilt not hold my grave! Lead on, lead on,  
Ulysses, I delay not, I will go—  
Will follow thee; my fate will follow me.  
No tranquil calm will rest upon the sea; 1035  
Wind, war, and flame shall rage upon the deep,  
My woes and Priam's! When these things shall  
come,  
Respite from punishment shall come to Troy.  
Mine is the lot, from thee I snatch the prize!  
But see where Pyrrhus comes with hasty steps 1040  
And savage mien. Why pause? On, Pyrrhus, on!  
Into this troubled bosom drive the sword,  
And join to thy Achilles his new kin!  
Slayer of aged men, come, here is blood,  
Blood worthy of thy sword; drag off thy spoil, 1045  
And with thy hideous slaughter stain the gods—  
The gods who rule in heaven and those in hell!  
What can I pray for thee? I pray for seas  
Worthy these rites; I pray the thousand ships,  
The fleet of the Pelasgians, may meet 1050  
Such fate as that I fain would whelm the ship  
That bears me hence a captive.



## SCENE II

*Chorus.* Sweet is a nation's grief to one who grieves—

Sweet are the lamentations of a land!  
 The sting of tears and grief is less when shared 1055  
 By many; sorrow, cruel in its pain,  
 Is glad to see its lot by others shared,  
 To know that not alone it suffers loss.  
 None shuns the hapless fate that many bear;  
 None deems himself forlorn, though truly so, 1060  
 If none are happy near him. Take away  
 His riches from the wealthy, take away  
 The hundred cattle that enrich his soil,  
 The poor will lift again his lowered head;  
 'Tis only by comparison man's poor. 1065  
 O'erwhelmed in hopeless ruin, it is sweet  
 To see none happy. He deplores his fate  
 Who, shipwrecked, naked, finds the longed-for port  
 Alone. He bears with calmer mien his fate  
 Who sees, with his, a thousand vessels wrecked 1070  
 By the fierce tempest, and upon a plank  
 Escaping safe, returns to shore, the while  
 The northwest wind, collecting all the waves,  
 Drives them from shore: and when the radiant ram,  
 The gold-fleeced leader of the flock, bore forth 1075  
 Phryxus and Helle, Phryxus mourned the fall  
 Of Helle dropped into the Grecian sea.  
 Pyrrha, Deucalion's wife, restrained her tears,  
 As he did, when they saw the sea, naught else,  
 And they alone of living men remained. 1080  
 The fleet shall soon far scatter this sad band,  
 Soon shall the trumpet sound to spread the sail,

n dip the laboring oars, and Troy's shores flee,  
    en shall the land grow faint and far, the sea  
    band before, Mount Ida fade behind?     1085  
    n grows our sorrow; then what way Troy lies  
    her and son shall gaze. The son shall say,  
    rting the while, 'There where the curving line  
    smoke floats, there is Ilium.' By that sign  
    ll Trojans know their country.     1090

## ACT V

### SCENE I

*Hecuba, Andromache, Messenger.*

*Messenger.* O bitter, cruel, lamentable fate!  
In these ten years of war what crime so hard,  
So sad, has Mars encountered? What decree  
Of fate shall I lament? Thy bitter lot,  
Andromache? Or thine, thou aged one? 1095

*Hecuba.* Whatever woe thou mournst is Hecuba's;  
Their own griefs only others have to bear,  
I bear the woes of all, all die for me,  
And sorrow follows all who call me friend.

*Andromache.* Tell of the deaths—the tale of double  
crime; 1100  
Suffering ever loves to hear its woes;  
Speak, tell us all.

*Messenger.* One mighty tower remains  
Of Troy, no more is left; from this high seat  
Priam, the arbiter of war, was wont  
To view his troops; and in this tower he sat 1105  
And, in caressing arms, embraced the son  
Of Hector, when that hero put to flight  
With fire and sword the trembling, conquered Greeks.  
From thence he showed the child its father's deeds.  
This tower, the former glory of our walls, 1110  
Is now a lonely, ruined mass of rock

Thither the throng of chiefs and people flock ;  
 From the deserted ships the Grecian host  
 Come pouring ; on the hills some find a place,  
 Some on the rising cliffs, upon whose top      1115  
 They stand tiptoe ; some climb the pines, and beech,  
 And laurel, till beneath the gathered crowd  
 The whole wood trembles ; some have found the peaks  
 Of broken crags ; some climb a ruined roof,  
 Or toppling turret of the falling wall ;      1120  
 And some, rude lookers-on, mount Hector's tomb.  
 Through all the crowded space, with haughty mien,  
 Passes the Ithacan, and by the hand  
 Leads Priam's grandson ; nor with tardy step  
 Does the young hero mount the lofty wall.      1125  
 Standing upon the top, with fearless heart  
 He turns his eagle glance from side to side.  
 As the young, tender cub of some wild beast,  
 Not able yet to raven with its teeth,  
 Bites harmlessly, and proudly feels himself      1130  
 A lion ; so this brave and fearless child,  
 Holding the right hand of his enemy,  
 Moves host and leaders and Ulysses' self.  
 He only does not weep for whom all weep,  
 But while the Ithacan begins the words      1135  
 Of the prophetic message and the prayers  
 To the stern gods, he leaps into the midst  
 Of Priam's kingdom, of his own accord.  
*Andromache.* Was ever such a deed by Colchians  
 done,  
 Or wandering Scythians, or the lawless race      1140  
 That dwells beside the Caspian ? Never yet  
 Has children's blood Busiris' altars stained,  
 Nor Diomedes feasted his fierce steeds

On children's limbs ! Who'll take thy body up,  
My son, and bear it to the sepulcher? 1145

*Messenger.* What would that headlong leap have  
left ? His bones

Lie dashed in pieces by the heavy fall,  
His face and noble form, inheritance  
From his illustrious father, are with earth  
Commingled ; on the cruel rocks his neck 1150  
Is broken, and his head is crushed, his brains  
Dashed out ; his body lies devoid of form.

*Andromache.* This, too, is like his father.

*Messenger.* When headlong from the wall the boy  
was cast,

And the Achaians wept the crime they did, 1155  
Then turned these same Achaians to new crimes,  
And to Achilles' tomb. With quiet flow  
The Rhoetean waters beat the further side,  
And on the other side the level plain  
Slopes gently upward, and surrounds the place 1160  
Like a wide amphitheater ; here the strand  
Is thronged with lookers-on, who think to end  
With this last death their vessels' long delay,  
And glad themselves to think the foeman's seed  
At last cut off. The fickle, common crowd 1165  
Condemn the crime, but feast their eyes on it.  
The Trojans haste with no less eagerness  
To their own funeral rites, and, pale with fear,  
Behold the final fall of ruined Troy.

As at a marriage, suddenly advance 1170  
The bridal torches, Helen goes before,  
Attendant to the bride, with sad head bent.  
' So may Hermione,' the Phrygians pray,  
' Be wed, and so base Helen find again



Her husband.' Sudden terror seizes both      1175  
 The awe-struck peoples. With her glance cast down,  
 Modestly comes the victim ; but her cheeks  
 Glow, and her beauty shines unwontedly ;  
 So shines the light of Phœbus gloriously  
 Before his setting, when the stars return      1180  
 And day is darkened by approaching night.  
 The throng is silenced ; all men praise the maid  
 Who now must die : some praise her lovely form,  
 Her tender age moves some, and some lament  
 The fickleness of fortune ; every one      1185  
 Is touched at heart by her courageous soul,  
 Her scorn of death. She comes, by Pyrrhus led ;  
 All wonder, tremble, pity ; when the hill  
 Is reached, and on his father's grave advanced,  
 The young king stands, the fearless maid shrinks  
                  not,      1190  
 But waits unflinchingly the fatal blow.  
 Her unquelled spirit moves the hearts of all ;  
 And—a new prodigy—Pyrrhus is slow  
 At slaughter ; but at length, with steady hand,  
 He buries to the hilt the gleaming sword      1195  
 Within her breast ; the life-blood gushes forth  
 From the deep wound ; in death as heretofore  
 Her soul is strong ; with angry thud she falls  
 As she would make the earth a heavy load  
 Upon Achilles' breast. Both armies weep ;      1200  
 The Trojans venture only feeble moans ;  
 The victors weep aloud : and thus was made  
 The sacrifice. Her blood, upon the ground  
 Once spilt, flowed not away, but eagerly  
 The tomb absorbed and greedily sucked in      1205  
 Each crimson drop.

*Hecuba.* Go, conquering Greeks,  
 Securely seek your homes ; with all sail set,  
 Your fleet may safely skim the longed-for sea.  
 The lad and maid are dead, the war is done !  
 Where can I hide my woe, where lay aside 1210  
 The long delay of the slow-passing years ?  
 Whom shall I weep ? my husband, grandson, child,  
 Or country ? Mourn the living or the dead ?  
 O longed-for death, with violence dost thou come  
 To babes and maidens, but thou fleest from me ! 1215  
 Through long night sought, mid fire, and swords, and  
 spears,  
 Why fly me ? Not the foe, nor ruined home,  
 Nor flame could slay me, though so near I stood  
 To Priam !

*Messenger.* [*Talthybius, coming from the Greek  
 camp.*]

Captive women, seek with speed  
 The sea ; the sails are set, the vessels move. 1220

THE PHŒNICIAN WOMEN



*DRAMATIS PERSONÆ*

ŒDIPUS.

ETEOCLES.

POLYNICES.

ANTIGONE.

JOCASTA.

A THEBAN GUARD.

SCENE: *Thebes.*

# THE PHŒNICIAN WOMEN

## ACT I

### SCENE I

*Œdipus, Antigone.*

*Œdipus.* O guide of thy blind father, only cheer  
To one sore wearied, daughter well-beloved  
Though got at such a heavy price, forsake  
Thy wretched parent, wherefore shouldst thou lead  
His wandering steps? O let him stumble on! 5  
'Tis better I should find the way I seek,  
Alone—the path that takes me out of life  
And frees from sight of this crime-laden head  
The earth and sky. How little have I done!  
The daylight, conscious of my evil deeds, 10  
I do not see, indeed; but I am seen!  
O child, unclasp the hand that clings to mine,  
Where'er my blind steps lead me let me roam.  
I go, I go, where high Cithæron lifts  
Its rugged summit, where Actæon swift, 15  
Roaming among the rocks, was made a prey  
By his own dogs; where through the shadowy groves  
And dusky woodlands of the bosky vales  
The mother, god-inspired, led forth her band,  
And on her waving thyrsus lifted up 20  
That head transfixed, rejoicing in ill deeds;

Where Zethus' bullock ran and dragged along  
 The shattered body—on the bristling thorns  
 Blood marked the course of the swift bullock's flight ;  
 Or where with lofty summit Ino's cliff 25  
 Rises beside the sea, where fleeing crime  
 But finding crime the mother sought to drown  
 Herself, her son, and leaped into the waves.  
 Thrice happy he whose better fortune gave  
 So good a mother! In these woods of ours 30  
 There lies another place that calls to me,  
 My footstep shall not falter, I will go  
 Thither without a guide, why hesitate  
 To take my rightful place? O give me death,  
 Cithæron, give me back my former lodge, 35  
 That where in infancy I should have died,  
 There in my age I may breathe out my life.  
 O ever savage, ruthless, cruel, fell,  
 Whether thou slay or spare, long, long ago  
 This lifeless trunk was due thee, now at last 40  
 Fulfil my father's mandate, mother's will.  
 My spirit longs to see accomplished now  
 The deed so long delayed. Why hold me clasped  
 With fatal love, my child? Why hold me so?  
 My father calls, I follow! Follow thee! 45  
 Yet spare! Behold where angry Laius comes,  
 Bearing the bloodstained standard of the realm  
 Snatched from him. With his hands he seeks to tear  
 My eyeballs' empty sockets. Dost thou see  
 My father, child? I see him! Now at last 50  
 Spew out thy baneful life, O coward soul,  
 Brave to destroy thy eyesight, not thyself!  
 Leave off thy long atonements, weak delays!  
 Why longer drag along thy life's slow length?

Why live? No crime remains for thee to do. 55  
 Ah, wretch! I here proclaim I still may sin!—  
 Go virgin, leave thy father; for her sake—  
 Thy mother's—fear I all.

*Antigone.* No power on earth,  
 O father, can unknit my hand from thine,  
 And none shall ever snatch me from thy side. 60  
 My brothers may with drawn sword seek to gain  
 The opulent realm and th' illustrious home  
 Of Labdacus, but mine the better part  
 Of all my father's realm—my father's self.  
 That brother who now holds in captured Thebes 65  
 The Theban scepter cannot take from me  
 This share, nor can that other who now leads  
 Argolic hosts; though Jupiter should speak  
 With thunderous voice out of the riven sky,  
 Although his bolt should fall to break our bond, 70  
 I will not let thee go. Though thou forbid,  
 Yet will I guide thee; though thou wish it not,  
 I will against thy will direct thy steps.  
 Seekst thou the plain? I go. The rugged heights?  
 I do not bar the way, but go before. 75  
 Whatever path thou treadst, make me thy guide,  
 We choose the selfsame road. Thou canst not die  
 Without me, with me thou mayst find thy death.  
 Here rises with steep sides the lofty cliff,  
 And views wide reaches of the sea that lies 80  
 Below, wilt thou go thither? There o'erhangs  
 The barren rock, there yawns the gaping jaws  
 Of the rent earth, shall I direct thee there?  
 There fall the hungry torrents, rolling down  
 The Sundered rocks from off the broken hills, 85  
 Shall we rush headlong in? Lo, I go first,

I go where'er thou wilt, I do not urge,  
 I would not hinder. Father, wouldst thou cut  
 Thy thread of life? Is death thy dearest wish?  
 I go before thee if thou seekest death, 90  
 I follow if thou live. Yet change thy mind,  
 Call to thy aid thy will, so strong of old,  
 With force heroic master thy distress,  
 To die is to be conquered by thy woes,  
 Oh, be courageous still.

*Œdipus.* From so base home 95  
 Whence comes such noble growth? Whence comes  
 this maid

So different from her race? Canst thou believe,  
 O fate, that this is true? Has any good  
 Been born of me? It never yet has been  
 That fortune smiled on me except to harm. 100  
 Nature obeys new laws; the streams, reversed,  
 Bear back swift waters to their fountain-head,  
 The torch of Phœbus ushers in the night,  
 And Hesperus brings the day; that I may find  
 Some increase of my woe, I, even I, 105  
 Shall have a loyal child. In death alone  
 Can Œdipus be safe. I may avenge  
 My father, unavenged till now; why cease  
 To mete out punishment, inert right hand?  
 Whatever hitherto was measured out 110  
 Was given for a mother. Dauntless maid,  
 Let go thy father's hand, thou dost prolong  
 My death; thy living father's funeral rites,  
 Already all too long, thou lengthenest,  
 Cover the hateful body with the earth. 115  
 Thou errest, though with nobleness of aim,  
 And deemst it loyalty to drag about

A father who lacks yet his burial rites.  
 Who hinders one in haste to find his death  
 Equals in guilt the one who forces death 120  
 On one unwilling. Yet he equals not!  
 The first I deem, indeed, the greater sin,  
 I rather would be hurried to my end  
 Than be from death's jaws snatched away. My child,  
 No longer strive, in my own hands I hold 125  
 The right to live or die: I laid aside  
 Freely my sovereign power, but still retain  
 Sovereignty o'er myself. If thou indeed  
 Art loyal, give again thy father's sword,  
 The sword with parent's slaughter infamous. 130  
 Thou giv'st it? Do my children also hold  
 This with the realm? Wherever there is need  
 Of crime, there that should be; I give it up,  
 My sons shall have it, yea both sons. Prepare  
 The torches rather and a heap of wood; 135  
 On the high funeral pyre I'll cast myself,  
 Embrace the flames and 'neath the desolate pile  
 Will hide this too firm heart; set free at last,  
 Will give to ashes all that lives in me.  
 Where is the pitiless sea? Where jutting crags 140  
 O'erhang, where swift Ismenus' savage shoals  
 Roll downward, lead me, if thou leader art.  
 Where on the high cliff sat the Sphinx, half brute,  
 Proposing riddles, there I'll go to die,  
 Thither direct my steps, oh, place me there! 145  
 Not empty should that baleful seat be left,  
 Let it be by the greater monster filled.  
 There sitting on the rocks I will propose  
 The riddle of our fortune none can solve.  
 Whoe'er thou art who plow'st th' Assyrian fields, 150

Whoe'er, a suppliant, offerest up thy prayers  
 Where dwelt the far-famed dragon, ye who drink  
 Eurotas or inhabit Sparta, famed  
 For the twin brothers, husbandmen who reap  
 Elis, Parnassus, and the fertile fields 155  
 Of rich Bœotia, listen ; what like this  
 Could she propose—Thebes' savage curse who wove  
 Dark, baneful riddles? What so hard to loose?  
 His father's father's son-in-law, yet found  
 His father's rival, brother to his sons, 160  
 And father of his brothers ; at one birth  
 The father's mother bore the husband sons,  
 And grandsons to herself. Who can search out  
 This prodigy? I, even I, who bore  
 The trophies from the conquered Sphinx, perplexed, 165  
 Am slow to read my riddle. Why waste words?  
 Why strive with prayers to soften my hard heart?  
 Fixed is my purpose to pour out this life,  
 Too long with death contending, and to seek  
 The land of shadows, for the blackest night 170  
 Is all too little for this crime of mine.  
 Hide me in Tartarus, or if beyond  
 Aught lies, there hide me ; what I should have done  
 Long since, I now will do. It cannot be  
 Death is forbidden. Wilt thou keep the sword? 175  
 Wilt thou close up the way that leads to death,  
 Nor grant a halter? Wilt thou take away  
 Poisonous herbs? What profits all thy care?  
 In every place is death, most graciously  
 God ordered this ; one may destroy man's life, 180  
 But none can snatch death from him, countless gates  
 To this lie open. I have need of nought,  
 Wont am I to employ my brave right hand.

Come, hand, with all thy force, with all thy guile,  
 With all thy strength ; I purpose not to wound 185  
 One place alone, I am all black with sin,  
 Deal death in whatsoever part thou wilt.  
 Lay wide the bosom, tear away the heart  
 So filled with crime, the inmost parts lay bare,  
 Let my weak throat sound with redoubled blows, 190  
 And let my veins, by wounding nails torn through,  
 Bleed ; or where thou art wont direct thy wrath :  
 Open again these wounds, with putrid gore  
 Wet them, and drag this unsubdued, hard heart  
 By this gate forth. O father, wheresoe'er 195  
 Thou mayst be found, judge of my penalty,  
 I have not thought by any punishment  
 Ever to fully expiate my sin ;  
 I was not satisfied with death alone,  
 I have not paid my ransom with my eyes, 200  
 I wished to perish for thee limb by limb,  
 At length exact the penalty I owe.  
 Now I atone, 'twas then but sacrifice  
 I offered ; oh, be present, inward urge  
 My feeble hand ; oh, plunge it deeper still ! 205  
 A timid, slight libation then I poured,  
 Hardly drew forth the eyes that eagerly  
 Followed my hand. My spirit even now  
 Falters, is loth with trembling hand to tear  
 These sockets. Œdipus, be brave indeed, 210  
 Less bold than thou hast purposed thou hast been,  
 In plucking out thine eyes ; deep in thy brain  
 Bury thy hand, and perfect thou the death  
 Where I began to die.

*Antigone.* I pray thee show  
 Some pity, great-souled father ; calmly hear 215



Thy daughter's words. I would not lead thee back  
 To the old home, nor to the kingly throne  
 With all its splendor, would not have thee bear  
 With weak, untroubled breast the wrath of God  
 Which time has not yet softened, but 'tis meet 220  
 So strong a man should not be crushed by grief,  
 Or fly, o'ercome by manifold distress.  
 It is not, father, as thou deemst it, brave  
 To be afraid of life ; 'tis brave to face  
 The greatest ills, nor flinch, nor turn the back. 225  
 He who has trampled on his destiny,  
 He who has rent life's good and cast it by,  
 And made his own life heavier, who has need  
 No more of God, why should he wish to die ?  
 Why seek his death ? Either were cowardly. 230  
 No one who longs for death despises it.  
 The man whose evil fate is at its worst  
 Is safe. Although he would, what god could make  
 Thy trouble heavier ? Nor canst thou thyself  
 Unless in deeming thou art worthy death. 235  
 Thou art not, for no sin has touched thy heart.  
 Thou canst more surely call thyself guilt free,  
 Since thou art innocent although the gods  
 Willed otherwise. What maddens thee ? What adds  
 New stings to misery ? What urges thee 240  
 Into the land of death ? What drives thee hence ?  
 Wouldst thou shun day ? Thou hast. Or wouldst  
 thou flee  
 Thy lofty palace and thy native land ?  
 For thee, although thou livest, native land  
 Is dead. Or wouldst thou fly thy mother, sons ? 245  
 Fate has removed thee from the sight of these.  
 What death from others takes, life takes from thee.

The tumult of the throne? At thy command  
 The press of crowding fortune fell away.  
 What wouldst thou fly, my father?

*Œdipus.*

Ah! My self! 250

I flee a bosom conscious of all crimes,  
 I flee this hand, this sky, I flee the gods.  
 Do I yet touch the earth where Ceres grows  
 Fruitful and fair? With noxious life still breathe  
 The vital air? or satisfy my thirst 255  
 With water? or enjoy in any way  
 The gifts of mother Nature? Base, defiled,  
 Detestable, do I yet feel the touch  
 Of thy pure hand? or can I yet perceive  
 Voices which speak the names of father, son? 260  
 Oh, could I with destroying hand throw wide  
 Those paths where enter sound! Might I destroy  
 These narrow pathways for the human voice!  
 O child, thy wretched father would have fled  
 Long, long ago, the knowledge that thou art, 265  
 Thou, part of my great sin. My crimes stick fast,  
 Repeated o'er and o'er. O eyes and ears,  
 Let all ye gave me pass away from me!  
 O'erwhelmed with blackest shadows, why not go  
 Into the everlasting shades of Dis? 270  
 Why keep my spirit here? Why weight the world?  
 Why wander yet among the souls that live?  
 What crime is left? Realm, parents, children, all,  
 Valor, the glory of sagacious mind,  
 Have perished; fate has taken from me all. 275  
 Tears still were left, these from myself I snatched.  
 Go, for my soul will listen to no prayers,  
 New penalties and equal to my crimes  
 I seek. Yet what can ever equal those?

I was condemned to death in infancy, 280  
 Who ever drew so bad a lot? ere yet  
 I saw the light, ere from my mother's womb  
 I was set free, already I was feared!  
 Night seizes many, just when they are born,  
 And carries them away from the new day; 285  
 Death found me even ere I saw the light.  
 Some meet an early death within the womb,  
 But have they also sinned? Still hidden close,  
 Secreted in the womb, not knowing yet  
 That I should be the doer of great crimes, 290  
 A god impelled; my father at his word  
 Condemned me, pierced with steel my tender feet,  
 And left me in the forest, food for beasts  
 And savage birds (oft wet with blood of kings)  
 Which dark Cithæron breeds. Yet whom the gods 295  
 Sentenced, and whom a father cast away,  
 Death also fled. I have fulfilled the word  
 Spoken at Delphos: I attacked and slew  
 My father. This might be by love made good.  
 My father I have slain, but I have loved 300  
 My mother—of our marriage torch to speak  
 Is loathsome, yet against my will I'll pay  
 This penalty, will tell the beastly crime,  
 Unheard-of, strange, at thought of which men shrink,  
 The crime which makes ashamed the man who slew 305  
 His father. This right hand, with father's blood  
 Made wet, even to my father's marriage bed  
 I took, and found sin's wages—greater sin.  
 My father's murder was a slight offence  
 Compared with this. Lest all too small should be 310  
 My guilt, my mother in my marriage bed  
 Was made a mother. Nature cannot yield

A greater crime than this, but should there be  
 A greater, those to whom 'twere possible  
 Have been by me created. From my hand 315  
 I cast aside the patricide's reward,  
 The scepter, with it armed another hand.  
 I knew right well my kingdom's destiny,  
 Without the sacrifice of sacred blood  
 No man can hold it. Nameless ills to come 320  
 My father heart presages. Seeds are sown  
 Of future slaughter. He who holds the realm  
 Will not resign it, he who wishes it  
 Calls upon justice and the gods who see  
 The violated pact ; exiled, he moves 325  
 Argos and all the cities of the Greeks  
 To arms ; destruction comes to wretched Thebes ;  
 The flying spear, flames, slaughter 'gainst her rise,  
 And greater ills, if greater ills there be,  
 That none may doubt I have begotten sons. 330  
*Antigone.* If thou no other reason hadst to live,  
 This were enough : that thou shouldst fatherlike  
 Control thy maddened sons, thou canst avert,  
 And thou alone, the threats of impious war,  
 Thou only canst restrain those youths insane, 335  
 Give to the people peace, to Thebes repose,  
 And, to the broken compact, faith renewed.  
 If thou thyself shouldst to thyself refuse  
 The right to live, thou tak'st from many more  
 The right of life.  
*Œdipus.* For empire and for blood, 340  
 For war and treachery athirst, base, vile,  
 In short my own, can these or can their like  
 Feel filial love ? They joy in doing ill,  
 And deem nought sacred when rage drives them forth.

Those base born ones consider nothing base, 345  
Their wretched father's shame affects them not,  
Nor does their native country, they are mad  
For sovereignty ; whither they tend I know,  
How much they strive to do ; therefore I seek  
A speedy way of death, make haste to die 350  
While none is guiltier in my house than I.  
Why, daughter, dost thou weep and clasp my knees?  
Why strive with prayers to guide my untamed heart?  
Elsewhere invulnerable, here alone  
Can fortune wound me, thou alone canst warm 355  
My frozen love, in all our house but thou  
Canst teach me goodness. Nought to me is hard  
Or grievous if I know it is thy wish.  
If thou shouldst bid him, Œdipus would cross  
Th' Ægean straits, would take between his lips 360  
The flame earth belches from Sicilia's mount,  
Would cast himself before the fiery snake  
That rages for the fruit that Hercules  
Stole from the grove, at thy command he'd bare  
His bosom to the birds, at thy command 365  
Would live.

## ACT II

*Œdipus, Antigone, Messenger.*

*Messenger.* O noble scion of a royal stock,  
Thebes, trembling at the brothers' hostile arms,  
Invokes thee, prays that thou wouldst turn aside  
The torch of war that threatens thy father's land. 370  
Nor threats alone, the danger nearer comes.  
A brother claims the promised interchange  
Of royal power, into war would force  
The Grecian cities, seven camps invest  
The walls of Thebes. Make haste to bring her aid, 375  
Prevent at once impiety and war.

*Œdipus.* Am I the man should put an end to crime,  
Or teach the hand to keep itself unstained  
With blood of kindred? Have I learned the laws  
Of justice and of duteous love? They seek 380  
To follow the example of my crimes,  
Gladly I recognize and praise their deed,  
Exhort them do some action worthy me.  
Dear offspring, forward! prove your noble birth  
By deeds, surpass my glory and my fame, 385  
Do something that shall make thy father glad  
That he has lived till now! I know you will,  
Your ancestry assures me that you will,  
Such greatness cannot with poor, common crimes  
Content itself. Bring weapons, cast the torch 390  
Into the sacred temples of the gods,

Mow down with flames thy native country's grain,  
 Throw all into disorder, ruin all,  
 Destroy the city walls, and to the dust  
 Level the city, with their shrines destroy 395  
 The great divinities, and bring to nought  
 The household gods become so infamous,  
 Burn up the city, lay thy whole house low,  
 And to my marriage bed put first the torch.

*Antigone.* Thy passionate, wild sorrow put aside ; 400  
 The public sorrow urges thee to be  
 The bringer of sweet peace between thy sons.

*Edipus.* Thinkst thou thou seest here a meek old  
 man,  
 And that thou callest to aid thee one who loves  
 Sweet peace? This heart of mine with wrath is  
 swelled, 405

Rage burns within me, greater war I seek  
 Than aught that destiny or youth desires.  
 I am not satisfied with cruel war,  
 Brother with brother wars—'tis not enough.  
 Crimes that are due, crimes that are like my own, 410  
 Crimes that become our bed,—let these be done.  
 Give weapons to the mother. From the woods  
 No one shall drag me, in the hollow cliffs  
 I'll lurk, or in dense thickets hide myself,  
 There will I wait on wandering Rumor's words, 415  
 And hear what'er I can of brothers' war.

## ACT III

### SCENE I

*Jocasta.*

Happy Agave! The wild crime she did,  
She herself bore; a blood-stained bacchanal,  
She carried forth the dreadful spoil, her son  
Dismembered; guilt was hers, yet nought of crime 420  
Beyond her own great sin was brought to pass.  
'Tis light to bear the burdens of the crimes  
Myself have done. I have made others sin;  
This also, even this is light to bear.  
I have brought forth the guilty, to my woes 425  
This bitterness still lacked—that I should love  
An enemy. Three times the winter snows  
Have fallen and three times the summer grain  
Before the bending sickle been laid low,  
Since, of his land deprived, my son has roamed 430  
An exile, and, a fugitive, has craved  
Aid from the Grecian kings. He has become  
Adrastes' son-in-law—that king who rules  
The waters the Corinthian Isthmus cuts,  
Who now to aid his son-in-law leads forth 435  
His hosts, and with him seven other kings.  
I know not what I ought to wish or think;  
He claims the kingdom, reason good he has  
For claiming, yet he seeks it by ill means.



Alas, whose part shall I, the mother, take? 440  
 Each is my son, I cannot safely show  
 My love for either. If I wish one well  
 I wish the other ill. With equal love  
 I love them both, and yet my spirit yearns,  
 Favoring still the weakest, toward the son 445  
 Whose lot is heaviest though his cause is just.  
 His evil fortune binds me to his side.

## SCENE II

*Antigone, Jocasta, A Theban Guard.*

*Theban Guard.* Queen, while in weeping and in  
 wild lament  
 Thou wastest time, the battle line is here,  
 Drawn up in open war, the trumpet calls 450  
 To arms, th' advancing eagle calls to war.  
 Drawn up in serried ranks the kings prepare  
 Seven battle fields, and Cadmus' sons go forth  
 With equal courage, swiftly here and there  
 The soldiers rush; see how black clouds of dust 455  
 Obscure the day, there rises from the field  
 Clouds dark as smoke, raised by the hurrying feet  
 Of horsemen and, if those who fear see true,  
 The hostile standards shine, the foe's first ranks  
 Are present, and the golden banners bear 460  
 Illustrious names of well-known generals.  
 Go, to the brothers bring fraternal love,  
 Give peace to all and with a mother's voice  
 Forbid the war.  
*Antigone.* Haste, mother, haste, fly fast,  
 Hold back the weapons, from the brothers' hands 465

Strike down the sword, between the hostile spears  
 Set thy brave breast, O mother, stop the war,  
 Or perish first.

*Focasta.* I go, I go, my head  
 I'll offer to their swords, between the swords  
 I'll stand, and he who would his brother slay 470  
 Must slay his mother first. At my request  
 The duteous son will lay his weapon down,  
 The son who is not duteous shall begin  
 His war with me ; though old, I may restrain  
 The fiery youths, no impious crime shall be 475  
 While I am witness, or if impious crime  
 Can be committed and I witness it,  
 One crime were not enough.

*Antigone.* The fight is on,  
 The neighboring banners gleam, the noise of war  
 Resounds, O mother, now employ thy prayers. 480  
 But see, as though prevailed on by thy tears,  
 Slowly, with spears at rest, the line draws near.

*Theban Guard.* The line moves slowly, but the  
 leaders haste.

*Focasta.* What winged wind will sweep me through  
 the air,  
 With the mad rushing of the tempest driven? 485  
 Would that the Sphinx or the Stymphalian birds  
 That darken like a heavy cloud the day  
 Would bear me swiftly on their eager wings!  
 Or that the harpies, seeing the fierce rage  
 Of the two cruel kings, would snatch me hence 490  
 And cast me down between the battle lines.

*Theban Guard.* Like one insane she moves, she's  
 mad, indeed!  
 As the swift Parthian arrow from the bow

Is driven, as the raft is swept along  
By the wild winds, or as a falling star 495  
Drops from the skies, when with swift fires it breaks  
A path unswerving, so her maddened flight  
She takes, and stands between the hostile lines.  
The fight a moment fails, compelled to yield  
Before a mother's prayers, on either side 500  
The warriors, eager to begin the work  
Of mutual slaughter, in their right hands hold  
The weapons poised, but motionless as yet  
Both armies stand, at peace. The swords of all  
Are sunk to earth, or hidden in the sheath, 505  
Only the brothers' hands still brandish them.  
The mother shows her loose hair, white and torn ;  
She supplicates, but they deny ; she wets  
Their knees with tears—who hesitates so long  
Can in the end deny a mother's prayers. 510

## ACT IV

### SCENE I

*Polynices, Eteocles, Jocasta, The Two Armies.*

*Jocasta.* Against me turn your weapons and your  
fires,

Attack me only, valorous youths who come  
From Argive cities ; and ye warriors fierce,  
Who from the Theban citadel descend,  
Fall upon me alone. Let friend and foe 515  
Alike attack this womb, which bore these sons—  
My husband's brothers. Tear these limbs apart,  
Scatter them far and wide. I bore you both.  
Do you more quickly lay aside the sword ?  
And shall I say who fathered you, my sons ? 520  
Give me your hands, give them while yet unstained ;  
Till now ye have unwittingly done wrong,  
Each crime was fortune's that against us sinned,  
This is the first base act brought forth between  
Those conscious of their guilt. In my hand lies 525  
Whate'er you will : if holy piety  
Be pleasing to you, give your mother peace ;  
If crime be pleasing, greater is prepared,  
A mother stands between you, make an end  
Of war or of the hinderer of war. 530  
Whom with alternate prayers and anxious words  
Shall I first strive to touch, whom first embrace ?  
With equal love am I to each one drawn.

One was far off—but if the brother's pact  
 Should hold, the other soon would be far off. 535  
 Shall I then never see the two at once  
 Except as now? Embrace me first, my son,  
 Who hast endured misfortunes manifold  
 And labors manifold, and now, foredone  
 By a long exile, dost at last behold 540  
 Thy mother. Nearer draw, within its sheath  
 Put up thy impious sword, and in the earth  
 Bury thy spear that trembles, poised to slay.  
 Thy shield prevents thy breast from meeting mine,  
 Lay it aside; loose from thy brow the bands 545  
 And from its warlike covering free thy head,  
 That I may see thy face. Where dost thou look?  
 Dost thou observe thy brother's battle line  
 With timid glance? I'll hide thee in my arms,  
 Through me must be the pathway to thy blood. 550  
 Why hesitate? Art thou afraid to trust  
 Thy mother?

*Polynices.* Yea, I am afraid. No more  
 Do nature's laws avail. Since I have known  
 A mother's precedent, I cannot trust  
 Even a mother's promise.

*Jocasta.* Put again 555  
 Thy hand upon thy sword, bind on once more  
 Thy helmet, take thy shield, retain thy arms  
 Until thy brother shall have been disarmed.  
 Thou who first used the sword, put by the sword.  
 If peace is odious, if thou seekest war 560  
 Thy mother asks thee for a short delay  
 That she may kiss the son from flight returned,  
 Whether it be the first kiss or the last.  
 Listen unarmed while I entreat for peace.

Thou fearest him, he thee? I fear thee both, 565  
But for the sake of each. Why wilt thou not  
Lay by the sword? Be glad at these delays:  
You seek to wage a war in which 'twere best  
To be o'ercome. Thy hostile brother's guile  
Fearst thou? 'tis often needful to deceive 570  
Or be oneself deceived, yet is it best  
To suffer rather than commit a crime.  
Fear not, a treacherous thrust from either side  
Thy mother will receive. Do I prevail?  
Shall I be envious of thy father's fate? 575  
Have I come hither to prevent a crime,  
Or see it nearer? See, he sheathes his sword,  
He drops his spear, he lays aside his arms;  
And now to thee thy mother turns with prayers  
And tears, I see again thy face, long sought. 580  
Thee, from thy native land a fugitive,  
A foreign king's penates long kept safe.  
By divers seas and by a changeful fate  
Thou hast been driven. Followed by her train,  
Thy mother did not to thy marriage bed 585  
Conduct thee, nor adorn the festal halls  
Herself, nor with the sacred fillets bind  
The happy torches, thy bride's father gave  
No gift of gold, a treasure for a king,  
Nor fields, nor towns; thy bridal gift is war. 590  
Thou of a foe art made the son-in-law,  
Far from thy land, the guest of alien laws,  
Sought by a stranger, driven from thine own,  
An exile through no crime that thou hast done.  
Lest thou shouldst taste not all thy parents' fate, 595  
This too thou hadst from them: to wed amiss.  
O son, sent back to me from many lands;

O son, thy anxious mother's hope and fear ;  
 For whose return I often prayed the gods,  
 Though thy return would snatch away as much 600  
 As it would give ; how long, I asked, how long,  
 Before I cease to fear on his account ?

The mocking god replied, till thou shalt fear  
 Himself. Thou hadst been far, but for this war ;  
 Hadst thou been far I should have known no war. 605

The sight of thee is given at a price  
 Heavy to pay, but to thy mother's eyes  
 The sight is welcome. Now, ere cruel Mars  
 Dares some dread crime, let the two hosts withdraw ;  
 Great sin it is that they have come so near. 610

I am amazed, I shudder, when I see  
 Two brothers stand so near the edge of crime.  
 My limbs are weak, how nearly had I seen  
 A crime of greater infamy than aught  
 Thy wretched father ever looked upon. 615

I am set free from fear of such a crime,  
 Such now I shall not see ; and yet I feel  
 Unhappy that so nearly I have seen.  
 Oh ! by the ten months' labor of my womb,  
 And by thy noble sister's piety, 620

And by thy father's eyes which he dragged forth,  
 Enraged against himself and from himself  
 Exacting the hard penalty of crime,  
 Though innocent of any guilt ; I pray :  
 Save from the cursed torch thy country's walls, 625

Turn back the standards of the hostile lines ;  
 Though thou turnst back, great portion of thy crime  
 Already is complete—thy land has seen  
 Its open plains o'errun by hordes of foes,  
 Has seen afar the shining troops, has seen 630

The Cadmean meadows trampled by the horse,  
And princes in their chariots of war  
Advancing, and the blaze of lighted beams  
Prepared to burn our homes, and—even for Thebes  
An unaccustomed crime—two brothers roused 635  
To war against each other. All the host  
Saw, the whole people saw, thy sister saw,  
And I, thy mother. That he saw it not,  
Thy father to his mangled eyeballs owes.  
Ah, what if Œdipus should see thee now, 640  
That judge who even for error would exact  
The penalty? O waste not with the sword  
Thy country and thy home, nor overthrow  
The Thebes thou so desirest to rule.  
What madness has possession of thy mind? 645  
Wilt thou by wild assault destroy the land?  
That it may be thine own wouldst make it nought?  
Thou dost but to thine own cause injury,  
When thou inflam'st thy land with hostile arms,  
Layest the ripe grain low, and far and wide 650  
Spreadst terror. None thus devastate their own.  
Thou must believe it but an alien land,  
Which thou commandest to be seized by fire  
And taken by the sword. Decide which one  
Shall be the king, but let the kingdom stand. 655  
Wilt thou with fire and spear destroy these roofs?  
Or canst thou shake Amphion's mighty work?  
Wouldst shake these walls, not builded by man's hand  
That lifts with noisy crane the slow moved weight,  
But called together by the cither's sound 660  
And singing—of themselves the stones moved up  
Into the highest turrets—wouldst thou break  
These walls in pieces? Wouldst thou bear away



A victor's spoil, thy father's vanquished peers  
 Lead hence, and shall the cruel soldiers drag 665  
 Mothers in chains, snatched from their husband's arms?  
 Shall Theban maidens, mingled with the herd  
 Of captives, go as gifts to Argive maids?  
 Shall I myself, with hands behind me bound,  
 The plunder of fraternal triumph be? 670  
 Canst thou behold thy fellow citizens  
 On all sides given o'er to death and flight?  
 Canst thou against these dear walls lead the foe?  
 Hast thou a heart so savage and so wild,  
 So cruel in its wrath? Thou art not yet 675  
 A king, what will thy sceptered hand perform?  
 I do beseech thee, put aside thy rage  
 And swelling anger, give to duteous love  
 Again thy heart.

*Polynices.* That I a fugitive  
 May wander? That I may afar from Thebes 680  
 Be kept? May ever as a guest desire  
 The aid of strangers? Had I broken faith,  
 Had I foresworn myself, what had I borne?  
 Shall I to aliens pay the penalty  
 Of treachery, and he alone enjoy 685  
 The profit of the crime? Thou bidst me go,  
 I would indeed obey a mother's word;  
 Where shall I go? My royal halls would be  
 My haughty brother's dwelling, a poor hut  
 Would cover me: give to the exiled that, 690  
 Let me exchange a realm for that poor home.  
 But shall I, given to my wife, a slave,  
 Bear the harsh judgments of a wealthy bride  
 And as a mean and humble follower  
 Obey the royal parents of my wife? 695

'Tis hard to fall from power to servitude.

*Jocasta.* If thou desirest to be a king  
Nor canst from the harsh scepter free thy hand,  
Many there are in the world's circle wide  
That thou canst seize. Where Tmolus lifts its heights  
Sacred to Bacchus, where wide stretches lie 701  
Of fruitful soil, where rich Pactolus flows  
And inundates the country with its gold.  
Nor does Mæander with its wandering stream  
Through meadowlands less happy wind its way ; 705  
Swift Hermus rolls through fertile fields ; there lies  
Gargara, loved by Ceres, and the land  
Which Zanthus, swoll'n with Ida's snows, makes wet ;  
There lies the shore where the Ionian sea  
Changes its name, across the narrow strait, 710  
Opposite to Abydos, Sestos stands ;  
Or, farther east, with safe and frequent ports,  
Lies Lycia : seek these kingdoms with the sword,  
Let thy bride's father bear his hostile arms  
Against these peoples, and betray these lands, 715  
And give them to thee to be ruled by thee.  
Think that thy father hitherto has held  
This kingdom. Better far for thee would be  
Exile than this return. Exiled thou art 719  
Through guilt not thine ; through crime thyself must do  
Thou wilt return. 'Twere better thou shouldst seek  
With these thy warriors a new realm, unstained  
By any crime. The sharer of thy war,  
Thy brother, will himself then fight for thee  
Go wage a war where we may wish thee well. 725  
A kingdom won by crime is heavier far  
Than any exile. Weigh the ills of war,  
Think on uncertain Mars' vicissitudes.

Though thou shouldst lead with thee the flower of  
Greece,

Though far and wide thy countless hosts should spread,  
Yet doubtful were the fortune of the war— 731

'Tis as Mars wills, he makes of equal strength  
Two swords, although they were before ill matched,  
Blind chance brings hope or fear. Though all the gods  
Favored thy vows, they have withdrawn from thee 735  
And, put to flight, have sought the Theban side,  
The soldiery, in awful overthrow  
Lying, are scattered over all the field.

Say thou wage war, from thy slain brother bear  
A victor's spoils, thy palms would soon be crushed; 740  
Thinkst thou such war can bring the conqueror joy  
When he commits in it accursed crime?

Him whom thou seekest now to overthrow,  
Him, conquered, wretched one, thou wilt bewail.  
Go, put an end to this disastrous war, 745  
From terror free thy native land, from grief  
Set free thy parents.

*Polynices.* Shall no punishment  
For all his crime and treachery be borne  
By my base brother?

*Focasta.* Fear not. He shall pay  
Hard penalty indeed, for he shall reign, 750  
This is his penalty. And shouldst thou doubt,  
Look on his father's, his grandfather's fate;  
Cadmus and Cadmus' offspring tell thee this:  
Never unpunished did a Theban hold  
The scepter, none shall hold it who break faith, 755  
And even now among such sinful ones  
Thou numberest a brother.

*Eteocles.* Be it so!

'Tis worth so much to be among Thebes' kings.  
Thee, place I mid the throng of exiled ones.

*Focasta.* Reign hated by the people.

*Eteocles.* He who fears 760

Hatred can never wish to be a king.

God, the creator of the universe,

Has bound together hate and kingly power.

A great king, I believe, will overcome

Hatred itself. Their peoples' love prevents 765

Many from ruling ; most is possible

Where hate abides. Who wishes to be loved

Rules with a languid hand.

*Focasta.* Not long maintained

Will be unwelcome empire.

*Eteocles.* Kings may give

The laws of empire with a better grace, 770

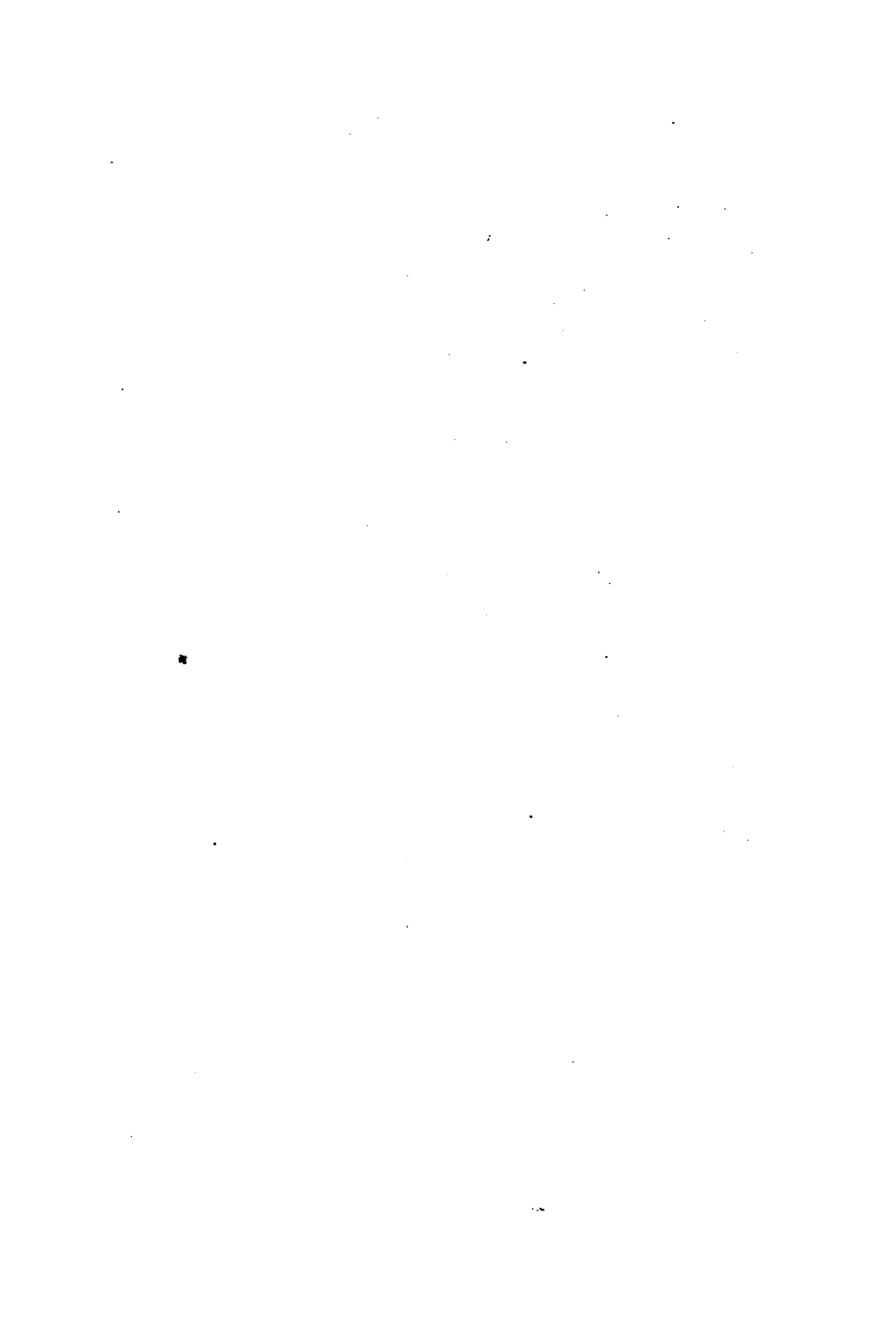
Speak thou of exiles. For my realm I wish—

*Focasta.* To give thy native land, thy household  
gods,

Thy wife, to the destroying flames?

*Eteocles.* Hard price

Is ever for imperial power paid.



# MEDEA

*DRAMATIS PERSONÆ*

JASON.

CREON.

MEDEA.

NURSE.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS OF CORINTHIAN WOMEN.

SCENE: *Corinth.*

# MEDEA

## ACT I

### SCENE I

*Medea.* [*Alone.*] Ye gods of marriage ;  
Lucina, guardian of the genial bed ;  
Pallas, who taught the tamer of the seas  
To steer the Argo ; stormy ocean's lord ;  
Titan, dividing bright day to the world ; 5  
And thou three-formed Hecate, who dost shed  
Thy conscious splendor on the hidden rites !  
Ye by whom Jason plighted me his troth ;  
And ye Medea rather should invoke :  
Chaos of night eternal ; realm opposed 10  
To the celestial powers ; abandoned souls ;  
King of the dusky realm ; Persephone,  
By better faith betrayed ; you I invoke,  
But with no happy voice. Approach, approach,  
Avenging goddesses with snaky hair, 15  
Holding in blood-stained hands your sulphurous torch !  
Come now as horrible as when of yore  
Ye stood beside my marriage-bed ; bring death  
To the new bride, and to the royal seed,  
And Creon ; worse for Jason I would ask— 20  
Life ! Let him roam in fear through unknown lands,  
An exile, hated, poor, without a home ;



A guest now too well known, let him, in vain,  
 Seek alien doors, and long for me, his wife !  
 And, yet a last revenge, let him beget 25  
 Sons like their father, daughters like their mother !  
 'Tis done ; revenge is even now brought forth—  
 I have borne sons to Jason. I complain  
 Vainly, and cry aloud with useless words,  
 Why do I not attack mine enemies ? 30  
 I will strike down the torches from their hands,  
 The light from heaven. Does the sun see this,  
 The author of our race, and still give light ?  
 And, sitting in his chariot, does he still  
 Run through the accustomed spaces of the sky, 35  
 Nor turn again to seek his rising place,  
 And measure back the day ? Give me the reins ;  
 Father, let me in thy paternal car  
 Be borne aloft the winds, and let me curb  
 With glowing bridle those thy fiery steeds ! 40  
 Burn Corinth ; let the parted seas be joined !  
 This still remains—for me to carry up  
 The marriage torches to the bridal room,  
 And, after sacrificial prayers, to slay  
 The victims on their altars. Seek, my soul— 45  
 If thou still livest, or if aught endures  
 Of ancient vigor—seek to find revenge  
 Through thine own bowels ; throw off woman's fears,  
 Intrench thyself in snowy Caucasus.  
 All impious deeds Phasis or Pontus saw, 50  
 Corinth shall see. Evils unknown and wild,  
 Hideous, frightful both to earth and heaven,  
 Disturb my soul,—wounds, and the scattered corpse,  
 And murder. I remember gentle deeds,  
 A maid did these ; let heavier anguish come, 55

Since sterner crimes befit me now, a wife!  
 Gird thee with wrath, prepare thine utmost rage,  
 That fame of thy divorce may spread as far  
 As of thy marriage! Make no long delay. 59  
 How dost thou leave thy husband? As thou cam'st.  
 Homes crime built up, by crime must be dissolved.

## SCENE II

*Enter Chorus of Corinthian women, singing the  
 marriage song of Jason and Creusa.*

*Chorus.* Be present at the royal marriage feast,  
 Ye gods who sway the scepter of the deep,  
 And ye who hold dominion in the heavens;  
 With the glad people come, ye smiling gods! 65  
 First to the scepter-bearing thunderers  
 The white-backed bull shall stoop his lofty head;  
 The snowy heifer, knowing not the yoke,  
 Is due to fair Lucina; and to her  
 Who stays the bloody hand of Mars, and gives 70  
 To warring nations peace, who in her horn  
 Holds plenty, sacrifice a victim mild.  
 Thou who at lawful bridals dost preside,  
 Scattering darkness with thy happy torch,  
 Come hither with slow step, dizzy with wine, 75  
 Binding thy temples with a rosy crown.  
 Thou star that bringest in the day and night,  
 Slow-rising on the lover, ardently  
 For thy clear shining maids and matrons long.  
 In comeliness the virgin bride excels 80  
 The Athenian women and the strong-limbed maids  
 Of Sparta's unwall'd town, who on the top

Of high Taygetus try youthful sports ;  
 Or those who in the clear Aonian stream,  
 Or in Alpheus' sacred waters bathe. 85

The child of the wild thunder, he who tames  
 And fits the yoke to tigers, is less fair  
 Than the Ausonian prince. The glorious god  
 Who moves the tripod, Dian's brother mild ;  
 The skilful boxer Pollux ; Castor, too, 90  
 Must yield the palm to Jason. O ye gods  
 Who dwell in heaven, ever may the bride  
 Surpass all women, he excel all men !

Before her beauty in the women's choir  
 The beauty of the other maids grows dim ; 95  
 So with the sunrise pales the light of stars,  
 So when the moon with brightness not her own  
 Fills out her crescent horns, the Pleiads fade.  
 Her cheeks blush like white cloth 'neath Tyrian dyes,  
 Or as the shepherd sees the light of stars 100  
 Grow rosy with the dawn. O happy one,  
 Accustomed once to clasp unwillingly  
 A wife unloved and reckless, snatched away  
 From that dread Colchian marriage, take thy bride,  
 The Æolian virgin—'tis her father's will. 105

Bright offspring of the thyrsus-bearing god,  
 The time has come to light the torch of pine ;  
 With fingers dripping wine flash out the fires,  
 Sound the gay music of the marriage song,  
 Let the crowd pass their jests ; 'tis only she 110  
 Who fled her home to wed a stranger guest,  
 Need steal away into the silent dark.

## ACT II

### SCENE I

*Medea, Nurse.*

*Medea.* Alas, the wedding chorus strikes my ears ;  
Woe, woe to me ! I could not hitherto  
Believe—can hardly yet believe such wrong. 115  
And this is Jason's deed ? Of father, home,  
And kingdom reft, can he desert me now,  
Alone and in a foreign land ? Can he  
Despise my worth who saw the flames and seas  
By my art conquered ? thinks, perchance, all crime  
Exhausted ! Tossed by every wave of doubt, 121  
I am distracted, seeking some revenge.  
Had he a brother ! Ah, he has a bride ;  
Through her be thrust the steel ! Is this enough ?  
If Grecian or barbarian cities know 125  
Crime that this hand knows not, that crime be done !  
Thy sins return to mind exhorting thee :  
The stolen treasure of a kingdom, too ;  
Thy little comrade, wicked maid, destroyed,  
Torn limb from limb and scattered on the sea 130  
An offering to his father ; Pelias old  
Killed in the boiling cauldron. I have shed  
Blood basely, but not yet, not yet have shown  
The power of wrath, unhappy love did all.  
Had Jason any choice, by foreign law 135

And foreign power constrained? He should have  
bared

His breast to feel the sword. O bitter grief,  
Speak milder, milder words. Let Jason live ;  
Mine as he was, if this be possible,  
But, if not mine, still let him live secure, 140  
To spare me still the memory of my gift !  
The fault is Creon's ; he abuses power  
To annul our marriage, sever strongest ties,  
And tear the children from their mother's breast ;  
Let Creon pay the penalty he owes. 145  
I'll heap his home in ashes, the dark flame  
Shall reach Malea's dreaded cape, where ships  
Find passage only after long delay.

*Nurse.* Be silent, I implore thee, hide thy pain  
Deep in thy bosom. He who silently 150  
Bears grievous wounds, with patience, and a mind  
Unshaken, may find vengeance. Hidden wrath  
Finds strength, when open hatred loses hope  
Of vengeance.

*Medea.* Light is grief that hides itself,  
And can take counsel. Great wrongs lie not hid. 155  
I am resolved on action.

*Nurse.* Foster-child,  
Restrain thy fury ; hardly art thou safe  
Though silent.

*Medea.* Fortune tramples on the meek,  
But fears the brave.

*Nurse.* When courage is in place  
It wins approval.

*Medea.* It can never be 160  
That courage should be out of place.

*Nurse.* To thee,

In thy misfortune, hope points out no way.

*Medea.* The man who cannot hope should naught  
despair.

*Nurse.* Colchis is far away, thy husband lost ;  
Of all thy riches nothing now remains. 165

*Medea.* Medea now remains ! Land, sea, sword,  
fire,

God and the thunderbolt, are found in me.

*Nurse.* The king is to be feared.

*Medea.* I claim a king

For father.

*Nurse.* Hast thou then no fear of arms ?

*Medea.* I, who saw warriors spring from earth ?

*Nurse.* Thou'lt die ! 170

*Medea.* I wish it.

*Nurse.* Flee !

*Medea.* Nay, I repent of flight.

*Nurse.* Thou art a mother.

*Medea.* And thou seest by whom.

*Nurse.* Wilt thou not fly ?

*Medea.* I fly, but first revenge.

*Nurse.* Vengeance may follow thee.

*Medea.* I may, perchance,

Find means to hinder it.

*Nurse.* Restrain thyself 175

And cease to threaten madly ; it is well

That thou adjust thyself to fortune's change.

*Medea.* My riches, not my spirit, fortune takes.

The hinge creaks,—who is this ? Creon himself,

Swelling with Grecian pride. 180

## SCENE II

*Creon with Attendants, Medea.*

*Creon.* What, is Medea of the hated race  
Of Colchian Æëtes, not yet gone?  
Still she is plotting evil; well I know  
Her guile, and well I know her cruel hand.  
Whom does she spare, or whom let rest secure? 185  
Verily I had thought to cut her off  
With the swift sword, but Jason's prayers availed  
To spare her life. She may go forth unharmed  
If she will set our city free from fear.  
Threatening and fierce, she seeks to speak with us; 190  
Attendants, keep her off, bid her be still,  
And let her learn at last, a king's commands  
Must be obeyed. Go, haste, and take her hence.

*Medea.* What fault is punished by my banishment?

*Creon.* A woman, innocent, doth ask, 'What  
fault?' 195

*Medea.* If thou wilt judge, examine; or if king,  
Command.

*Creon.* Unjust or just, a king must be  
Obeyed.

*Medea.* An unjust king not long endures.

*Creon.* Go! 'Plain to Colchis!

*Medea.* Willingly I go;  
Let him who brought me hither take me hence. 200

*Creon.* Thy words come late, my edict has gone  
forth.

*Medea.* The man who judges, one side still un-  
heard,  
Were hardly a just judge, though he judge justly.

*Creon.* Peliás for listening to thee died, but speak,  
Let me give time to hear so fair a plea. 205

*Medea.* How hard it is to calm a wrathful soul,  
How he who takes the scepter in proud hands  
Deems his own will sufficient, I have learned ;  
Have learned it in my father's royal house.  
For though the sport of fortune, suppliant, 210  
Banished, alone, forsaken, on all sides  
Distressed, my father was a noble king.  
I am descended from the glorious sun.  
What lands the Phasis in its winding course  
Bathes, or the Euxine touches where the sea 215  
Is freshened by the water from the lakes,  
Or where armed maiden cohorts try their skill  
Beside Thermodon, all these lands are held  
Within my father's kingdom, where I dwell  
Noble and favored, and with princely power. 220  
He whom kings seek, sought then to wed with me.  
Swift, fickle fortune cast me headlong forth,  
And gave me exile. Put thy trust in thrones—  
Such trust as thou mayst put in what light chance  
Flings here and there at will ! Kings have one power,  
A matchless honor time can never take : 226  
To help the wretched, and to him who asks  
To give a safe retreat. This I have brought  
From Colchis, this at least I still can claim :  
I saved the flower of Grecian chivalry, 230  
Achaian chiefs, the offspring of the gods ;  
It is to me they owe their Orpheus  
Whose singing melted rocks and drew the trees ;  
Castor and Pollux are my twofold gift ;  
Boreas' sons, and Lynceus whose sharp eye 235  
Could pierce beyond the Euxine, are my gift,



And all the Argonauts. Of one alone,  
 The chief of chiefs, I do not speak ; for him  
 Thou owest me naught ; those have I saved for thee,  
 This one is mine. Rehearse, now, all my crime ; 240  
 Accuse me ; I confess ; this is my fault—  
 I saved the Argo ! Had I heard the voice  
 Of maiden modesty or filial love,  
 Greece and her leaders had regretted it,  
 And he, thy son-in-law, had fallen first 245  
 A victim to the fire-belching bull.  
 Let fortune trample on me as she will,  
 My hand has succored princes, I am glad !  
 Thou hast the recompense for all my crimes.  
 Condemn me, but give back the cause of crime. 250  
 Creon, I own my guilt—guilt known to thee  
 When first a suppliant I touched thy knees,  
 And asked with outstretched hands protecting aid.  
 Again I ask a refuge, some poor spot  
 For misery to hide in ; grant a place 255  
 Withdrawn, a safe asylum in thy realm,  
 If I must leave the city.

*Creon.* I am no prince who rules with cruel sway,  
 Or tramples on the wretched with proud foot.  
 Have I not shown this true by choosing him 260  
 To be my son-in-law who is a man  
 Exiled, without resource, in fear of foes ?  
 One whom Acastus, king of Thessaly,  
 Seeks to destroy, that so he may avenge  
 A father weak with age, bowed down with years, 265  
 Whose limbs were torn asunder ? That foul crime  
 His pious sisters impiously dared,  
 Tempted by thee ; if thou wilt go away,  
 Jason can then maintain his innocence ;

No guiltless blood has stained him, and his hands 270  
 Touched not the sword, are yet unstained by thee.  
 Foul instigator of all evil deeds,  
 With woman's wantonness in daring aught,  
 And man's courageous heart—and void of shame,  
 Go, purge our kingdom; take thy deadly herbs, 275  
 Free us from fear; dwelling in other lands  
 Afar, invoke the gods.

*Medea.* Thou bidst me go?  
 Give back the ship and comrade of my flight.  
 Why bid me go alone? Not so I came.  
 If thou fear war, both should go forth, nor choice 280  
 Be made between two equally at fault:  
 That old man fell for Jason's sake; impute  
 To Jason flight, rapine, a brother slain,  
 And a deserted father; not all mine  
 The crimes to which a husband tempted me; 285  
 'Tis true I sinned, but never for myself.

*Creon.* Thou shouldst be gone, why waste the time  
 with words?

*Medea.* I go, but going make one last request:  
 Let not a mother's guilt drag down her sons.

*Creon.* Go, as a father I will succor them, 290  
 And with a father's care.

*Medea.* By future hopes,  
 By the king's happy marriage, by the strength  
 Of thrones, which fickle fortune sometimes shakes,  
 I pray thee grant the exile some delay  
 That she, perchance about to die, may press 295  
 A last kiss on her children's lips.

*Creon.* Thou seekst  
 Time to commit new crime.

*Medea.* In so brief time

What crime were possible?

*Creon.* No time too short

For him who would do ill.

*Medea.* Dost thou deny

To misery short space for tears?

*Creon.* Deep dread 300

Warns me against thy prayer; yet I will grant  
One day in which thou mayst prepare for flight.

*Medea.* Too great the favor! Of the time allowed,  
Something withdraw. I would depart in haste.

*Creon.* Before the coming day is ushered in 305  
By Phœbus, leave the city or thou diest.  
The bridal calls me, and I go to pay  
My vows to Hymen.

### SCENE III

*Chorus.* He rashly ventured who was first to make  
In his frail boat a pathway through the deep; 310  
Who saw his native land behind him fade  
In distance blue; who to the raging winds  
Trusted his life, his slender keel between  
The paths of life and death. Our fathers dwelt  
In an unspotted age, and on the shore 315  
Where each was born he lived in quietness,  
Grew old upon his father's farm content;  
With little rich, he knew no other wealth  
Than his own land afforded. None knew yet  
The changing constellations, nor could use 320  
As guides the stars that paint the ether; none  
Had learned to shun the rainy Hyades;  
None had as yet to Goat, or Northern Wain  
That follows slow by old Boötes driven,

Or Boreas, or Zephyr, given names. 325  
 Rash Tiphys was the first to tempt the deep  
 With spreading canvas ; for the winds to write  
 New laws ; to furl the sail ; or spread it wide  
 When sailors longed to fly before the gale,  
 And the red topsail fluttered in the breeze. 330  
 The world so wisely severed by the seas  
 The pine of Thessaly united, bade  
 The ocean suffer scourgings at our hands,  
 And distant waters bring us unknown fears.  
 The ill-starred ship paid heavy penalty 335  
 When the two cliffs, the gateway of the sea,  
 Moved as though smitten by the thunderbolt,  
 And the imprisoned waters smote the stars.  
 Bold Tiphys paled, and from his trembling hand  
 Let fall the rudder ; Orpheus' music died, 340  
 His lyre untouched ; the Argo lost her voice.  
 When, belted by her girle of wild dogs,  
 The maid of the Sicilian straits gave voice  
 From all her mouths, who feared not at her bark ?  
 Who did not tremble at the witching song 345  
 With which the Sirens charmed the Ausonian sea ?  
 The Thracian Orpheus' lyre had almost forced  
 Those hinderers of ships to follow him !  
 What was the journey's prize ? The golden fleece,  
 Medea, fiercer than the raging flood,— 350  
 Worthy reward for those first mariners !  
 The sea forgets its former wrath ; submits  
 To the new laws ; and not alone the ship  
 Minerva builded, manned by sons of kings,  
 Finds rowers ; other ships may sail the deep. 355  
 Old metes are moved, new city walls spring up  
 On distant soil, and nothing now remains

As it has been in the much-traveled world.  
The cold Araxes' stream the Indian drinks ;  
The Persian quaffs the Rhine ; a time shall come 360  
With the slow years, when ocean shall strike off  
The chains from earth, and a great world shall then  
Lie opened ; Tiphys shall win other lands—  
Another Tiphys—Thule cease to be  
Earth's utmost bound. 365

## ACT III

### SCENE I

*Medea, Nurse.*

*Nurse.* Stay, foster-child, why fly so swiftly hence?  
Restrain thy wrath! curb thy impetuous haste!  
As a Bacchante, frantic with the god  
And filled with rage divine, uncertain walks  
The top of snowy Pindus or the peak 370  
Of Nysa, so Medea wildly goes  
Hither and thither; on her face the mark  
Of frenzied rage, her visage flushed, her breast  
Shaken by sobs. She cries aloud, her eyes  
Are drowned in scalding tears; again she laughs; 375  
All passions surge within her angry heart.  
Where will she fling the burden of her soul?  
She hesitates, she threatens, storms, complains,  
Where falls her vengeance? where will break this  
wave  
Of fury? Passion overflows! she plans 380  
No easy crime, no ordinary deed.  
Herself she will surpass; I mark old signs  
Of raging; something terrible she plans,  
Some deed inhuman, devilish, and wild.  
Ye gods, avert the horrors I foresee! 385  
*Medea.* Wretch, dost thou seek how far to show thy  
hate?

Imitate love! And must I then endure  
 Without revenge the royal marriage-torch?  
 Shall this day prove unfruitful, sought and gained  
 Only by earnest effort? While the earth 390  
 Hangs free within the heavens; while the vault  
 Of heaven sweeps round the earth with changeless  
 change;  
 While the sands lie unnumbered; while the day  
 Follows the sun, the night brings up the stars;  
 Arcturus never wet in ocean's wave 395  
 Rolls round the pole; while rivers seaward flow,  
 My hate shall never cease to seek revenge.  
 Did ever fierceness of a ravening beast;  
 Or Scylla or Charybdis sucking down  
 The waters of the wild Ausonian 400  
 And the Sicilian seas; or Ætna fierce,  
 That holds imprisoned great Enceladus  
 Breathing forth flame, so glow as I with threats?  
 Not the swift rivers, nor the storm-tossed sea,  
 Nor wind-blown ocean, nor the force of flame 405  
 By storm-wind fanned, can imitate my wrath.  
 I will o'erthrow and bring to naught the world!  
 Did Jason fear the king? Thessalian war?  
 True love fears naught. Or was he forced to yield,  
 And gave consent unwillingly? But still 410  
 He might have sought his wife for one farewell.  
 This too he feared to do. He might have gained  
 From Creon some delay of banishment.  
 One day is granted for my two sons' sake!  
 I do not make complaint of too short time, 415  
 It is enough for much; this day shall see  
 What none shall ever hide. I will attack  
 The very gods, and shake the universe!

*Nurse.* Lady, thy spirit so disturbed by ills  
 Restrain, and let thy storm-tossed soul find rest. 420

*Medea.* Rest I can never find until I see  
 All dragged with me to ruin; all shall fall  
 When I do;—so to share one's woe is joy.

*Nurse.* Think what thou hast to fear if thou  
 persist;  
 No one can safely fight with princely power. 425

## SCENE II

*The Nurse withdraws; enter Jason.*

*Jason.* The lot 'is ever hard; bitter is fate,  
 Equally bitter if it slay or spare;  
 God gives us remedies worse than our ills.  
 Would I keep faith with her I deem my wife  
 I must expect to die; would I shun death 430  
 I must forswear myself. Not fear of death  
 Has conquered honor, but love full of fear  
 Knowing the father's death involves the sons.  
 O holy Justice, if thou dwell in heaven,  
 I call on thee to witness that the sons 435  
 Vanquish their father! Say the mother's love  
 Is fierce and spurns the yoke, she still will deem  
 Her children of more worth than marriage joys.  
 I fain would go to her with prayers, and lo,  
 She starts at sight of me, her look grows wild, 440  
 Hatred she shows and grief.

*Medea.* Jason, I flee!  
 I flee, it is not new to change my home,  
 The cause of banishment alone is new;  
 I have been exiled hitherto for thee.



I go, as thou compellst me, from thy home, 445  
 But whither shall I go? Shall I, perhaps,  
 Seek Phasis, Colchis, and my father's realm  
 Whose soil is watered by a brother's blood?  
 What land dost thou command me seek? what sea?  
 The Euxine's jaws through which I led that band 450  
 Of noble princes when I followed thee,  
 Adulterer, through the Symplegades?  
 Little Iolchos? Tempe? Thessaly?  
 Whatever way I opened up for thee  
 I closed against myself. Where shall I go? 455  
 Thou drivest into exile, but hast given  
 No place of banishment. I will go hence.  
 The king, Creusa's father, bids me go,  
 And I will do his bidding. Heap on me  
 Most dreadful punishment, it is my due. 460  
 With cruel penalties let the king's wrath  
 Pursue thy mistress, load my hands with chains,  
 And in a dungeon of eternal night  
 Imprison me—'tis less than I deserve!  
 Ungrateful one, recall the fiery bull; 465  
 The earth-born soldiers, who at my command  
 Slew one another; and the longed-for spoils  
 Of Phrixus' ram, whose watchful guardian,  
 The sleepless dragon, at my bidding slept;  
 The brother slain; the many, many crimes 470  
 In one crime gathered. Think how, led by me,  
 By me deceived, that old man's daughters dared  
 To slay their aged father, dead for aye!  
 By thy hearth's safety, by thy children's weal,  
 By the slain dragon, by these blood-stained hands 475  
 I never spared from doing aught for thee,  
 By thy past fears, and by the sea and sky

Witnesses of our marriage, pity me !  
 Happy thyself, make me some recompense !  
 Of all the ravished gold the Scythians brought 480  
 From far, as far as India's burning plains,  
 Wealth our wide palace hardly could contain,  
 So that we hung our groves with gold, I took  
 Nothing. My brother only bore I thence,  
 And him for thee I sacrificed. I left 485  
 My country, father, brother, maiden shame :  
 This was my marriage portion ; give her own  
 To her who goes an exile.

*Jason.* When angry Creon thought to have thee  
 slain,

Urged by my prayers, he gave thee banishment. 490

*Medea.* I looked for a reward ; the gift I see  
 Is exile.

*Jason.* While thou mayst fly, fly in haste !  
 The wrath of kings is ever hard to bear.

*Medea.* Thou giv'st me such advice because thou  
 lov'st

Creusa, wouldst divorce a hated wife ! 495

*Jason.* And does Medea taunt me with my loves ?

*Medea.* More—treacheries and murders.

*Jason.* Canst thou charge  
 Such sins to me ?

*Medea.* All I have ever done.

*Jason.* It only needs that I should share the guilt  
 Of these thy crimes !

*Medea.* Thine are they, thine alone ; 500  
 He is the criminal who reaps the fruit.  
 Though all should brand thy wife with infamy,  
 Thou shouldst defend and call her innocent :  
 She who has sinned for thee, toward thee hold pure.

*Jason.* To me my life is an unwelcome gift 505  
Of which I am ashamed.

*Medea.* Who is ashamed  
To owe his life to me can lay it down.

*Jason.* For thy sons' sake control thy fiery heart.

*Medea.* I will have none of them, I cast them off,  
Abjure them ; shall Creusa to my sons 510  
Give brothers ?

*Jason.* To an exile's wretched sons  
A mighty queen will give them.

*Medea.* Never come  
That evil day that mingles a great race  
With race unworthy,—Phœbus' glorious sons  
With sons of Sisypus.

*Jason.* What, cruel one, 515  
Wouldst thou drag both to banishment ? Away !

*Medea.* Creon has heard my prayer.

*Jason.* What can I do ?

*Medea.* For me ? Some crime perhaps.

*Jason.* Two wrathful kings  
I fear.

*Medea.* Medea's wrath is still more fierce !  
Let us essay our power, the victor's prize 520  
Be Jason.

*Jason.* Passion-weary, I submit ;  
Thou too shouldst fear a lot so often tried.

*Medea.* Fortune has ever served me faithfully.

*Jason.* Acastus comes.

*Medea.* Creon's a nearer foe,  
Flee thou from both. Medea does not ask 525  
That thou shouldst arm thyself against the king,  
Or soil thy hands with murder of thy kin ;  
Flee with me innocent.

*Jason.* Who will oppose  
 If double war ensue, and the two kings  
 Join forces ?

*Medea.* Add to them the Colchian troops 530  
 And King Æetes, Scythian hosts and Greeks,  
 Medea conquers all !

*Jason.* I greatly fear  
 A scepter's power.

*Medea.* Do not covet it.

*Jason.* We must cut short our converse, lest it breed  
 Suspicion.

*Medea.* Now from high Olympus send 535  
 Thy thunder, Jupiter ; stretch forth thy hand,  
 Prepare thy lightning, from the riven clouds  
 Make the world tremble, nor with careful hand  
 Spare him or me ; whichever of us dies  
 Dies guilty ; thy avenging thunderbolt 540  
 Cannot mistake the victim.

*Jason.* Try to speak  
 More sanely ; calm thyself. If aught can aid  
 Thy flight from Creon's house, thou needst but ask.

*Medea.* My soul is strong enough, and wont to  
 scorn  
 The wealth of kings ; this boon alone I crave, 545  
 To take my children with me when I go ;  
 Into their bosoms I would shed my tears,  
 New sons are thine.

*Jason.* Would I might grant thy prayer ;  
 Paternal love forbids me, Creon's self  
 Could not compel me to it. They alone 550  
 Lighten the sorrow of a grief-parched soul.  
 For them I live, I sooner would resign  
 Breath, members, light.

*Medea.* [*Aside.*] 'Tis well! He loves his sons,  
 This, then, the place where he may feel a wound!  
 [*To Jason.*] Before I go, thou wilt, at least, permit  
 That I should give my sons a last farewell, 556  
 A last embrace? But one thing more I ask:  
 If in my grief I've poured forth threatening words,  
 Retain them not in mind; let memory hold  
 Only my softer speech, my words of wrath 560  
 Obliterate.

*Jason.* I have erased them all  
 From my remembrance. I would counsel thee  
 Be calm, act gently; calmness quiets pain.

[*Exit Jason.*]

### SCENE III

*Medea, Nurse.*

*Medea.* He's gone! And can it be he leaves me so,  
 Forgetting me and all my guilt? Forgot? 565  
 Nay, never shall Medea be forgot!  
 Up! Act! Call all thy power to aid thee now;  
 This fruit of crime is thine, to shun no crime!  
 Deceit is useless, so they fear my guile.  
 Strike where they do not dream thou canst be feared.  
 Medea, haste, be bold to undertake 571  
 The possible—yea, that which is not so!  
 Thou, faithful nurse, companion of my griefs  
 And varying fortunes, aid my wretched plans.  
 I have a robe, gift of the heavenly powers, 575  
 An ornament of a king's palace, given  
 By Phœbus to my father as a pledge  
 Of sonship; and a necklace of wrought gold;

And a bright diadem, inlaid with gems,  
 With which they used to bind my hair. These gifts,  
 Endued with poison by my magic arts, 581  
 My sons shall carry for me to the bride.  
 Pay vows to Hecate, bring the sacrifice,  
 Set up the altars. Let the mounting flame  
 Envelop all the house. 585

## SCENE IV

*Chorus.* Fear not the power of flame, nor swelling  
 gale,  
 Nor hurtling dart, nor cloudy wind that brings  
 The winter storms ; fear not when Danube sweeps  
 Unchecked between his widely severed shores,  
 Nor when the Rhone hastes seaward, and the sun 590  
 Has broken up the snow upon the hills,  
     And Hæmus flows in rivers.  
 A wife deserted, loving while she hates,  
 Fear greatly ; blindly burns her anger's flame,  
 She cares not to be ruled, nor bears the curb, 595  
 Nor fears to die ; she courts the hostile swords.  
 Ye gods, we ask your grace divine for him  
 Who safely crossed the seas ; the ocean's lord  
 Is angry for his conquered kingdom's sake ;  
     Spare Jason, we entreat ! 600  
 Th' impetuous youth who dared to drive the car  
 Of Phœbus, keeping not the wonted course,  
 Died in the heavenly fires himself had lit.  
 Few are the evils of the well-known way ;  
 Seek the old paths your fathers safely trod, 605  
 The sacred federations of the world  
     Keep still inviolate.

The men who dipped the oars of that brave ship ;  
 Who plundered of their shade the sacred groves  
 Of Pelion ; passed between the unstable cliffs ; 610  
 Endured so many hardships on the deep ;  
 And cast their anchor on a savage coast,  
 Passing again with ravished foreign gold,  
 Atoned with fearful death for dire wrong

To Ocean's sacred laws. 615

The angry deep demanded punishment :  
 To an unskilful pilot Tiphys gave  
 The rudder. On a foreign coast he fell,  
 Far from his father's kingdom, and he lies  
 With nameless shades, under a lowly tomb. 620  
 Becalmed in her still harbor Aulis held  
 Th' impatient ships, remembering in wrath  
 The king that she lost thence.

Sweet voiced Camena's son, who touched his lyre  
 So sweetly that the floods stood still, the winds 625  
 Were silent, and the birds forgot to sing,  
 And forests followed him, on Thracian fields  
 Lies dead, his head borne down by Hebrus' stream.  
 He touched again the Styx and Tartarus,

But not again returns. 630

Alcides overthrew the north wind's sons ;  
 He slew that son of Neptune who could take  
 Unnumbered forms ; but after he had made  
 Peace over land and sea, and opened wide  
 The realm of Dis, lying on Cæta's top 635  
 He gave his body to the cruel fire,  
 Destroyed by his wife's gift—the fatal robe  
 Poisoned with Centaur's blood.

Ancaeus fell a victim to the boar  
 Of Caledonia ; Meleager slew 640

His mother's brother, perished by the hand  
Of his own mother. They have merited  
Their lot, but what the crime that he atoned  
Whom great Alcides sought so long in vain,  
The tender Hylas drawn beneath safe waves? 645  
Go now, brave soldiers, boldly plow the main,

But fear the gentle streams.

Idmon the serpents buried in the sands  
Of Libya, though he knew the future well.  
Mopsus, to others true, false to himself, 650  
Fell far from Thebes ; and if the seer spoke true,  
Peleus must wander exiled from his realm ;  
And Nauplius, seeking injury to the Greeks  
By his deceitful beacon fires, shall fall  
Into the ocean ; Palamedes, too, 655  
Shall suffer, dying for his father's sin.

Oileus, smitten by the thunderbolt,  
Shall perish on the sea ; Admetus' wife  
To save her husband's life shall give her own.  
He who commanded that the golden spoil 660  
Be carried in the ships had traveled far,  
But, plunged in seething cauldron, Pelias died  
In narrow limits. 'Tis enough, ye gods ;

Ye have avenged the sea !



## ACT IV

### SCENE I

*Nurse.* I shrink with horror! Ruin threatens us!  
How terribly her wrath inflames itself! 666  
Her former force awakes, thus I have seen  
Medea raging and attacking God,  
Compelling heaven. Greater crime than then  
She now prepares. No sooner had she sought 670  
Wildly her fatal shrine than she put forth  
Her every power, and what before she feared  
She does; lets loose all ills, mysterious arts.  
With her left hand the dismal sacrifice  
Preparing, she invokes whatever ills 675  
The Libyan sands with their fierce heat create,  
Or frost-bound Taurus with perpetual snow  
Encompasses. Drawn by her magic spell,  
Come from their desert holes a scaly host.  
The serpent drags his heavy length along, 680  
Darts his forked tongue, and seeks his destined prey.  
Hearing her incantation, he draws back  
And knots his swelling body coiling it.—  
'They are but feeble poisons earth brings forth,  
And harmless darts,' she says, 'heaven's ills I seek. 685  
Now is the time for deeper sorcery.  
The dragon like a torrent shall descend,  
Whose mighty folds the Great and Lesser Bear  
Know well (the Great Bear o'er the Phrygians shines,

The Less o'er Tyre); Ophiuchus shall loose 690  
 His grasp, and poison flow. Come at my call,  
 Python, who dared to fight twin deities.  
 The Hydra once cut off by Hercules,  
 Accustomed from its wounds to gain fresh strength,  
 Shall come. Thou ever watchful Colchian one, 695  
 Be present with the rest—thou, who first slept  
 Lulled by my incantations.' When the brood  
 Of serpents has been called she blends the juice  
 Of poisonous herbs; all Eryx' pathless heights  
 Bear, or the snow-capped top of Caucasus 700  
 Wet with Prometheus' blood, where winter reigns;  
 All that the rich Arabians use to tip  
 Their poisoned shafts, or the light Parthians,  
 Or warlike Medes; all Suebian witches cull  
 In the Hyrcanian forests in the north; 705  
 All poisons that the earth brings forth in spring  
 When birds are nesting; or when winter cold  
 Has torn away the beauty of the groves  
 And bound the world in icy manacles.  
 Whatever herb gives flower the cause of death, 710  
 Or juice of twisted root, her hands have culled.  
 These on Thessalian Athos grew, and those  
 On mighty Pindus; on Pangæus' height  
 She cut the tender leaves with bloody scythe.  
 These Tigris nurtured with its eddies deep, 715  
 The Danube those; Hydaspes rich in gems  
 Flowing with current warm through levels dry,  
 Bætis that gives its name to neighboring lands  
 And meets the western ocean languidly,  
 Have nurtured these. The knife cut those at dawn;  
 These other herbs at dead of night were reaped; 721  
 And these were plucked with the enchanted nail.

Death-dealing plants she chooses, wrings the blood  
 Of serpents, and she takes ill-omened birds,  
 The sad owl's heart, the quivering entrails cut 725  
 From the horned owl living ;—sorts all these.  
 In some the eager force of flame is found,  
 In some the bitter cold of sluggish ice ;  
 To these she adds the venom of her words  
 As greatly to be feared. But lo, I hear 730  
 The sound of her mad footstep and her song.  
 Earth trembles when she hears.

## SCENE II

*Medea, before the altar of Hecate.*

*Medea.* Lo, I invoke you, all ye silent shades,  
 Infernal gods, blind Chaos, sunless home  
 Of shadowy Dis, and squalid caves of Death 735  
 Bound by the banks of Tartarus. Lost souls,  
 For this new bridal leave your wonted toil.  
 Stand still, thou whirling wheel, Ixion touch  
 Again firm ground ; come, Tantalus, and drink  
 Unchecked the wave of the Pirenian fount. 740  
 Let heavier punishment on Creon wait :—  
 Thou stone of Sisyphus, worn smooth, roll back ;  
 And ye Danaïdes who strive in vain  
 To fill your leaking jars, I need your aid.  
 Come at my invocation, star of night, 745  
 Endued with form most horrible, nor threat  
 With single face, thou three-formed deity !  
 For thee, according to my country's use,  
 With hair unfilleted and naked feet  
 I've trod the lonely groves ; called forth the rain 750

From cloudless skies ; have driven back the sea ;  
 And forced the ocean to withdraw its waves.  
 Earth sees heaven's laws confused, the sun and stars  
 Shining together, and the two Bears wet  
 In the forbidden ocean. I have changed 755  
 The circle of the seasons :—at my word  
 Earth flourishes with summer ; Ceres sees  
 A winter harvest ; Phasis' rushing stream  
 Flows to its source ; and Danube that divides  
 Into so many mouths restrains its flood 760  
 Of waters—hardly moving past its shores.  
 The winds are silent ; but the waters speak,  
 The wild seas roar ; the home of ancient groves  
 Loses its leafy shade ; and day returns  
 At my command ; the sun stands still in heaven. 765  
 My incantations move the Hyades.  
 It is thy hour, Dian.

For thee my bloody hands have wrought this crown  
 Nine times by serpents girt ; those knotted snakes  
 Rebellious Typhon bore, who made revolt 770  
 Against Jove's kingdom ; Nessus gave this blood  
 When dying ; Cæta's funeral pyre provides  
 These ashes which have drunk the poisoned blood  
 Of dying Hercules ; and here thou seest  
 Althea's vengeful brand, she sacrificed 775  
 A mother's to a sister's love. These quills  
 The Harpies left within some trackless cave,  
 Their refuge when they fled from Zetes' wrath ;  
 And these were dropped by the Stymphalian birds  
 That felt the wound of arrows dipped in blood 780  
 Of the Lernæan Hydra.

The altars find a voice, the tripod moves,  
 Stirred by the favoring goddess. Her swift car

I see approach—not the full-orbed that rolls  
 All night through heaven ; but as, with darkened light,  
 Her orb contracted, with wan face she moves 786  
 Through night's dark skies, vexed by Thessalian  
 charms.

So, pale one, from thy torch shed murky light,  
 Affright the nations that they clash for thee  
 Corinthian cymbals. Here I pay to thee, 790  
 On altars made of turf and red with blood,  
 These solemn rites ; have stolen from the tomb  
 This torch that gives its baleful funeral light ;  
 To thee with bowed head I have made my prayer ;  
 And in accordance with funereal use, 795  
 Have filleted my loosened hair, have plucked  
 This branch that grows beside the Stygian wave ;  
 Like a wild Mænad, laying bare my breast,  
 With sacred knife I cut for thee my arm ;  
 My blood is on the altars ! Hand, learn well 800  
 To use the knife and shed blood dear to thee.  
 See, from the wound, the sacred stream flows forth,  
 Daughter of Perses, have I asked too oft  
 Thine aid ? Recall no more my former prayers.  
 To-day as always I invoke thine aid 805  
 For Jason only ! Ah, endue this robe  
 With such a baleful power that the bride  
 May feel at its first touch consuming fire  
 Of serpent's poison in her inmost veins ;  
 For fire flames hid in the bright gold, a gift 810  
 Prometheus gave and taught me how to store—  
 He now atones his daring theft from heaven  
 With tortured vitals. Mulciber has given  
 This flame, and I in sulphur nurtured it ;  
 I brought a spark from the destroying fire 815

Of Phaethon ; I have the flame breathed forth  
 By the Chimæra, and the fire I snatched  
 From Colchis' savage bull ; and mixed with these  
 Medusa's venom. I have bade all keep  
 Their poison unrevealed ; now, Hecate, add 820  
 The sting to poison, keep the seeds of flame  
 Hid in my gift ; let them deceive the sight  
 Nor burn the touch ; but let them penetrate  
 Her very heart and veins, melt all her limbs,  
 Consume her bones in smoke. Her burning hair 825  
 Shall glow more brightly than the nuptial torch !  
 My vows are heard, and Hecate thrice has barked,  
 And shaken fire from her gleaming brand.  
 'Tis finished ! Call my sons. My royal gifts,  
 Ye shall be borne by them to the new bride. 830  
 Go, go, my sons, a hapless mother's brood,  
 Placate with gifts and prayers your father's wife !  
 But come again with speed, that I may know  
 A last embrace !

## SCENE III

*Chorus.* Where hastes the blood-stained Mænad,  
 headlong driven 835  
 By angry love ? What mischief plots her rage ?  
 With wrath her face grows rigid ; her proud head  
 She fiercely shakes, and dares defiantly  
 Threaten the king.  
 Who would believe her exiled from the realm ? 840  
 Her cheeks glow crimson, pallor puts to flight  
 The red, no color lingers on her face ;  
 Her steps are driven to and fro as when  
 A tigress rages, of her young bereft,

Beside the Ganges in the gloomy woods. 845  
Medea knows not how to curb her love  
Or hate. Now love and hate together rage.  
When will she leave the fair Pelasgian fields,  
The wicked Colchian one, and free from fear  
Our king and kingdom? Drive with no slow rein 850  
Thy car, Diana ; let the sweet night hide  
The sunlight. Hesperus, end the dreaded day.

## ACT V

### SCENE I

*Messenger, Chorus.*

*Messenger* [*enters in haste*]. All are destroyed, the  
royal empire falls,

Father and child lie in one funeral pyre.

*Chorus.* Destroyed by what deceit?

*Messenger.* That which is wont  
To ruin princes—gifts.

*Chorus.* Could these work harm? 856

*Messenger.* I myself wonder, and can hardly deem  
The wrong accomplished, though I know it done.

*Chorus.* How did it happen?

*Messenger.* A destructive fire  
Spreads everywhere as at command ; even now 860  
The city is in fear, the palace burned.

*Chorus.* Let water quench the flames.

*Messenger.* It will not these,  
As by a miracle floods feed the fire.  
The more we fight it so much more it glows.

### SCENE II

*Medea, Nurse.*

*Nurse.* Up! up! Medea! Swiftly flee the land 865  
Of Pelops; seek in haste a distant shore.

*Medea.* Shall I fly? I? Were I already gone  
I would return for this, that I might see



These new betrothals. Dost thou pause, my soul,  
 And shrink to follow up thy first success? 870  
 This joy's but the beginning of revenge.  
 Thou still dost love if thou art satisfied  
 To widow Jason. For this work prepare:  
 Honor begone and maiden modesty,—  
 It were a light revenge pure hands could yield. 875  
 Strengthen thy drooping spirit, stir up wrath,  
 Drain from thy heart its all of ancient force,  
 Thy deeds till now call love; awake, and act,  
 That they may see how light, how little worth,  
 All former crime—the prelude of revenge! 880  
 What was there great my novice hands could dare?  
 What was the madness of my girlhood days?  
 I am Medea now, through crime made strong.  
 Rejoice, because through thee thy brother died;  
 Rejoice, because through thee his limbs were torn;  
 Through thee thy father lost the golden fleece; 886  
 That, armed by thee, his daughters Pelias slew.  
 Find thou a way, revenge. No novice hand  
 Thou bring'st to crime; what wilt thou do; what dart  
 Let fly against thy treacherous enemy? 890  
 I know not what of crime my madness plots,  
 Nor yet dare I confess it to myself!  
 In folly I made haste—would that my foe  
 Had children by this other! Mine are his,  
 We'll say Creusa bore them! 'Tis enough; 895  
 Through them my heart at last finds just revenge;  
 My soul must be prepared for this last crime.  
 Ye who were once my children, mine no more,  
 Pay ye the forfeit for your father's crimes.  
 Awe strikes my spirit and benumbs my hand; 900  
 My heart beats wildly; vanished is my rage,

And mother love, returning, now drives out  
The hatred of the wife. I shed their blood ?  
My children's blood ? Give better counsel, rage !  
Be far from thee this crime ! What guilt is theirs ?  
Is Jason not their father ?—guilt enough ! 906  
And, greater guilt, Medea calls them sons.  
They are not sons of mine, so let them die !  
Nay, rather let them perish since they are !  
But they are innocent !—my brother was ! 910  
Waverest thou ? Do tears make wet thy cheek ?  
Do wrath and love like adverse tides impel  
Now here, now there ? As when the winds wage war  
And the wild waves against each other smite,  
And warring tides run high, and ocean raves, 915  
My heart is beaten, and love drives out wrath,  
As wrath drives love. My anger dies in love.  
Dear sons, sole solace of a storm-tossed house,  
Come hither, lock your arms about my neck ;  
You may be safe for him, if safe for me ! 920  
But I am driven into exile, flight ;  
Torn from my bosom weeping, soon they'll go  
Lamenting for my kisses—let them die  
For father and for mother ! Once again  
Rage swells, hate burns ; again the fury seeks 925  
Th' unwilling hand—I follow where wrath leads.  
Would that the children that made proud the heart  
Of Niobe were mine, that I had borne  
Twice seven sons ! In bearing only two  
I have been cursed ! And yet it is enough 930  
For father, brother, that I have borne two.—  
Where does that horde of furies haste ? whom seek ?  
For whom prepare their fires ? or for whom  
Brandish the infernal band the bloody torch ?

The huge snake hisses writhing, as they lash 935  
 Their serpent scourges ; with her hostile brand  
 Whom does Megæra seek ? What dim-seen shade  
 Is that which hither brings its scattered limbs ?  
 It is my brother, and he seeks revenge ;  
 I grant it, thrust the torches in my eyes ; 940  
 Kill, burn ; the furies have me in their power !  
 Brother, command the avenging goddesses  
 To leave me, and the shades to seek their place  
 In the infernal regions without fear ;  
 Here leave me to myself, and use this hand 945  
 That held the sword—your soul has found revenge.

*[Kills one of her sons.]*

What means this sudden noise ? They come in arms  
 And seek to slay me. Having thus begun  
 My murders, I will go upon the roof,  
 Come, follow thou, I'll takè the dead with me. 950  
 Strike now, my soul, nor longer hide thy power,  
 But show the world thy strength.

*[She goes out with the nurse and the living boy,  
 and carries with her the body of her dead son.]*

### SCENE III

*Jason in the foreground, Medæa with the children  
 appears upon the roof.*

*Jason.* Ye faithful ones, who share  
 In the misfortunes of your harassed king,  
 Hasten to take the author of these deeds. 955  
 Come hither, hither, cohorts of brave men ;  
 Bring up your weapons ; overthrow the house.

*Medea.* I have recaptured now my crown and throne,

My brother and my father ; Colchians hold  
The golden fleece ; my kingdom is won back ; 960  
My lost virginity returns to me !

O gods at last appeased ! Glad nuptial day !  
Go, finished is the crime. Not yet complete  
Is vengeance, finish while thy hand is strong  
To smite. Why stay, why hesitate, my soul ? 965  
Thou art able ! All thine anger falls to nought !  
I do repent of that which I have done !

What hast thou done, O miserable one ?  
What, miserable ? Though I should repent,  
'Tis done, great joy fills my unwilling heart, 970  
And, lo, the joy increases. But one thing  
Before was lacking—Jason did not see !  
All that he has not seen I count as lost.

*Jason.* She threatens from the roof ; let fire be brought,  
That she may perish burned with her own flame. 975

*Medea.* Pile high the funeral pyre of thy sons,  
And rear their tomb. To Creon and thy wife  
I have already paid the honors due.  
This son is dead, and this one too shall die,  
And thou shalt see him perish.

*Jason.* By the gods, 980  
By our sad flight together, and the bond  
I have not willingly forsaken, spare  
Our son ! If there is any crime, 'tis mine ;  
Put me to death, strike down the guilty one.

*Medea.* There where thou askest mercy, and canst  
feel 985  
The sting, I thrust the sword. Go, Jason, seek

Thy virgin bride, desert a mother's bed.

*Jason.* Let one suffice for vengeance.

*Medea.* Had it been

That one could satisfy my hands with blood,  
I had slain none. Although I should slay two, 990  
The number is too small for my revenge.

*Jason.* Then go, fill up the measure of thy crime,  
I ask for nothing but that thou should'st make  
A speedy end.

*Medea.* Now, grief, take slow revenge;  
It is my day; haste not, let me enjoy. 995

[*Kills the other child.*]

*Jason.* Slay me, mine enemy!

*Medea.* Dost thou implore  
My pity? It is well! I am avenged.

O vengeance, no more offerings can I give,  
Nothing is left to immolate to thee!  
Look up, ungrateful Jason, recognize 1000  
Thy wife; so I am wont to flee. The way  
Lies open through the skies; two dragons bend  
Their necks, submissive to the yoke. I go  
In my swift car through heaven. Take thy sons!

[*She casts down to him the bodies of her children,  
and is borne away in a chariot drawn by dragons.*]

*Jason.* Go through the skies sublime, and in thy  
flight 1005

Prove that there are no gods where'er thou goest.

PHÆDRA

*DRAMATIS PERSONÆ*

HIPPOLYTUS.

THESEUS.

PHÆDRA.

NURSE.

MESSSENGER.

CHORUS.

SCENE: *Athens.*

# PHÆDRA

## ACT I

### SCENE I

*Hippolytus, and his Huntsmen.*

<sup>4</sup>  
*Hippolytus.* Cecropians, go gird the shadowy groves,  
And ridges of the mountains ; traverse swift  
The places that 'neath rocky Parnes lie,  
Where, swiftly flowing through Thessalian vales,  
The river roars ; ascend the hills that shine 5  
White ever with Rhipean snow. Where stand  
The tangled woods of lofty elder, go ;  
Go where fields stretch o'er which sweet Zephyr blows  
With dewy breath that wakens vernal herbs,  
Where flows Ilissus' narrow, sluggish stream 10  
Through barren lands and with its niggard thread  
Touches the sterile sands. Turn leftward, ye,  
To where the wooded highlands open out  
Toward Marathon, where nightly for their young  
The does seek food ; go ye where, breathed upon 15  
By the soft south wind, harsh Acharnæ's cold  
Is tempered ; tread ye sweet Hymettus' cliffs :  
Seek ye Achidnæ small ; too long has lain  
Immune the land where on the curved sea shore  
Sunion presses. If a huntsman's pride 20  
Is felt by any, Phlius calls to him—  
There dwells that fear of husbandmen, the boar,



Dreaded, well known, already scarred with wounds.  
 Give to the dogs that silent track the game  
 Free rein, but hold the swift Molossian hounds 25  
 In leash, and let the savage Cretans pull  
 On the stout chains with straining necks. Bind fast,  
 With care, by firmest knots, the Spartan dogs;  
 Daring and eager for the chase are they.  
 The time draws near when through the hollow rocks 30  
 Shall sound their baying. While it is but dawn  
 And while the dewy earth still shows the tracks,  
 With nostrils wide, sagacious let them snuff  
 The air, and with their noses to the ground  
 Search for the quarry's scent. Let some make haste 35  
 To carry on their backs the nets, and some  
 To bear the noose; and let the feathered snare,  
 Red dyed, with empty terror fill the prey.  
 Thou shalt the light dart poise; in both hands, thou,  
 Direct the heavy spear; thou, lying hid, 40  
 Shalt with thy clamor drive the wild beasts forth,  
 And thou, now victor, with curved slaughtering knife  
 Lay bare the victim's heart. Be present now  
 To us thy comrades, goddess hero-souled,  
 To whom the secret parts of earth lie bared, 45  
 Whose darts unerring ever find their prey  
 Whether the quarry drink Araxes' stream  
 Or on the frozen Hister play. Thy hand  
 Has slain Gætulian lions, and the deer  
 Of Crete; and now with lighter hand the flight 50  
 Of the swift doe is stayed. The tiger yields  
 To thee, to thee the rough-haired bison yields  
 And the wild, broad-horned ox. Whatever finds  
 In solitary places pasture land,  
 Whate'er the needy Garamantian knows, 55

Whate'er the Arabs in their fertile groves,  
 Or the Sarmatian wanderers in waste plains,  
 Whate'er the Pyrenees' wild summit hides,  
 All that Hyrcania's wooded pastures know,  
 Diana, fear thy bow. When to the woods 60  
 A worshipper accepted takes thy grace,  
 The toils hold conquered game, no foot breaks through  
 The net, the groaning wagon bears the spoils,  
 The muzzles of the dogs are wet with blood,  
 And joyously the rustics seek again 65  
 Their huts. Thou art propitious, goddess, now!  
 The signal by the loud-mouthed dogs is given,  
 Lo, to the woods I'm called; the shortest way  
 I follow.

## SCENE II

*Phædra, Nurse.*

*Phædra.* O mighty Crete, thou ruler of wide seas, 70  
 Whose ships unnumbered sail by every coast,  
 Through every sea which Nereus' prows divide,  
 Far as Phœnician soil, why driv'st thou me  
 To pass my youth in sorrow and in tears,  
 A hostage given to the hated race, 75  
 And wedded to a foe. Lo, far away,  
 My husband Theseus is a fugitive  
 And keeps such faith as he is wont to keep.  
 Through the dense shadows of the infernal lake  
 That knows no backward path bold Theseus swam, 80  
 Pirithous' friend, that he might carry thence,  
 As bride, the infernal monarch's ravished wife;  
 He goes, the friend of folly, unrestrained  
 By fear or shame; in lowest Acheron



Most deeply angered, by our homage now  
 Avenging both herself and Mars, weighs down  
 The race of Phœbus with most shameful crime. 120  
 No daughter of unfaithful Minos' house  
 Is free from love—love ever joined with crime.

*Nurse.* O wife of Theseus, Jove's illustrious child,  
 From thy chaste bosom swiftly thrust such sin,  
 O quench these fires, nor yield to cruel hope. 125  
 Whoever from the first contends against  
 And conquers love, is safe, but those who nurse  
 The evil with sweet blandishments too late  
 Refuse to bear the yoke themselves assumed.  
 And yet I am not ignorant, in truth, 130  
 How the proud spirit of the princess spurns—  
 Haughty and arrogant—a guiding hand.

I'll bear whatever outcome fate may bring;  
 Approaching freedom makes the aged brave.  
 To wish for honor nor to go astray 135  
 From the right path is best, yet near to this  
 Is shame that one has known the thought of sin.  
 Where goest thou, unhappy one? wouldst spread  
 Thy household's infamy? Wouldst thou surpass  
 Thy mother? Greater is thy crime than hers; 140  
 Thou must impute the minotaur to fate,  
 Thy crime is offspring of thine own self-will.  
 If thou, because thy husband sees no more  
 The light of upper day, shouldst deem thy sin  
 To be committed safely, without fear, 145  
 Thou errst. Though Theseus is in depths profound  
 Of Lethe hidden, though forevermore  
 He dwell in Stygian darkness, yet why deem  
 That he who gives the law to many lands  
 And rules the waters with his empery wide 150

Would let so base a crime go undivulged?  
 Wise is a father's care.—Yet shouldst thou think  
 That we by subtilty or guile might hide  
 Such evil from him, wherefore shouldst thou think  
 Thy mother's parent who pours forth his light 155  
 On all things, or the father of the gods  
 Who shakes the world when in his flashing hand  
 He waves the thunderbolt from Etna's forge  
 Will see it not? Dost thou indeed believe  
 That it is possible to do this deed 160  
 In sight of these thy ancestors, who see  
 All thou wouldst hide? Yet should some favoring  
     god  
 Conceal the shameful union, grant to lust  
 Protection hitherto denied to crime,  
 What of the everpresent punishment, 165  
 The conscious terror of a guilty mind,  
 The heart that knows its fault and fears itself?  
 Some crimes are safe, no sinner feels secure.  
 Stifle the flames of guilty love, I pray,  
 Do not a sin which never yet was done 170  
 In barbarous lands, not on the level plains  
 Of wandering Getæ, nor the unfriendly heights  
 Of Taurus, nor in lonely Scythia.  
 Make thy mind chaste, drive out the horrid thought,  
 And mindful of thy mother, fear to try 175  
 Strange unions. Wouldst thou give one marriage bed  
 To son and father, in thy impious womb  
 Conceive a progeny so basely mixed?  
 Forth then, and with thy bestial fires o'erthrow  
 The laws of nature; why should monsters fail? 180  
 Why empty leave thy brother's labyrinth?  
 As often as a Cretan woman loves

Shall she not dare unwonted prodigies ?  
 Shall nature not withdraw from her own laws ?

*Phædra.* I know that what thou callst to mind  
 is true, 185

Love's fire compels me choose the worsèr part.  
 My soul hastes downward not unknowingly,  
 And seeking saner counsels, vainly turns  
 Backward. So when his heavy boat is driven  
 By adverse currents does the sailor use 190  
 In vain his labor, and his conquered ship  
 Yields to the racing current. What avail  
 Is reason? Madness has o'ercome and reigns ;  
 The potent god within my breast holds sway.  
 The unbridled, winged one in all the world 195  
 Holds sway, he burns with unrelenting flames  
 Ev'n wounded Jove, the warlike Mars has felt  
 Those torches, and the artisan who makes  
 Jove's triple thunderbolts has felt them too,  
 He, who Mount Etna's ever blazing forge 200  
 Keeps busy, with this tiny spark grows hot ;  
 Phœbus himself, who from his bow directs  
 Sure darts, is by the boy's more certain shafts  
 Transfixed ; they fly alike to earth and heaven.

*Nurse.* Base lust, crime-maddened, feigns that  
 love's a god, 205

Those who have wished great liberty have given  
 Falsely the name of deity to lust.  
 Yea, doubtless, Venus sends her son to roam  
 Through every land ! He with his tender hand  
 Prepares his shameless darts ! So great a realm 210  
 The least of all the gods can claim ! Mad souls  
 Created empty fables and have feigned  
 Venus' divinity, the love god's bow.

Whoever too much joys in happy days  
 And languishes in luxury desires 215  
 Some unaccustomed pleasure, then comes lust,  
 Ill-omened comrade of the fortunate :  
 Accustomed feasts no longer satisfy,  
 Nor home well-ordered, nor cheap wine to drink.  
 Why does this plague, selecting dainty roofs, 220  
 So rarely seek the poorer dwelling-place ?  
 Why is it holy love abideth still  
 In humble homes, that temperate passions sway  
 The saner multitude of common folk  
 To practise self-restraint and soberness ? 225  
 Why do the rich and powerful desire  
 More than is lawful ? Who already has  
 Too much desires that he cannot have.  
 Thou knowest what is fitting her who sits  
 Upon the throne ; honor and fear the crown 230  
 Of him who will return.

*Phædra.*

Love's empery

In me, I think, is greatest and no more  
 I fear returns. He never more has seen  
 The convex upper world who enters once  
 The home of silence and perpetual night. X 235

*Nurse.* Yet though Death bars his realm and  
 though the gates

Are ever guarded by the Stygian dog,  
 Theseus e'er finds forbidden paths.

*Phædra.*

Perchance

Theseus will find indulgence for our love.

*Nurse.* He has been, even to a faithful wife, 240  
 Most harsh. Antiope the Amazon  
 Made proof of his hard hand. Yet couldst thou bend  
 Thine angered husband's will, canst thou control

Hippolytus' hard heart? The very name  
 Of woman he abhors and flies them all; 245  
 Harshly he vows his years to singleness,  
 Shuns marriage: such the Amazonian race!

*Phædra.* It pleases me through woods and lofty  
 hills

To follow him, when on the snowy top  
 He stays his steps, or mocks the cruel rocks 250  
 With his swift foot.

*Nurse.* And will he stay his steps  
 And, softened, give himself to thy caress?  
 Will he for rites of unchaste Venus give  
 His chastity? Perchance his hate of thee  
 Is but the reason why he so hates all. 255  
 He cannot be by any prayers o'ercome.

*Phædra.* Wild is he but we know wild beasts are  
 tamed

By love.

*Nurse.* He'll flee thee.

*Phædra.* Though through seas he flee,  
 I'll follow him.

*Nurse.* Recall thy father's fate.

*Phædra.* My mother's I'll recall.

*Nurse.* He hates thy kind. 260

*Phædra.* I shall be free from rivals in his love.

*Nurse.* Thy husband will return—

*Phædra.* Pirithous' friend?

*Nurse.* Thy father'll come.

*Phædra.* For Ariadne's send.

*Nurse.* I pray thee by the silvery locks of age,  
 And by this heart o'erwearied with its cares 265  
 And by the breast which nursed thee, curb thy rage.  
 Call up thy strength; who wishes to be well



Is partly healed.

*Phædra.* Shame has not wholly fled  
From my chaste spirit ; nurse, I yield to thee.  
Let love that wishes not to be controlled 270  
Be overcome. Thee will I not allow,  
O honor, to be stained. One way remains  
One only refuge from my misery ;  
My husband I will follow, hinder crime  
By death.

*Nurse.* O daughter, moderate the rush 275  
Of thoughts unbridled, curb thy passion's force.  
Now that thou thinkest thou art worthy death,  
I think thee worthy life.

*Phædra.* Death is decreed ;  
I only wait to seek the kind of death.  
Shall I destroy my life with twisted noose, 280  
Or fall upon the sword ? Or shall I leap  
Headlong from Pallas' lofty citadel ?

*Nurse.* In my old age, shall I permit thee thus  
To perish by a violent death ? Restrain  
Thy impulse mad.

*Phædra.* No reason can prevent 285  
The death of one who has resolved to die,  
Who ought to die, we therefore arm our hand  
To vindicate our chastity.

*Nurse.* Sole stay  
Of wearied age, if thus hot passions press  
Upon thy heart, think not of thy fair fame : 290  
Fame seldom sides with truth ; kindest it is  
To those who merit least and to the good  
Most harsh. That soul intractable and stern  
We will attempt ; my labor let it be  
To meet the youth and bend his fierce, wild will. 295

## SCENE III

*Chorus.*

O goddess, daughter of the stormy seas,  
 Whom Cupids twain call mother, how thy boy,  
 Ungoverned, wanton, smiling, from sure bow  
 Lets fly his fiery shafts! the wound when given  
 Shows no wide scar, but hidden deep within 300  
 Devours the heart. That freakish boy can know  
 No peace; he scatters swiftly through the world  
 His arrows: all who see the rising sun,  
 Or toward the bounds of Hesperus may dwell,  
 Or underneath the cold Parrhasian Bear, 305  
 Or fervid Cancer—ever-wandering tribes,—  
 They know those fires. In youth he wakes fierce  
 flames,  
 Recalls to wearied age its long cooled heat,  
 Inflames with unaccustomed fires the hearts  
 Of virgins, and compels the gods to leave 310  
 Their heaven and in disguise to dwell on earth.  
 Phœbus Apollo shepherded the sheep  
 Of Thessaly and put aside his lyre  
 And called the bulls with unaccustomed pipe.  
 How often has he taken milder forms, 315  
 Who moves the sky and clouds: once, like a bird,  
 White wings he moved, and with a sweeter voice  
 Than dying swan he sang; then with fierce front,  
 A wanton bull, he took upon his back  
 The sportive maid, like slow oars moved his hoofs, 320  
 Breasted the deep, and through his brother's waves,  
 An unaccustomed realm, he took his way,  
 Made timid by the plunder rich he bore.

The shining goddess of the dark world burned  
 With love, forsook the night, her bright car gave 315  
 Into her brother's unfamiliar hand —  
 He learned to drive the chariot of the night  
 And turn a shorter circuit, while the wheels  
 Trembled beneath the heavier weight they bore;  
 Nor did the night retain its wonted length : 320  
 The day with tardy rising came to earth.  
 Alcmena's son, his quiver laid aside,  
 Put by the mighty lion's threatening spoil,  
 Suffered his fingers to be decked with gems,  
 Submitted to the comb his unkempt locks, 325  
 And bound his limbs about with shining gold,  
 While yellow sandals on his feet were tied,  
 And with the hand accustomed to the club  
 From the swift flying spindle drew the thread.  
 The Persians saw, saw too the men who dwell 330  
 In fertile Lydia's realm, the lion's skin  
 Put by, and on the shoulders that had borne  
 The skies the dainty Tyrian mantle laid.  
 Believe the wounded : sacred is love's fire  
 And all too potent. In whatever land 335  
 The deep surrounds, where'er the bright stars run  
 Their courses through the heavens, the cruel boy  
 There reigns : the Nereid's king has felt his dart  
 Within the depths of ocean, and the flame  
 No waters could extinguish ; his hot fires 340  
 The winged ones knew well ; the bull with love  
 Instinct will boldly for the whole herd war ;  
 The timid stags will fight, if for their does  
 They fear ; the swarthy Indian trembles then  
 At sight of the striped tiger ; the fierce bear 345  
 Makes sharp his wounding tusks and all his mouth

Her tears flow ever and with constant dew 390  
 Keep moist her cheeks, as when from Taurus' top  
 The melted snows flow down in warm, full streams.

But see, the palace opens ; she herself,  
 Reclining on her golden couch, rejects,  
 In her insanity, her wonted robe. 395

*Phædra.* The garments wrought of gold and  
 purple, slaves,  
 Remove ; bring not the red of tyrian conch,  
 The web the distant Eastern peoples weave  
 From fiber of the trees ; my flowing robe—  
 Uppgathered—let a girdle bind ; take off 400  
 The necklace from my neck ; the pearls, rich gift  
 Of Indian seas, shall not adorn my ears ;  
 Free from Assyrian odors, let my hair  
 Hang loose ; at random thus about my neck  
 And shoulders shall my unbound locks flow free, 405  
 And as I fly shall by the winds be blown ;  
 The quiver in my left hand, in my right  
 The sharp Thessalian spear. Like her who left  
 The frozen seas and with her maiden hosts  
 From Tanais and Mæotis touched the soil 410  
 Of Athens—with loose hair and crescent shield  
 She came, in guise like hers I seek the woods.

*Chorus.* Cease thy laments : complaints will not  
 avail  
 Thy sorrow ; to the goddess of the woods,  
 The guardian god of virgins, make thy prayer. 415

*Nurse.* Queen of the groves, who on the mountain  
 tops  
 Lovest to dwell alone, we pray thee turn  
 To better omens thy unkindly threats.  
 O mighty goddess of the woods and vales,

Bright star of heaven, glory of the night, 420  
 Who with alternate shining dost relume  
 The world, O triformed Hecate, favoring shine  
 On this attempt ; sway thou th' unbending mind  
 Of stern Hippolytus, that he may lend  
 A willing ear ; Oh, soften his hard heart, 425  
 Teach him to love ; Oh, charm his savage breast  
 To feel responsive fires, to Venus' laws  
 Submit his savage, harsh, and hostile soul.  
 Exert thy power ; come thus with shining face,  
 Ride through the rifted clouds with crescent bright,  
 Be no Thessalian incantation strong 431  
 To draw thee from the starry sky of night  
 Through which thou ridest : let no shepherd take  
 Glory from thee. O goddess now invoked,  
 Be present, look with favor on our prayers. 435  
 Himself I see, who worships only thee ;  
 Alone he comes. Why hesitate ? Chance gives  
 Both time and place. Arts now must be employed.  
 Why do I fear ? It is not light to dare  
 Crime's mandate. He who fears a queen's commands  
 Must banish thought of honor from his breast ; 441  
 Poor servant of the royal will, indeed,  
 Is loyalty to duty.

## SCENE II

*Hippolytus, Nurse.*

*Hippolytus.* O faithful nurse, why hither dost thou  
 toil,  
 With aged, wearied steps ; why bearest thou 445  
 This troubled face, this set and anxious brow ?  
 Safe is my father, surely ? Phædra safe ?

Safe the two well-loved pledges of their love?

*Nurse.* Put by thy fears; most prosperous is the realm,

By happy fortune blessed, thy family thrives. 450

But live thou gladlier in this fair estate,

For anxious am I in my care for thee,

Because thou dost so harshly rule thyself.

He may be pardoned who, by fate compelled,

Is wretched, but if any uncompelled 455

Gives himself up to trouble willingly,

Tortures himself—who knows not how to use

The goods of fortune well may forfeit them.

Rather be mindful of thy years, give rein

To thy free spirit, lift on high thy torch 460

On festal nights, let Bacchus lighten care;

Enjoy thy youth, it flies with nimble feet.

Thy bosom now is free, love smiles on youth,

Oh, let thy heart be glad; why dost thou keep

A widowed couch? Make cheerful thy sad youth, 465

Make haste, let loose the reins, life's richest days

Allow not to flow from thee unenjoyed.

God for each age provides its office fit,

And leads from step to step; a happy brow

Befits the young, austerity the old. 470

Why keep thyself in check and strangle thus

Thy rightful nature? To the husbandman

That grain gives increase that with pliant stem

Runs riot in the joyous fields, the tree

Cut or restrained by no unfriendly hand 475

Rises above the grove with lofty top;

So upright natures will the better gain

True glory, if unhampered liberty

Nourish the noble soul. Why dost thou pass

An austere youth, fair Venus all forgot, 480  
 Inhabiting the woods, fierce, ignorant  
 Of life? Dost deem this part alone to be  
 Assigned to men: that they should hardships bear,  
 Should learn in the swift race to drive the horse, 484  
 And wage, with streaming blood, most savage wars?  
 What various modes of death drag mortals down  
 And sweep away the throngs of men! the sea,  
 The sword, and treachery! But shouldst thou deem  
 That thou art safe from these—of our own will  
 We seek black Styx before our time when youth 490  
 Would pass its life in barren singleness.  
 These peoples that thou seest will endure  
 But one age, in themselves will come to nought.  
 The first great parent of the world took care,  
 When ravenous thus he saw the hand of fate, 495  
 That ever a new offspring should replace  
 The lost. Should Venus, who renews again  
 The race destroyed, withdraw from man's affairs,  
 The world were dark indeed, the sea would lie  
 Bereft of fish, the air would have no birds, 500  
 The woods no beasts, and all the ether be  
 A path for sun and winds alone. Make haste  
 To follow nature, the true lord of life;  
 Frequent the city, live among thy kind.  
*Hippolytus.* No other life there is more free from  
 fault, 505  
 More full of liberty, which better keeps  
 The ancient customs, than the life of one  
 Who loves the woods and leaves the city walls;  
 No passion of the sordid soul inflames  
 Him who to mountain tops commits himself 510  
 Unstained; no voice of popular applause,

No common peoples false to honor's claims,  
 No deadly envy, no inconstant fame.  
 He serves no realm, nor, striving for a throne,  
 Pursues vain honor, perishable wealth ; 515  
 Free both from fear and hope, black hungry spite  
 Attacks him not with his vile tooth, the crimes  
 Nourished among the folk who dwell in towns  
 He does not know, nor does he shrink afraid  
 At every sound, nor coin false words, nor seek 520  
 A home with columns numberless made rich,  
 Nor proudly hide his rafters 'neath much gold ;  
 Blood in abundance does not overflow  
 His pious altars, nor a hundred bulls,  
 Sprinkled with sacred meal, their white necks bow 525  
 Beneath the sacrificial knife for him.  
 His are the lonely fields, and innocent  
 He roams beneath the open sky, he knows  
 Only to build the cunning trap for beasts,  
 When worn with labor, in Ilissus' stream 530  
 He finds refreshment ; now he skirts the banks  
 Of swift Alphæus, now through thickets dense  
 Of the high groves he presses where flows down  
 Through silent ways, with pure and shining shoals, 534  
 Cold Lerna's stream, and where the querulous birds  
 Murmur, whence softly smitten by the winds  
 The mountain ash trees and the ancient beech  
 Tremble. He loves to lie upon the banks  
 Of winding rivers, or upon the sod  
 To find sweet sleep, whether abundant streams 540  
 Pour down swift floods or through fresh flowers flows  
 The slender brook and murmurs a sweet song.  
 Fruit gathered from the woods supplies his food,  
 And berries gathered from the thickets quench



His thirst. I wish not royal luxuries ; 545  
 The proud man drinks from golden cup, the cause  
 Of anxious care ; how sweet it is to drink  
 From hollowed hand the water of the spring !  
 A surer rest refreshes him who rests  
 On his hard bed secure : he does not seek, 550  
 Shameless, in secret corners, in the dark,  
 Intrigues, nor does he, fearful, hide himself  
 In hidden dwellings : but the light and air  
 He seeks ; with heaven for his witness lives ;  
 Lives like the men of old who with the gods 555  
 Mingled. No blind desire for gold was theirs,  
 No judge with boundary stones set off their lands,  
 Not yet were vessels, rashly confident,  
 Sailing the deep ; only his own home seas  
 Each knew. They did not build about their towns  
 Vast walls and frequent towers, the warrior then 561  
 Knew not to use stern weapons, nor to break  
 Closed gates with warlike engines armed with stones ;  
 Earth knew no master, nor was made a slave  
 To the yoked oxen, but the fields untilled 565  
 Brought forth their fruit, nor feared mankind's de-  
 mands,  
 The woods gave natural wealth, the shadowy caves  
 Natural homes. Unholy thirst for gain,  
 And headlong wrath, and lust which fires the heart  
 Broke first this order ; fierce desire to rule 570  
 Arose, the greater preyed upon the less,  
 And might made right. Man then with naked hands  
 Fought, and to weapons turned the stones and trees,  
 He was not armed with the light cornel spear  
 Pointed with iron, nor the sharp-edged sword, 575  
 Nor crested helmet ; anger made such arms.

New arts by warlike Mars were learned, new ways  
 To kill, and blood polluted every land,  
 The sea was red with blood. Then everywhere  
 Was crime forever found, no evil deed 580  
 Was left untried; brother by brother's hand,  
 Parent by son's, was slain, the husband fell  
 By the wife's sword, and impious mothers killed  
 Their children. I pass over stepdame's wrath.  
 She is nowise less savage than the beasts. 585  
 But woman was the leader in all wrongs;  
 This bold artificer of crime beset  
 All hearts: so many cities are consumed,  
 So many peoples wage destructive war,  
 So many kingdoms ruined lie o'erthrown,  
 By reason of her vile adulteries.  
 Of others I am silent—Ægeus' wife  
 Medea shows how savage women are.

*Nurse.* Why make all guilty of the crimes of  
 one?

*Hippolytus.* I hate, I fear, I loathe, I flee from all.  
 Say it is reason, nature, passions wild, 596  
 It pleases me to hate; sooner shall join  
 Water and flame, and vessels sooner find  
 In the uncertain Syrtes friendly depths,  
 Sooner from farthest confines of the west 600  
 Shall Tethys bring the day, and to the lambs  
 Shall wolves prove kindly, than I, overcome,  
 Turn friendly looks on woman.

*Nurse.* Love has oft  
 About the stubborn cast his charms, and changed  
 Their hate to love. Look at thy mother's realm, 605  
 The Amazons felt Venus' yoke, thou prov'st  
 This truth—one son of Amazonian blood.

*Hippolytus.* For mother lost, one consolation's mine—

I may hate womankind.

*Nurse.* As cliffs resist

The waves, invincible on every side, 610

And hurl far back the waters that assail,

He spurns my words. But see, where Phædra comes  
With headlong steps, impatient of delay.

Where leads her passion? What will fortune give?

Lifeless she falls; the color, as in death, 615

Deserts her face. O'nursling, lift thy head,

Speak, see, Hippolytus embraces thee.

### SCENE III

*Hippolytus, Phædra, Nurse.*

*Phædra.* Who gives me back my sorrow, brings  
again

My passion's heavy weight upon my soul?

How gladly would I put an end to life! 620

*Hippolytus.* Why wish to flee the gift of life re-  
stored?

*Phædra.* Be bold, my soul, accomplish now thy  
will.

Though scorned, speak fearless words; who asks in  
fear

Teaches denial. Of my sin great part

Is done: it is too late for modesty; 625

I have loved basely. If I follow up

This my attempt, perchance the marriage torch

May hide my crime; success makes certain sins

Respectable. Lo, now begin, my soul!

I pray a little nearer bend thine ear, 630

Lest any of thy comrades should be nigh.

*Hippolytus.* The place is free from any witnesses.

*Phædra.* My lips refuse a passage to my words :  
'Tis a great pow'r that urges me to speak,  
A greater holds me silent. O ye gods, 635  
I call on you to witness: what I wish——

*Hippolytus.* And one who wishes something cannot  
speak?

*Phædra.* Light cares find words, but heavy ones  
are dumb.

*Hippolytus.* Mother, commit thy cares to me.

*Phædra.* The name

Of mother is an honorable name, 640

And all too powerful; a humbler one

Befits our love. Call me, Hippolytus,

Sister or slave, slave rather; I will bear

All servitude. If thou shouldst bid me go

Through deepest snows, Mount Pindus' frozen top 645

Would give me no annoy, or if through fire

And hostile battle lines, I would not shrink

From giving to the ready sword my breast.

Take back the scepter to my charge consigned,

Receive me as thy slave; it is not meet 650

A realm of cities by a woman's hand

Should be defended. Thou who flourishest

In the first bloom of youth, thy father's realm

Govern, O take thy suppliant to thy breast,

Pity the widow (and protect the slave.) 655

*Hippolytus.* This omen may the sovereign gods  
avert!

My father presently will come again.

*Phædra.* The ruler of the realm whence none  
return

And of the silent Styx has made no way  
 Back to the upper air. Will he send back  
 The violator of his marriage couch? 660  
 Unless, perchance, now merciful to love,  
 He, too, inactive sits.

*Hippolytus.* The upright gods  
 Will truly give him back to earth. But while  
 God holds our wish ungranted, I will shield, 665  
 With duteous love, my brothers; care for thee  
 So that thou'lt no more feel thyself bereft  
 Of husband. I myself will fill for thee  
 My father's place.

*Phædra.* O lover's trusting hope!  
 Deceitful love! Have I not said enough!  
 With prayers I will assault him. Pity me, <sup>670</sup> *cf. Rac*  
 Hear my unspoken prayers; I long to speak, *malgré*  
 Yet dare not. *moi*

*Hippolytus.* What is this that troubles thee?

*Phædra.* What thou wouldst hardly think could  
 overtake

A stepdame.

*Hippolytus.* Doubtful words thou utterest: 675  
 Speak openly.

*Phædra.* My heart is all aflame  
 With love and madness, fiercest fires burn hot  
 Within my vitals, hidden in my veins,  
 As o'er the lofty roof the swift flame plays.

*Hippolytus.* With wifely love for Theseus dost thou  
 rage? 680

*Phædra.* Hippolytus, 'tis so; I love the form,  
 The face that Theseus in his boyhood bore,  
 When first his cheeks were darkened by a beard,  
 And he beheld the winding labyrinth

Where dwelt the Theban monster ; by a thread 685  
 He found his path. How glorious was he then !  
 A fillet bound his locks, a modest blush  
 Reddened his tender cheeks, on his soft arms  
 Were iron muscles. Thy Diana's face,  
 Or my Apollo's had he, or thine own ! 690  
 Lo ! such he was when he made glad his foe,  
 Thus proudly did he hold his head ; in thee  
 Shines forth his manly beauty unadorned  
 But greater ; all thy father is in thee,  
 And yet some part of thy stern mother's look, 695  
 A Scythian sternness on thy Grecian face.  
 If thou with him had crossed the Cretan straits,  
 For thee my sister would have loosed the thread. X  
 O sister, in whatever part of heaven  
 Thou shinest, I invoke thee in a cause 700  
 Both thine and mine ; one house has snatched away  
 Two sisters, thee the father, me the son.  
 Lo ! fallen at thy feet a suppliant lies,  
 Child of a kingly race. Unstained I was,  
 Pure, innocent—'tis thou hast wrought this change.  
 See, to entreaty I have sunk : this day 706  
 Must either end my sorrow or my life.  
 Have pity on my love.

*Hippolytus.*

O king of gods,

Dost thou so mildly hear, so mildly see  
 Such baseness ? When will fly the thunderbolt 710  
 Sent from thy hand, if thou art now unmoved ?  
 Oh ! Let the firmament be rent apart,  
 The daylight be by sable clouds concealed,  
 The backward driven stars be turned aside  
 To run inverted courses. Thou bright sun, 715  
 Chief of the stars, canst thou behold the crimes

Of this thy offspring? Let thy light depart!  
 Fly to the shades! Ruler of gods and men,  
 Why is thy right hand idle, hurling not  
 Thy triple thunderbolt against the world? 720  
 Thunder upon me, pierce me with thy bolt,  
 And swiftly burn me with thy smiting fires.  
 Guilty I am, I have deserved to die,  
 For I have pleased my stepdame. Lo, was I  
 Worthy of incest deemed? Did I alone 725  
 Seem to thee facile subject for thy crimes?  
 Is this what my austerity deserved?  
 O thou in crime surpassing all thy kind,  
 More wicked than thy mother thou art found!  
 She stained herself with lust most infamous, 730  
 And though her crime was long a secret held,  
 The two-formed offspring brought at last to light  
 The mother's guilt—the child's ambiguous form  
 Betrayed her crime—of that womb thou art born.  
 O thrice, O four times happy call I those 735  
 Destroyed and given to a violent death,  
 By stepdame's hate and treachery o'ercome.  
 Father, I envy thee! This scourge is worse,  
 Worse than thy Colchian stepdame.

*Phædra.* I also recognize our family's fate,— 740  
 Fleeing we find it; yet I o'er myself  
 No more have power; I'll madly follow thee,  
 Through flames and seas, through rocks and raging  
 streams;

Where'er thou turnst thy steps my love drives me.  
 Again, O proud one, at thy feet I fall. 745

*Hippolytus.* Withdraw from my chaste body thy  
 foul touch.

Ha, what is this? She falls upon my breast!

The sword shall slay her, she shall meet just death.  
 See, I bend backward by the twisted hair  
 With my left hand her shameless head ; ne'er fell 750  
 Upon thy altars, goddess of the bow,  
 Blood shed in better cause.

*Phædra.* Thou giv'st me now  
 My wish, Hippolytus. Thou mak'st me sane.  
 Better is this than aught that I could wish.  
 I'm saved, with honor by thy hand I die ! 755

*Hippolytus.* Live, yet go hence lest somehow, by  
 thy prayers,  
 Thou shouldst avail—and let this sword, defiled  
 By thee, my chaste side leave. Could Tanais' stream,  
 Or the Mæotis, or the Euxine sea,  
 Cleanse me—e'en Neptune could not wash away, 760  
 With all the waters of the mighty deep,  
 So great impurity. O wilderness !  
 O forests !

## SCENE IV

*Phædra, Nurse.*

*Nurse.* The fault is known; why rest inactive? <sup>U</sup>p,  
 Throw back on him the blame ; sin must be hid 765  
 By sin. (The safest way for one in fear  
 Is to attack. ) Since no one saw the crime,  
 Who shall be witness whether we first dared  
 Or suffered ill? (Athenian women, haste !  
 Help, faithful band of slaves ; Hippolytus, 770  
 The ravisher, pursues, attacks the queen ;  
 He threatens death, and with the sword attacks  
 That virtuous one. \* Lo, headlong has he fled,  
 Affrighted, in his hasty flight has left



His sword ; we hold the token of his crime. X 775

First bring again to life the fainting form :

Leave as they are her torn and loosened locks,

Proofs of the crime attempted ; bear her forth

Into the city. Mistress, take thou heart ;

Why shouldst thou wound thyself and shun all  
eyes? 780

X Unchastity lies not in chance but thought.

### SCENE V

#### *Chorus.*

As swiftly as the hurricane he fled,

More swiftly than the hurricane that drives

The clouds before it, swifter than swift flame

That burns when meteors, driven by the winds, 785

Send forth long fires. On thee, Hippolytus,

Shall fame confer all beauty that aroused,

In ages past, man's wonder ; lovelier shines

Thy form than, when her crescent orbs have poured

Their fires, Diana moves with glowing face 790

All night, full-orbed, in her swift car through heaven,

And lesser stars no longer show their face.

So Hesperus, the messenger of night,

At twilight shines, fresh bathed in ocean's waves ;

So Lucifer drives darkness into flight. 795

Thou Thyrsus-bearing Liber, Indian born,

Whose unshorn locks shine with immortal youth,

Who fightest tigers with thy vineclad staff,

Who bindest with broad bands thy horned head,

Thou art not fairer than Hippolytus ; 800

Nor shouldst thou think too highly of thy form,

For fame has blazoned through all lands his fame

Whom Phædra's sister did to Bromius  
Prefer.

O beauty, doubtful gift to mortals given, 805  
A fleeting good that but a moment stays,  
With what swift feet thou flyest. Not so soon,  
When noon glows hot and night a brief course  
runs,

Does burning summer's breath deprive the fields  
Of all the comeliness of early spring. 810

As the pale flowers of the lily fall,  
So falls the hair, the glory of the head ;  
The glow which brightens on the tender cheek  
Is in a moment gone, and one day spoils

The body's grace. A transitory thing 815

Is beauty : who may in so frail a good  
With wisdom trust? Oh ! use it while thou mayst ;  
Time silently destroys thee, and each hour  
Is worse than that which just has passed away.

Why shouldst thou seek the desert's loneliness 820  
Beauty is no more safe in pathless ways.

Thee will the saucy bands of wanton nymphs,  
Accustomed to imprison lovely youths  
In streams, surround at midday in the wood ;  
And dryads, who upon the mountain tops 825

Follow some Pan, will in thy sleep assail ;  
Or from the starry heavens, beholding thee,  
The planet that since old Arcadian folk

Sprung loses power to drive her shining car.  
Lately she blushed, no sordid cloud obscured 830

Her shining face ; but by her angry light  
Disturbed, and fearing dark Thessalian charms,  
We offered prayers—thou wast her trouble's cause,  
And thou the cause of her unwonted stay ;

Because the goddess of the night saw thee, 835  
 She checked her rapid course.  
 Did bitter winds blow less upon thy face,  
 Didst thou less oft expose it to the sun,  
 Whiter than Parian marble would it shine.  
 How pleasant is thine austere, manly face, 840  
 The sternness of thy brow! that glorious neck  
 Thou mayst with bright Apollo's well compare,  
 His hair about his shoulders flowing free,  
 Knowing no bond, adorns and covers him,  
 Thy hirsute front, thy shorter, uncombed locks, 845  
 Become thee. Thou mayst with the gods contend  
 In battles stern and conquer by thy strength,  
 For equal is thy strength with Hercules',  
 Broader thy breast than that of warlike Mars.  
 If it had pleased thee on a horse to ride, 850  
 Thou couldst have reined the Spartan Cyllarus  
 More easily than Castor. With thy hand  
 Make tense the bowstring, and with all thy strength  
 Direct the shaft: the Cretan, apt to learn  
 The art of shooting, not so far could send 855  
 The slender arrow; if in Parthian wise  
 Thou shootest skyward, not a dart descends  
 Without a bird: within the warm breast hid  
 It brings its prey from out the very clouds.  
 Seldom has man been beautiful and safe: 860  
 Look at the ages. May a kindlier god  
 Leave thee in safety, and thy beauty gain  
 The aspect of unbeautiful old age!  
 What will a woman's passion leave undared?  
 She plots 'gainst youth and innocence base crime. 865  
 Behold the sinner! she would find belief  
 By her torn locks, the glory of her hair

Is all dishevelled, and her cheeks are wet ;  
Her woman's cunning doth devise all frauds.  
But who is this that comes with kingly form,  
And lofty bearing? To Pirithous  
How like his face, were not his cheeks so pale,  
His unkempt hair so rough about his brow.  
Ah! Theseus comes, returned again to earth!

870

## ACT III

### SCENE I

*Theseus, Nurse.*

*Theseus.* I have at last escaped the land where  
reigus, 875  
Eternal darkness, where night holds the dead  
In its vast prison. Hardly can my eyes  
Endure the brightness of the hoped-for day.  
Four times the plow, gift of Triptolemus,  
Has cut Eleusis' soil, four times the Scales 880  
Have measured day the equal of the night,  
Since first the doubtful toils of unknown fate  
Have led me twixt the ills of life and death—  
To me, though dead, a part of life remained,  
The sense of ills. Alcides was their end. 885  
He when he carried off from Tartarus  
Th' unwilling dog, brought me as well to earth.  
My wearied body lacks its ancient strength,  
My footsteps tremble—ah! how hard the task  
It was to seek the far-off upper air 890  
From lowest Phlegethon, to flee from death  
And follow Hercules.

What sound is this  
Of lamentation strikes upon my ears?  
Ah, some one, tell me! Grief, and tears, and woe,  
And sad lament, e'en at my very door 895  
Assail me; truly, worthy auspices

For one who as a guest from Hades comes.

*Nurse.* Phædra maintains her firm resolve to die,  
She spurns our prayers, and is resolved on death.

*Theseus.* What cause is there for death? Why  
should she die, 900  
Her husband come again to life?

*Nurse.* E'en this  
Hastens her death.

*Theseus.* I know not what may mean  
The riddle of thy words. Speak openly.  
What heavy sorrow weighs upon her mind?

*Nurse.* To none she tells it, she conceals her woe,  
Determined that her ills shall die with her. 906  
But haste, I pray thee, haste, for there is need.

*Theseus.* Unbar the portals of my royal house.

## SCENE II

*Phædra, Nurse, Theseus.*

*Theseus.* O wife, dost welcome thus my late re-  
turn?

Dost thus behold thy husband's longed-for face? 910  
Let go the sword and take me to thy breast,  
Tell me what makes thee seek to flee from life.

*Phædra.* Alas, great Theseus, by thy scepter's  
might,  
And by the inborn nature of thy sons,  
And by thy coming from the shades again, 915  
Yes, by thy ashes, suffer me to die.

*Theseus.* What reason urges thee to die?

*Phædra.* The fruit  
Of death would perish if its cause were known.

*Theseus.* None other than myself shall hear the  
cause.

*Phædra.* A virtuous wife dreads but her husband's  
thoughts. 920

*Theseus.* Speak, hide thy secret in my faithful  
breast.

*Phædra.* That which thou wouldst not have an-  
other tell,

Tell not thyself.

*Theseus.* Death shall not have the power  
To touch thee.

*Phædra.* Death can never fail to come  
To him who wills it.

*Theseus.* Tell me what the fault 925  
Thou must by death atone.

*Phædra.* The fault of life.

*Theseus.* And art thou not affected by my tears?

*Phædra.* The sweetest death is one by loved ones  
mourned.

*Theseus.* Thou wilt keep silence? Then with  
blows and chains

Thy aged nurse shall be compelled to speak 930

What thou wouldst not. Now cast her into chains,

Let blows drag forth the secrets of her mind.

*Phædra.* Cease, I myself will speak.

*Theseus.* Why turn away

Thy mournful face, why cover with thy robe

The tears that wet so suddenly thy cheek? 935

*Phædra.* O father of the gods, on thee I call

To witness, and on thee, bright light of heaven,

From whom our family springs; I strove to stand

Against his prayers, my spirit did not yield

Either to threats or steel. Yet to his force 940

My body yielded ; this the stain my blood  
Must wash away..

*Theseus.* Who was it, tell me who  
Thus stained our honor ?

*Phædra.* Him thou least suspectest. —

*Theseus.* I earnestly entreat thee, tell me who.

*Phædra.* The sword will tell thee, that th' adulterer  
left, 945

When by approaching tumult terrified,  
He feared the gathering of the citizens.

*Theseus.* Alas, what crime is this which I behold?  
What awful thing is this I look upon ?

The royal hilt of ivory, carved and bright, 950  
The glory of Actæon's race ! But he—  
Where has he fled ?

*Phædra.* His fear and hasty flight  
These slaves beheld.

*Theseus.* O holy piety !  
O ruler of the sky, and thou who holdest  
The kingdom of the waters ! Whence has come 955  
This foul infection of my sinning son ?

Did Greek soil nourish him, or was he reared  
On Scythian Taurus, and by Colchis' stream ?  
The child repeats the father, and base blood  
Bespeaks its primal source. This passion comes 960

From that armed race that hated ties of love  
And, too long chaste, made common to the crowd  
Their bodies. O vile people, to no laws  
Of milder climes obedient ! Even beasts  
Shun sins of love and with unconscious awe 965

Obeys the laws of nature. Where that face,  
That feigned majesty and manner stern,  
That seeking after old austerity,



That sad affected gravity of age?  
 O treacherous life, thou carriest hidden thoughts, 970  
 And hidest with fair form a sinful soul ;  
 A modest bearing covers shamelessness,  
 Gentleness boldness, seeming goodness crime ;  
 The false looks true, and harshness tender seems.  
 O dweller in the woods, wild, virgin, chaste, 975  
 Unconquered, hast thou kept thyself for me?  
 Wilt thou first try thy manhood with such crime,  
 In my own bed? Now to the gods above  
 Be praises that Antiope has fallen,  
 Struck by my hand ; that when I sought the Styx 980  
 Thy mother was not left behind for thee.  
 O fugitive, seek unknown climes afar,  
 By ocean's plains shut off in earth's last bounds,  
 Be hid within the region 'neath our feet.  
 Shouldst thou have crossed the realms of bitter cold,  
 And deep within its farthest nook be lost, 986  
 Or, placed beyond hoar frost and winter snows,  
 Have left behind cold Boreas' bitter threats,  
 Thou yet shalt pay the penalty for crime ;  
 Undaunted, fast upon thy flying steps, 990  
 Through every lurking place I'll follow thee.  
 Long, diverse, difficult, and pathless ways,  
 Aye, ways impossible shall we pass through ;  
 Nothing shall hinder. Whence I have returned  
 Thou knowest. Whither arrows cannot go 995  
 I'll send my curse. Neptune has promised me  
 Three wishes by his favor gratified,  
 And has confirmed his promise with an oath  
 Sworn by the river Styx. My stern desire  
 Perform, O ruler of the restless seas ! 1000  
 Let not Hippolytus behold again

The day's fair light, but let the youth go down  
 Among the wrathful spirits of the dead—  
 Wrathful because of me. O father, bring  
 Thy son thy dreaded aid—I had not asked 1005  
 Of thy divinity this gift supreme  
 But that such heavy evil pressed me sore.  
 ✓ Even within the depths of Tartarus,  
 Dread realm of Dis, and threatened by the wrath  
 Of the infernal king, I still withheld 1010  
 This wish. Fulfil thy promise. Why delay?  
 Why, father, are thy waters silent still?  
 Black clouds with driving wind should hide the sky,  
 Snatch from the heavens the stars, upheave the deep,  
 Arouse the monsters of the sea, call forth 1015  
 The swelling floods from Ocean's farthest bounds!

## SCENE III

*Chorus.*

O nature, mighty mother of the gods,  
 And thou of fiery Olympus king,  
 Who speedest through the flying firmament  
 The scattered constellations, and the stars' 1020  
 Uncertain courses, and the heavens that turn  
 So swiftly, why continue with such care  
 To keep the pathway of the airy heights  
 That in its season winter's cold and snow  
 Lay bare the forests, that the leafy shade 1025  
 Returns, that summer's constellation shines  
 And ripens with its fervid heat the grain,  
 That milder autumn comes? But since thou rul'st,  
 Since by thy power alone the balance weight

Of the vast universe revolves, why, then, 1030  
 No longer careful of the race of men,  
 Careless to punish evil or reward  
 The good, dost thou desert Hippolytus?  
 Fortune by ways unordered rules man's life ;  
 The worse she cherishes, and blindly flings. 1035  
 Her gifts, and base desire conquers law,  
 And fraud is king within the palace walls,  
 The populace rejoice to give the base  
 High office and to hate the very man  
 Whom they should honor. Rigid virtue finds 1040  
 The recompense of evil, poverty  
 Follows the pure in heart, and strong in crime  
 Th' adulterer reigns. O reputation vain !  
 O empty honor! But with headlong steps  
 Why comes the messenger with tear-wet cheeks! 1045

ACT IV

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ht,

SCENE I

*Theseus, Messenger.*

*Messenger.* O hard and bitter lot, grim servitude !  
Why am I called by fate to bring such news ?

*Theseus.* Be brave to speak, e'en of the bitterest  
woes.

I have a heart not unprepared for grief.

*Messenger.* Alas, alas, Hippolytus is dead ! 1050

*Theseus.* The father knew long since his son was  
dead.

Now dies the ravisher, but tell me how ?

*Messenger.* When he, a fugitive, with troubled steps,  
Had left the city, taking his swift course  
With flying feet, he quickly yoked his steeds, 1055  
With bit and bridle curbed them ; with himself  
Revolving many things, he cursed his land  
And oft invoked his father. With loose rein  
He shook his lash, impetuous. x Suddenly  
The depths of ocean thundered, and its waves 1060  
Smote on the stars ; no wind blew on the sea ;  
And nowhere were the quiet heavens stirred,  
The tempest moved the placid deep alone.  
No south wind e'er blew up Sicilia's straits  
Like this, nor did the wild Ionian sea 1065  
E'er rise before the northwest wind like this,  
When cliffs shake with the beating of the waves,

And the foam flashes white on Leucas' top.  
 The great deep rose in billows mountain high,  
 But not for ships was this disaster planned, 1070  
 The earth was threatened; not with gentle roll  
 The waves swept onward, some strange thing the surge  
 Threw on its burdened bosom. What new world  
 Howly upheaves its head? What island new  
 Arises among the Cyclades? While thus 1075  
 Questioning we gazed, the whole wide ocean roared,  
 The cliffs on every side sent back the sound; X  
 His head all dripping with the driving spray,  
 Belching the flood from out his cavernous jaws,  
 Foaming and vomiting the waters forth, 1080  
 Through the great straits was dragged a monster vast;  
 The mound of waters, smitten, sank amazed,  
 Opened, and on the shores spewed out a beast  
 Most terrible. The deep with landward rush  
 Followed the monster—at the thought I quake! 1085  
 Ah, that huge body, what a form it had!  
 A great bull with blue neck, it lifted up  
 On a green brow a lofty crest, its ears  
 Were shaggy, and of changing hue its eyes;  
 Such form the wild herd's lord on earth might have,  
 Or bull of ocean born. Its eyes shot flame, X 1091  
 Wondrously with the ocean blue they shone;  
 A thick mane grew upon its brawny neck,  
 With every breath it snorted; breast and throat  
 Were green with clinging moss, its monster sides 1095  
 Were dotted with red lichens; backward thence  
 It showed a monstrous form, a scaly fish,  
 Vast, horrible, dragging huge length along; X  
 Such are the fish that in the outer seas 1099  
 Swallow swift ships or wreck them. The land shook,

The frightened herds fled madly through the fields,  
 The shepherd was not mindful of the lambs,  
 The wild beasts in the wooded pastures fled,  
 The huntsmen stood alarmed and faint with fear.  
 Hippolytus, alone untouched by fear, 1105  
 With tight rein curbed his horses, checked their flight,  
 And with his well-known voice encouraged them.  
 A pathway wide bends through the parted hills  
 Into the fields, along the ocean strand ;  
 That mound of flesh there armed him for the fight,  
 Lashed up his rage, and having taken heart 1111  
 And stretched himself, he then essayed his strength ;  
 He sped along, scarce touching in his flight  
 The surface of the ground, and stayed his course  
 Before the frightened horses. With fierce look 1115  
 Thy son arose to meet its menaces,  
 Nor was he silent ; with loud voice he cried :  
 ' My courage is not mastered by this threat,  
 To conquer bulls has been my family's task.'  
 The horses, disobedient to the rein 1120  
 And turning from the way, dragged off the car ;  
 Where'er blind terror drove them there they went ;  
 They fled among the rocks, but he, thy son,  
 Guided the chariot as the pilot guides  
 His vessel in a storm, nor lets it turn 1125  
 Aslant the wave, and by his skill escapes.  
 Now with tight rein he pulled upon the bit ;  
 Now with the twisted lash he smote the steeds.  
 The fish, a constant comrade, followed him,  
 Devouring now the ground with equal pace, 1130  
 Now lying in the way the car was turned,  
 And causing greatest fear on every side.  
 Nor farther was it possible to flee,

For the great horned monster of the deep  
 Lying in wait with open mouth assailed. 1135  
 Then the excited horses, mad with fear,  
 Freed themselves from the guidance of the rein  
 And rearing struggled from the yoke to tear  
 Themselves. They hurled their burden to the ground,  
 { Headlong he fell, entangled in the lines; 1140  
 The more he fought against the tightening noose,  
 The more its knots were strengthened. What they'd  
 done

{ The frightened horses felt, and, driverless,  
 Where fear impelled they rushed with the light car. x  
 So through the air the horses of the sun, 1145  
 Not recognizing their accustomed load  
 And angry that a false god brought the day,  
 Upon their devious course hurled Phaethon forth!  
 { The field was red with blood, his wounded head  
 Rebounded from the cliffs, the brambles tore 1150  
 His hair, hard rocks destroyed his lovely face,  
 His illstarred beauty marred by many wounds  
 Perished. x Upon the wheels his dying limbs  
 Were whirled about; pierced through the midst at  
 last  
 By a burnt stake, upon its point was fixed 1155  
 His trunk, the car was stayed a little while  
 Held fast by its prone driver, and the steeds  
 At the disaster stayed their hasty course,  
 Then broke through all delays and tore away  
 Their master. Brambles cut the lifeless form, 1160  
 Each stinging brier and sharp thorn took part  
 Of that torn trunk. The band of sorrowing slaves  
 Followed through all the field where, dragged along,  
 Hippolytus in bloody characters

Marked the long path, the howling dogs tracked out  
 Their master's members, but most loving care 1166  
 Could not find all. Is this his noble form ?  
 Illustrious sharer of his father's throne,  
 And certain heir, who like a star in heaven  
 Shone bright, he now was gathered from all sides 117c  
 For the last honors, for his funeral pyre  
 Was brought together from the plain.

*Theseus.* O nature, all too potent, with what chains  
 Thou holdst the parent's heart ! we cherish thee  
 Although against our will. I wished to slay 1175  
 The guilty one and now I weep his loss.

*Messenger.* What one has wished not always makes  
 one glad.

*Theseus.* This is, I think, the farthest reach of ill :  
 That chance should make me curse the thing I loved.

*Messenger.* Why wet thy cheeks with tears for one  
 thou hat'st ? 1180

*Theseus.* Not that I lost but that I slew I weep.

## SCENE II

*Chorus.*

How many chances rule the lot of man !  
 Fortune against the humble least is roused,  
 The god more lightly smites the little worth ;  
 Obscurity finds peace and quietness, 1185  
 The cottage offers undisturbed old age.  
 The pinnacles that tower toward the skies  
 Most feel the east wind and the south wind smite,  
 Endure the savage north wind's menaces,  
 The blowing of the rainy north-west wind ; 1190



The moist vale seldom feels the thunderbolt,  
But lofty Caucasus, the Phrygian grove  
Of mother Cybele, are often shaken  
By thundering Jove's attack, for Jupiter,  
Fearing their nearness to his heavenly heights, 1195  
Aims there his bolts. Beneath the humble roofs  
Of lowly homes great tumults never come.  
Fickle and restless is the hour's flight,  
And faith with none does flying fortune keep.  
Theseus, who left the gloomy shades of night, 1200  
And sees the starry skies, the sunny day,  
Must sadly mourn his sorrowful return,  
And find his native land more full of grief  
Than dread Avernus.  
Chaste Pallas, venerated by the Greeks, 1205  
Because thy Theseus sees the upper world  
And has escaped the waters of the Styx,  
Thou owest to thy robber uncle naught ;  
The tyrant finds hell's number still the same.  
What voice from out the mourning palace sounds ?  
With weapon drawn why comes sad Phædra forth ? 1211

ACT V

SCENE I

*Theseus, Phædra.*

*Theseus.* What fury animates thee, and with  
grief?

Wherefore that sword, and why those sad laments?  
Why beat thy bosom for such hated dead?

*Phædra.* Me, me, O cruel ruler of the seas, 1215  
Assail, and send the blue sea's awful shapes  
To war on me—whate'er far Tethys bears  
Within its inmost bosom, whatsoever  
Ocean, embracing with its restless waves  
The world, conceals within its farthest flood! 1220

O Theseus, ever most unfeeling one,  
Thou ne'er returnest safely to thy home.  
Father and son must pay for thy return  
By death; thou, ever guilty, dost destroy  
Thy home with love or hate. Hippolytus, 1225  
Such as I made thee do I see thee now?  
Did Sinis or Procrustes scatter thus  
Thy members, or some savage Cretan bull,  
Half man, half beast, refilling with its roar  
The labyrinth of Dædalus, destroy 1230  
With its great horns? Oh! whither now is fled,  
My star, the glory of thy brilliant eyes?  
Dost thou lie lifeless? Come, one moment come,  
And hear my words, 'tis nothing base I speak!

Handwritten notes in the top right corner:  
A sword  
was slain  
this me  
of - spe  
Dædalus

Handwritten notes on the right side:  
L DEATH  
SHRIL

With my own hands I'll pay thee what I owe, 1235  
 Into this sinful breast will thrust the sword,  
 Will by one deed take Phædra's life away,  
 And cleanse her from her sin, and follow thee  
 Madly through floods, through Tartarean lake,  
 Through Styx and fiery rivers. Let me die— 1240  
 Let me placate the spirit of the dead :  
 Receive the lock of hair here cut for thee,  
 It was not lawful that our souls should wed,  
 But still, perchance, we may in fate be one.  
 Let me, if chaste, die for my husband's sake,  
 And if unchaste, die for the loved one's sake! 1245  
 Shall I approach my husband's marriage bed  
 That am with such crime stained? This one sin  
 lacked :

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1240  
 \* William  
 1245  
 \* gift  
 \* Gus  
 \* 40  
 \* 1246

That I, as one unstained, should still enjoy  
 That bed as if it were my right. O death,  
 The only solace for the pains of love ;  
 O death, last grace of injured chastity,  
 To thee I fly, take me to thy calm breast!  
 x Hear me, Athena, let his father hear—  
 He than the cruel stepdame sterner found—  
 x Falsely have I accused him of a crime  
 Which I myself in my mad heart conceived ;  
 I spoke a lie. Thou, father, hast in vain  
 Sought punishment ; of all incestuous crime  
 x The youth is pure, unstained and innocent. 1250  
 Recover now thy former spotless fame, x  
 The sinful breast lies bare for justice' sword ;  
 My blood is offered to a holy man.

1250  
 \* solace  
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 \* n  
 \* 1255  
 \* 20  
 \* 1260

*Theseus.* What thou should'st do,  
 O father, for thy son thus snatched away,  
 Learn from his stepdame. Seek the Acheron!

by away  
 1265  
 w  
 p  
 v

O jaws of pale Avernus and ye caves  
 Of Tænarus, ye waves of Lethe's stream  
 So welcome to the wretched, stagnant fens,  
 Hide ye thîe wretched one, with endless woes 1270  
 O'erwhelm! Ye cruel monsters of the deep,  
 Great sea, and whatsoever Proteus hides  
 Within the farthest corner of his waves,

Be present now; into the whirling deeps  
 Drag me, so long rejoicing in such crimes. 1275

O father, ever all too easily  
 Approving of my wrath, I am not meet  
 To suffer easy death—I who have strewn  
 My son's torn members in unheard of ways  
 Through all the fields. Crime did I truly find 1280

When, as the harsh avenger, I pursued  
 One falsely charged with crime. The seas and  
 stars

And land of shadows by my crimes are filled;  
 No place remains, me the three kingdoms know.  
 Have I returned for this? Was upward way 1285

Opened but that I might behold the dead,  
 That, widowed, childless, I might with the torch  
 Light the sad funeral pyres of wife and son?

Giver of light, Alcides, take thy gift  
 Back to the sable groves of shadowy Dis, 1290  
 Restore me to the Manes whence I came.

Me miserable! Vainly I invoke  
 The death that I deserted. Bloody one,  
 Artificer of death, contrive thou now

And bring to light unheard of means of death, 1295  
 Inflict upon thyself just punishment.

Shall a great pine be bent until the top  
 Touches the earth, then, being freed again,

Upspringing, bear me with it to the stars?  
 Or shall I fling myself from Sciron's cliffs? 1300  
 Yet heavier punishment than that I've seen,  
 Which Phlegethon compels the guilty souls  
 Prisoned within its circling waves of fire  
 To suffer: well I know the dwelling place,  
 The bitter penalties reserved for me. 1305  
 Ye guilty souls give place and let the rock  
 That to the ancient son of Æolus  
 Gives ceaseless labor weigh these shoulders down,  
 Weary these hands; let rivers, flowing near  
 My thirsty lips, ever elude their touch. 1310  
 Let the fierce vulture, leaving Tityus,  
 Hover about my liver and increase  
 My punishment. Mayst thou have rest at last,  
 Thou father of my friend Pirithous:  
 On the swift flying wheel that never stays 1315  
 Its turning let my limbs be whirled about.  
 Earth, open! Dire chaos, take me back!  
 Take me! The pathway to the shades of hell  
 Is mine by better right; I follow him!  
 O thou who rul'st the spirits of the dead, 1320  
 Fear not, for we who come to thee are chaste.  
 Receive me to thy everlasting home,  
 There will I stay. My prayers the gods hear not,  
 But had I asked their help in evil deeds,  
 How ready had they been!  
*Chorus.* Eternity 13  
 Is thine, O Theseus, for lament; pay now  
 The honors due thy son, and quickly hide  
 In earth his scattered members so dispersed.  
*Theseus.* O hither, hither bring the dear remains,  
 Give me the parts from many places brought. 132

Is this Hippolytus? The crime is mine,  
 'Twas I destroyed thee ; and not I alone—  
 A father, daring crime, I called to aid  
 My father, I enjoy a father's gift !

How bitter is such loss to broken age ! 1335

Embrace whatever of thy son is left,  
 And clasp him to thy bosom, wretched one.

*Chorus.* O father, in their rightful order place  
 The mangled body's separated parts,  
 Restore the severed members to their place. 1340  
 Lo, here the place the strong right hand should  
 rest,

And here the left that learned to hold the reins ;  
 I recognize the marks on his left side.

How great a part is absent from our tears !

*Theseus.* For this sad duty, trembling hands, be  
 strong ; 1345

O cheeks be dry, and let abundant tears  
 Be stayed, the while I count my son's torn limbs,  
 And form his body. What is this I see,  
 Lacking in beauty, base, with many wounds ?  
 What part of thee it may be I know not, 1350  
 Yet part of thee it is. Here, here repose,  
 Not in thine own but in a vacant place.

Is this the face that like the bright stars shone ?

His eyes that overcame his enemy ?  
 Thus has his beauty fallen ? Bitter fate ! 1355

O cruel kindness of the deity !  
 And is my son thus given back to me,  
 As I have wished ? O son, in fragments borne  
 Forth to thy burial, from thy father take  
 These funeral rites ; thee shall the fire burn. 1360  
 Lay wide the house with dismal murder filled,

Let Mopsopia sound with loud lament.

Ye, to the royal funeral pyre bring flame,

And ye, seek out his body's scattered parts

Through all the fields. When she is buried, 1365

[Turning to Phædra's body] Let earth lie heavy on  
her, let the soil

Weigh down her impious head!

*Alc. Hec.*

# ŒDIPUS



*DRAMATIS PERSONÆ*

ŒDIPUS.

CREON.

TIRESIAS.

PHORBAS.

JOCASTA.

MANTO.

A CORINTHIAN.

MESSSENGER.

CHORUS.

SCENE: *Thebes.*

# ŒDIPUS

## ACT I

### SCENE I

*Œdipus, Jocasta.*

*Œdipus.* Already night has fled, dim dawns the day  
The morning star looks darkly through the gloom,  
The woful light in baleful flame appears  
And sees our homes made desolate by plague ;  
And day will show what havoc night has wrought. 5  
Who would be glad at being made a king ?  
Deceitful honor, how thy flattering face  
Conceals untold misfortune. As the ridge  
Of mountain summits by the wind is swept ,  
As rocky headlands, even when the sea 10  
Is calm, by breakers at their jutting base  
Are lashed, so fortune's storms attack the heights  
Of kingly power. 'Twas but right to flee  
The scepter of my father Polybus.  
An exile, free from care and unafraid, 15  
(I call to witness heaven and the gods)  
Idly I happened on a kingdom's throne.  
I fear an impious crime : lest slain by me  
My father die ; for so admonished me  
The Delphic laurel, and of greater crime 20  
Forewarned me. Could there be a greater crime

Than murder of a father? Woe is me,  
 It shames me but to give the crime a voice ;  
 For Phoebus threatens a marriage infamous,  
 A parent's bed dishonored by a son, 25  
 Incestuous union, and a bridal torch  
 That fits such wedding feast. This fear it is  
 Made me an exile from my father's house.  
 Not as a fugitive I left my home,  
 But, fearing to myself to trust myself, 30  
 Nature, thy holy laws I made secure.  
 Although thou loath'st the sin, yet none the less  
 Fear that which seems to be impossible,—  
 I greatly feared and trusted not myself.  
 E'en now the fates prepare some grievous ill — 35  
 This plague, so hostile to the Cadmean land,  
 And spreading such disaster, spares but me ;  
 For what worse evil then am I reserved?  
 Amid the city's ruins, 'mid new deaths,  
 That ever with new tears must be bewept, 40  
 'Mid slaughter of my people, I stand safe—  
 Apollo's hand is plain. How can I hope,  
 Destined for crimes like these to hold secure,  
 A healthful realm? 'Tis I infect the air. ✓  
 No gentle wind with cool breath cherishes ✓ 45  
 The hearts that labor under burning suns ;  
 Light Zephyr blows not ; Titan, pressing close  
 The lion of Nemea's flanks, augments  
 The dog-star's heat ; the river beds are dry ;  
 The green deserts the herbage ; Dirce's fount 50  
 Fails, and Ismenus' stream is but a thread  
 Whose waters scarce make moist the barren shoals ;  
 Apollo's sister moves obscured through heaven,  
 And earth is sad and wan with clouded day ;

No night serene is lighted by the stars, 55  
 But o'er the earth brood black and heavy mists ;  
 Infernal darkness veils the heavenly heights,  
 The dwelling of the gods ; her ripened fruit  
 Ceres withholds—just as the golden ear  
 Lifts itself trembling on the thirsty stalk 60  
 The grain dies fruitless ; nought remains secure  
 From ruin ; every age and sex alike  
 Is smitten, son with father, youth with age,  
 In ghastly ruin, and one funeral pyre  
 Serves wife and husband, so that neither mourns 65  
 Nor weeps beside the bier of a dead spouse.  
 Nay more, the rigor of such heavy woes  
 Makes dry the eyes, and tears, the wonted gift  
 Of sorrow, may not fall. Here going forth,  
 A grieving father carries out his child ; 70  
 Or there a grief-stunned mother brings her son,  
 To burn his body on the last dread fire ;  
 Swiftly they go, returning to perform  
 The same sad office for another child.  
 New sorrow rises from the sorrow's self, 75  
 And they who came to bear the dead away  
 Fall dead ; on strangers' pyres their forms are burned,  
 And fire made common spoil ; woe knows no shame ;  
 No separate tombs enclose the holy dead ;  
 It is enough the bodies should have blazed, 80  
 How small a part to ashes really burns !  
 No space remains for graves, the woods refuse  
 To furnish funeral pyres for the dead.  
 When once the plague has smitten, art nor vows  
 Can save. Physicians fall while minist'ring, 85  
 And sickness seizes him who offers help.  
 Prostrate before the altars here I stretch

My suppliant hands, implore a speedy death ;  
 I would outrun my country's overthrow,  
 Die ere all perish, live not as the last 90  
 Of all my kingdom. O too cruel gods!  
 O heavy lot! Death, that so swiftly smites  
 My people, is to me alone denied,  
 Lay down the scepter from thy fatal hands ;  
 Flee from the tears, the funerals, and the air 95  
 So full of pestilence, which thou, a guest  
 Ill-omened, brought'st with thee ; fly swiftly hence,  
 Although to home and parents thou must flee.

*Jocasta.* Why add lament to sorrow ? knowest thou  
 not

'Tis kingly to endure unflinchingly 100  
 Whatever adverse fortune choose to give ?  
 Although prosperity decline, the strength  
 Of mighty empire totter to its fall,  
 The king should stand unshaken ; it is base  
 To turn the back to fortune.

*Ædipus.* Far from me 105  
 Be the reproach of sins of cowardice ;  
 My spirit does not know ignoble fear.  
 If hostile dart, if bristling might of war  
 Attack me, I would boldly hold my own—  
 Against the Giants even. When the Sphinx 110  
 Proposed her riddle, I was not afraid ;  
 Nor did I fear before the bloody jaws  
 Of that dread prophetess, though all the ground  
 Was white with scattered bones ; and when she stooped  
 From the high cliff, and, ready for her prey, 115  
 Spread her broad wings, and, lashing with her tail,  
 Threatened to pounce as a fierce lion does,  
 I asked her for her riddle ; o'er my head

Wildly she sang, impatient ground her teeth,  
 And tore the rocks with claws that fain would tear 120  
 My heart. The twisted riddle of the Sphinx,  
 The double speech, the baleful prophecy  
 That fierce bird sang, I solved. Thou foolish one,  
 Why yearn too late for death? 'Twas possible  
 Then to have died; this scepter was the meed 125  
 Of honor, and Jocasta the reward  
 Allotted thee for slaying of the Sphinx.  
 But from the ashes of the monster comes  
 This curse against me, and that perished plague  
 Now ruins Thebes. No safety now remains, 130  
 If Phœbus does not show us safety's path. <

## SCENE II

*Chorus of Theban women.*

O noble sons of Cadmus' race, ye die  
 With all your city! Wretched Thebes! alas,  
 Thy homes are left unto thee desolate.  
 Bacchus, thy soldiery is snatched away 135  
 By death—those gallant comrades who dared ride  
 To farthest India and the distant east,  
 And plant thy banners on earth's utmost bounds;  
 They saw the woods of Araby the blest  
 Fragrant with breath of cinnamon; they saw 140  
 The flying Parthian cavalry who shoot  
 Their treacherous arrows backward as they flee;  
 They saw that Red Sea's shore, where first the sun  
 Springs from the waters, bringing up the day,  
 There where the naked Ethiopian feels 145  
 His nearer flame.

Sons of a race unconquered, thus we fall ;  
 We pass snatched hence by cruel destiny ;  
 Each hour new sacrifice is led to death ;  
 The long train of the sad procession hastes 150  
 Down to the shades, and all the ways are blocked,  
 And, for the throngs that seek the place of tombs,  
 The seven gates of Thebes are not enough ;  
 Corpse upon corpse the bodies of the dead  
 Are heaped together. 155  
 The stolid sheep feel first the touch of death,  
 The sick lambs scarcely crop the juicy herbs.  
 The priest stands ready for the sacrifice,  
 But as his hand is raised to strike the blow,  
 The bull that waited it with gilded horns 160  
 Sinks slowly ; as the heavy ax descends,  
 Relaxed beneath the blow his huge neck falls,  
 But yet by no red blood the steel is stained,—  
 A humor black and foul flows from the wound.  
 The horse, o'erwearied in the course, drops dead 165  
 And throws his rider prone ; what sheep still live  
 Lie helpless in the fields ; the bull grows weak  
 Among the herd ; the shepherd fails his flock,  
 Fainting and dying 'mid the wasting young ;  
 The hinds no longer fear the plundering wolf ; 170  
 No more the angry lion roars ; no more  
 The shaggy bear is fierce ; the lurking snake  
 Loses its sting, shrivels and perishes,  
 Its venom dried.  
 The woods no longer from their leafy boughs 175  
 Shed dusky shadows on the mountain side ;  
 No more the land grows green with springing grain ;  
 No more the vines' full branches downward bend  
 With weight of Bacchus' gifts ; earth feels our woes.

The Tartarean band of sisters, armed 180  
 With fatal torch, have burst apart the gates  
 Of Erebus profound, the Phlegethon  
 Has changed its course, and with Sidonian streams  
 The Styx is mingled. Black Death's eager jaws  
 Gape for us, wide he spreads his mighty wings. 185  
 The hard old ferry-man who guides the boat  
 That plies between the gloomy river's banks,  
 Sore taxed with frequent poling to and fro,  
 Can hardly lift his over-wearied arms,  
 Too weak to bear the thronging dead across. 190  
 'Tis said the dog of hell has burst his chains,  
 Forged of Tænarian iron, and now haunts  
 Our country; earth makes moan, and misty forms,  
 Larger than human, wander through the groves; 194  
 The Cadmean woods twice trembled and shook down  
 Their weight of snow, and twice the troubled fount  
 Of Dirce welled with blood, Amphion's dogs  
 Howled on the silent night.  
 Oh, strange and dreadful kind of death, far worse  
 Than death itself! A heavy lassitude 200  
 Binds fast our listless limbs, the feverish red  
 Flames in the face, and spots defile the brows;  
 The body's citadel, the head, is burnt  
 With scorching heat, the cheeks are swelled with blood,  
 The eyes are fixed, and on the drooping limbs 205  
 A foul corruption feeds, a ringing noise  
 Sounds in the ears, black blood flows from the nose  
 And bursts the veins agape; quick, racking groans  
 Are wrung from quivering hearts; some seek to cool  
 Their glowing fever on the icy rocks, 210  
 And some in empty homes, the watcher gone,  
 Make haste to seek the fountain, but their thirst



Grows as they drink. Before the altars lie  
A prostrate throng and pray for speedy death,  
For death alone the gods consent to give. 215  
They crowd the shrines, not with their votive gifts  
T' appease the wrathful gods, but with themselves  
To glut the greedy anger of the gods.

## ACT II

### SCENE I

*Œdipus, Creon, Chorus.*

*Œdipus.* Who is it hither comes with hasty steps?  
Is it not Creon, great in deed and race? 220

Or does my sick soul view the false as true?

*Chorus.* 'Tis Creon—he whom all desire to see.

*Œdipus.* I tremble, for I dread the trend of fate;  
My fearful heart is torn by two desires :  
Where joy with sorrow mingled lies in doubt 225  
The soul, uncertain, longing still to know,  
Still fears to know. Dear brother of my wife,  
If any hope thou bringst to wearied hearts,  
I pray thee now be swift to tell it me.

*Creon.* The oracle a doubtful answer gave. 230

*Œdipus.* Who gives us doubtful safety, gives us none.

*Creon.* The Delphic oracle is wont to hide  
Her secret meaning in a double sense.

*Œdipus.* Though it be doubtful, tell it, since to read  
Dark sayings is to Œdipus allowed. 235

*Creon.* The god commands that murder of the king  
Should be atoned by exile, Laius' death  
Avenged ; not otherwise shall cloudless day  
Arise, nor any breathe untainted air.

*Œdipus.* Who slew the noble king? what man is he  
Whom Phœbus names? Speak, that he may atone. 241

*Creon.* I pray it may not be unsafe to tell

The horrid tale of what I saw and heard.  
 A numbness lies upon my limbs, chill fear  
 Congeals my blood : when I, with suppliant feet, 245  
 Within the temple of Apollo came,  
 And with observance due had lifted up  
 Pure hands, and made my prayer, Parnassus' peak  
 Thundered, Apollo's drooping laurel shook,  
 And swayed its leaves, the holy stream that flows 250  
 From the Castalian fountain ceased ; the seer,  
 Moved by the god, shook back her unkempt locks,  
 Nor had she reached the cave when from its depths  
 A thundering voice greater than human came :  
 ' The kindly stars will not again return 255  
 To Cadmus' city till the stranger guest  
 Whom even as a child Apollo knew—  
 The stranger guilty of king Laius' death—  
 Shall flee from Dirce. Thou may'st not retain  
 The pleasant fruit of slaughter, long enjoyed ; 260  
 Thou with thyself shalt war, and shalt bequeath  
 War to thy sons, so basely hast thou turned  
 Again to her who bore thee.'

*Edipus.*

At command

I am prepared to do the god's behests,  
 For it is meet this man be offered up 265  
 To Laius' ashes, that the sanctity  
 Of kings be not by treachery profaned ;  
 For kings have need to guard the life of kings.  
 Him who alive was feared none think of dead.

*Creon.* 'Twas terror drove out thought of him who  
 died. 270

*Edipus.* Can any fear prevent a reverent care ?

*Creon.* The Sphinx, her gloomy song of threatened  
 crime.

*Edipus*  
*Creon*  
*de*  
*propria*  
*te*

*Œdipus.* This wrong, at heaven's command, shall be avenged.

Ye gods who look with favor on our realm,  
 Whoe'er ye be, both thou whose laws control 275  
 The whirling firmament, thou brightest star  
 Of heaven, who governest the twice six signs  
 Diversely, whose swift wheel rolls off slow time;  
 And thou Diana, wanderer through the dark,  
 Who still returnest to thy brother's side; 280  
 Thou too almighty ruler of the winds,  
 Who driv'st thy azure car through ocean's plains;  
 And thou whose dwelling shuns the holy light,  
 Be present. Grant that he who slew the king  
 May find no peaceful home, no household gods, 285  
 Nor hospitable land; may he lament  
 A shameful marriage, offspring odious;  
 Let him commit the crime from which I fled—  
 What worse could it be possible to wish?  
 Nor shall a place of grace remain for him. 290  
 I swear by this my kingdom, where I dwell  
 A guest, and by the kingdom that I left,  
 And by my household gods; by thee I swear,  
 Great father Neptune, who dost softly bathe  
 My dear land's double coast with gentle waves; 295  
 By thee I swear, who camest to inspire  
 The Delphic priestess' words of prophecy:  
 So may my father on his lofty throne  
 Live out his age secure in length of days,  
 And Merope no other marriage know 300  
 Than that of Polybus, as I will show  
 The guilty man no favor. Tell me where  
 The impious crime was done, did Laius fall  
 In open war or slain by treachery?

*Creon.* He sought the leafy grove, Castalia's fount,  
 Treading the way o'ergrown with thorny vines ; 306  
 From thence three roads stretch forth into the plain ;  
 One leads through Phocis, land to Bacchus dear,  
 Whence high Parnassus lifts its double peak  
 And, seeking heaven, rises from the fields 310  
 By gentle slopes ; another to the land  
 Of Sisyphus, whose shores two oceans wash ;  
 Into the valley lands of Olenos  
 The other leads, and, by a sinuous course  
 Meeting at last the wandering waters, slips 315  
 Across the cool ford of th' Elean stream ;  
 Here unexpectedly, when all seemed safe,  
 Robbers assailing, wrought the hidden crime.  
 But summoned by Apollo's oracle,  
 Tiresias comes in haste, with trembling steps, 320  
 And Manto, his companion, hither leads  
 The sightless seer.

## SCENE II

*Ædipus, Tiresias, Manto, Creon in the background.*

*Ædipus.* Near to Apollo, sacred to the god,  
 Speak, tell the answer ; whom does justice seek ?  
*Tiresias.* In truth it hardly fits thee, great-souled one,  
 To wonder that the tongue is slow to speak, 326  
 And asks delay ; truth, to the blind, lies hid.  
 Yet whither Phœbus or my country calls  
 I follow, and Apollo's oracle  
 Shall be made known. If youth's hot blood were mine,  
 I might receive the god within my breast ; 331  
 But to the altars bring the white-backed bulls

That never on their necks have borne the yoke ;  
 And thou, who to a father reft of light  
 Art guide, my daughter, tell me what the marks 335  
 Of the prophetic sacrifice.

*Manto.* There stands,  
 Fronting the altars, an abundant gift.

*Tiresias.* In hallowed words invoke the gods on high,  
 Heap up the altars with the fragrant gift  
 Of eastern incense.

*Manto.* On the sacred fire 340  
 The frankincense has been already cast.

*Tiresias.* What of the flame ? Has it yet seized the  
 gift ?

*Manto.* It shone a moment with a sudden light,  
 Then fell again as suddenly.

*Tiresias.* But say  
 If clear and bright the fire now burns, if shoots 345  
 To heaven a straight, pure flame, until its crest,  
 Upstreaming, melts away in liquid air ?  
 Or does it fluttering creep about the sides  
 And flicker dark with undulating smoke ?

*Manto.* Th' inconstant flame has not one form  
 alone : 350

As Iris, the rain-bearer, intertwines  
 Her various colors, and her bow, stretched forth  
 Across the heavens, by its painted arc  
 Announces showers—you may not tell the tints,  
 Blue mingles with the gold, then disappears 355  
 And glows again blood red, then sinks at last  
 Into the dark. The stubborn flame is split  
 In two, and one discordant half divides  
 Again. I shudder, father, at the sight !  
 To Bacchus the libation has been poured, 360

And see, it turns to blood ; a heavy smoke  
 O'erhangs the king, is densest round his head,  
 And hides the murky light with heavy cloud.  
 Father, what means it? Say.

*Tiresias.* What can I say?

Amid the tumult of a mind confused 365  
 I grope ; what shall I say? The ills are dire,  
 But hidden. By a less uncertain sign  
 The gods are wont to manifest their wrath ;  
 What is it that they wish yet do not wish  
 Should be revealed? Why hide they thus their wrath?  
 Something there surely is that shames the gods. 371  
 Bring near the victims, scatter on their necks  
 The salted meal : do they with placid mien  
 Suffer the priest's approach and lifted hand?

*Manto.* Turned toward the east, the bull throws  
 back his head, 375

Shrinks from the day, and, overcome with fear,  
 He dreads the sun's face and her radiant beams.

*Tiresias.* By one blow fall they, to the earth struck  
 down?

*Manto.* The heifer gave herself to death, o'erthrown  
 By the first blow ; the bull, by two strokes felled 380  
 Rolls madly here and there, until at last,  
 Wearied, his struggling life is forced away.

*Tiresias.* Springs the blood swiftly from a narrow  
 cut,

Or does it slowly moisten the deep wounds?

*Manto.* The blood in rivers from the heifer's side  
 Flows forth, but from the bull's deep wound the  
 stream 386

Is scant, though from his mouth and eyes there wells  
 Much blood.

*Tiresias.* An unpropitious sacrifice  
Foretells most terrible events. But say  
What signs undoubted do the entrails show? 390

*Manto.* My father, what is this? The inward parts  
Not with the wonted gentle quivering  
Are moved, but shake the hand in which they're held,  
And from the veins new blood flows forth; the heart  
Is sick and withered, and lies covered up; 395  
The veins are leaden blue, the bowels lack  
The greater part, the liver is decayed  
And covered up with froth of inky gall,  
And, omen ever fraught with ill for kings,  
See from the lobe two equal heads arise; 400  
A slender membrane covers either head  
Denying lurking place for hidden things;  
The hostile side in sturdy strength lifts up  
Its seven veins; all these an oblique ridge  
Cuts off, preventing them from turning back. 405  
Changed is the natural order, nothing lies  
Where it is wont, inverted is the whole:  
Not on the right is found the bloody lung,  
Breather of air, nor on the left the heart;  
Nor does the membrane with its soft embrace 410  
Surround the viscera's rich folds, no law  
Is here observed, and nature's ways are changed.  
Let us examine whence this order strange.  
What shocking prodigy is this I see?  
In a new place, an unaccustomed way, 415  
The fœtus of the unwed heifer fills  
The parent, moves its members with a moan,  
Stirs with a quivering motion its weak limbs;  
Black blood pollutes the tissues, the torn trunk  
Attempts to move, the lifeless heifer seeks 420



To rise and with its horns attack the priest ;  
 The entrails fly the hand ; that sound you hear  
 Is not the lowing of the noble herd,  
 Is not the voice of the affrighted flocks—  
 The altars shake, the altar-fires resound. 425

*Œdipus.* Say freely what these fearful signs presage,  
 Unfrighted shall my ears drink in thy words.

*Tiresias.* Those ills for which thou seekest help,  
 thou'lt grudge  
 Thyself to help.

*Œdipus.* Tell that high heaven ordains ;  
 What hand destroyed the king, defiled the realm ? 430

*Tiresias.* Alas, not wandering bird that on light wing  
 Cleaves the blue depth of heaven, nor fibre torn  
 From out the living breast can tell the name.  
 Another way must needs be found, the king  
 Must from the region of eternal night 435  
 Be called, must be sent forth from Erebus,  
 That he may name the author of his death ;  
 The earth must open and relentless Dis  
 Must be invoked, and hither must be brought  
 The dwellers of the nether Styx. Declare 440  
 To whom thou wilt this office delegate ;  
 For as the king 'tis not permitted thee  
 To see the land of shades.

*Œdipus.* This task demands,  
 Creon, thy care, for thou art next myself.

*Tiresias.* While open wide we lay the Stygian  
 depths, 445  
 Ye Thebans, raise a song in Bacchus' praise.

## SCENE III

*Chorus of Thebans.*

Wreathe with the nodding vine your flowing locks,  
Take the Nysean thyrsus in your hands.

O Bacchus, light and glory of the skies,  
Be present while the noblest in thy Thebes 450  
Raise supplicating hands and prayers to thee ;  
With favoring glance turn hitherward thy head  
So virginal, dispel with starry look  
The clouds, the menaces of Erebus  
And eager fate. To twine the flowing hair 455  
With vernal flowers well beseemeth thee ;  
To bind about thy head the Tyrian crown,  
Or wreath with berried ivy thy smooth brows ;  
To let thy loosened hair fall unrestrained,  
Or in a careful knot to bind it back. 460  
Thus didst thou grow, fearing a stepdame's wrath,  
Under false seeming ; wore thy flaxen locks  
In virgin fashion, girded up thy robe  
And flowing syrma ; thus the regions wild  
Of eastern lands, of men who drink the streams 465  
Of Ganges, or who break the Araxes' ice,  
Saw thee reclining in thy golden car,  
Thy lions half concealed beneath thy robe ;  
On his mean ass Silenus followed thee,  
His swollen temples with green vine leaves bound, 470  
And wanton priests thy hidden mysteries held.  
Thy company of Bassarids, thy band  
Of chosen followers led the Edonian dance.  
Now on Pangæus, now on Thracian soil  
Of Pindus' heights ; among the Cadmean dames 475

The Mænad, Theban Bacchus' comrade, came,  
 Her body with a sacred fawn skin girt,  
 The slender thyrsus in her waving hand.  
 The bacchanals who mangled Pentheus' limbs,  
 When madness left them and their limbs relaxed, 480  
 Gazed on their deed as on an unknown crime.

Surrounded by her train of ocean nymphs,  
 Cadmean Ino, shining Bacchus' aunt,  
 Rules o'er the ocean; and the wandering youth,  
 Divine Palæmon, Bacchus' kin, gives laws 485  
 That still the raging of the mighty deep.  
 Thee, when a child, Etrurian shepherds stole,  
 But Nereus stilled the raging of the sea—  
 Plane trees and laurel groves to Phœbus dear  
 Sprang green with early leaves, a garrulous bird 490  
 Sang in the branches, riotous ivy held  
 The oars, and vines o'erhung the lofty mast;  
 In the ship's prow the Idæan lion roared,  
 A tiger from the Ganges held the poop.  
 The frightened pirate leaped into the sea, 495  
 And as he sank a new form covered him—  
 A sinuous dolphin followed the swift ship.  
 Pactolus that with rushing waters sweeps  
 Its golden banks away, has carried thee  
 On its rich current; the Massagetes, 500  
 Who mix with blood their drink of milk, unbent  
 Their conquered bows and freed their Getan shafts;  
 Lycurgus' ax-armed people recognize  
 The sway of Bacchus; the wild Dacian land,  
 The wandering tribes that feel the north wind's blast,  
 The nations where the cold Mæotis flows, 506  
 And those on whom look down from heaven's heights  
 The wagons twain and star of Arcady

Have felt his power. The scattered Geloni  
He overcame, and took away their arms 510  
From the fierce maiden warriors by his might.  
The virgin troops that by Thermodon dwell,  
To Mænads turned, cast from them their light shafts  
And sank to earth with drooping face. The mount  
Of blest Cithæron flowed with Theban blood; 515  
And Prætus' daughters wandered in the woods;  
In Juno's presence Argos honored him;  
Naxos, surrounded by the Ægean sea,  
Brought him a maid deserted for his bride,  
And with a better husband thus replaced 520  
Her loss. The Bacchic river freely flowed  
From the dry rock, its bubbling rills divide  
The turf, the deep earth drank the honey's stream,  
And fountains of white milk and Lesbian wine  
Mingled with odorous thyme. 525  
Bacchus led up his bride to heaven's height;  
With loose hair, Phœbus sang the bridal song,  
Twin Cupids waved aloft the bridal torch;  
At Bacchus' coming Jove laid by his dart  
Of fire, and loathed the dreaded thunderbolt. 530  
As long as old earth's starry heavens turn,  
As long as ocean with its waves surrounds  
Th' encircled earth, and while the full-orbed moon  
Continues to relight her dying fires,  
As long as Lucifer foretells the dawn, 535  
As long as high Arcturus touches not  
The azure ocean, we will pay our vows  
To fair Lyæus' bright divinity.

## ACT III

### SCENE I

*Ædipus, Creon.*

*Ædipus.* Thy face betrays the signs of tears, but  
speak,  
Whose life must be an offering to the god? 540

*Creon.* Thou bid'st me tell what fear would have me  
hide.

*Ædipus.* If thou remain'st unmoved by suffering  
Thebes,  
Thy kindred's fallen scepter bids thee speak.

*Creon.* Thou'lt yearn to know not what thou fain  
would'st know.

*Ædipus.* A want of knowledge is an idle balm 545  
For ills. Would'st thou conceal the evidence  
That brings us public health?

*Creon.* When medicine  
Is bitter, painful is it to be healed.

*Ædipus.* Tell what thou heard'st or thou shalt learn  
to know,  
Conquered by heavy punishment, what power 550  
The weapons of an angry king may have.

*Creon.* Kings hate the words their own commands  
call forth.

*Ædipus.* Unless thy voice lay bare the oracle  
Thou shalt be sent to dusky Erebus,  
A sacrifice for all.

*Creon.* O grant the boon 555  
Of silence. Can a lesser liberty  
Be sought for from a king?

*Œdipus.* Such liberty  
Oft harms both king and kingdom more than words.

*Creon.* What boon is left when silence is forbid?

*Œdipus.* He weakens royal power who, told to speak,  
Keeps silence.

*Creon.* Hear unmoved, I pray, the words 561  
Forced from me.

*Œdipus.* What man, being urged to speak,  
Was ever punished for obedience?

*Creon.* Near the Dircean region of moist vales,  
Afar from Thebes, there stands an ilex grove, 565  
The cypress, ever green, lifts up its head  
Above the wood, and aged, spreading oaks  
Stretch out gnarled, rotten branches; wasting years  
Have rent the cypresses, and from their roots  
Great oaks have fall'n and lean 'gainst neighboring  
trunks; 570

The bitter-berried laurel, the slim lime,  
The Paphian myrtle, and the alder tree  
Destined to move as oars through the wide deep,  
The pine around whose slender bole the winds  
Play and whose summit stretches to the sun, 575  
Are here, and in their midst a mighty tree  
Spreads o'er the lesser grove its heavy shade,  
And darkens all beneath its spreading boughs.  
In shadow, knowing neither light nor sun,  
And stiff with everlasting frost, there lies 580  
A melancholy pool; an oozy swamp  
Surrounds the sluggish spring; here came the priest,  
Nor knew delay—the place itself brought night.

The earth was hollowed out and brands were laid,  
 Brands snatched from funeral pyres; the seer put on 585  
 The sombre robe and smote upon his brow,  
 Even to his feet his unkempt vestments flowed.  
 With mourning guise the sad old man advanced,  
 The gloomy yew upon his hoary locks.  
 Black two-year sheep were brought and jet-black bulls;  
 The flame destroyed the sacrifice, the sheep 591  
 That still were living feared the deadly fire.  
 Then he invoked the manes, thee invoked,  
 King of the shades, and him who blocks the gates  
 Of the Lethean waters; and his song 595  
 Rolled magically forth, wild threats he sang,  
 Compelled and calmed the airy shades, and poured  
 Offerings of blood, and burned the victims whole—  
 He saturated all the grot with blood.  
 Libations too with the left hand he poured 600  
 Of snow-white milk and wine, and sang again,  
 And looking down he called with dreadful voice  
 The manes. Hecate's train bayed back, the cave  
 Thrice grimly thundered, all the earth was moved.  
 'I have been heard,' the prophet said, 'my words 605  
 Have proved effectual, the dark abyss  
 Is broken open and a way is made  
 For Pluto's people to the upper air.'  
 The forest shook and lifted up its leaves,  
 The oaks were split, a shudder shook the grove, 610  
 Earth groaned and opened; either not unmoved  
 Could hell behold her hidden depths assailed,  
 Or earth, that she might give the dead a path,  
 Rent wide her surface, thundering, or the dog,  
 Three-headed Cerberus, in anger shook 615  
 His heavy chains. Earth yawned and opened wide

Her mighty breast, I saw the darksome lake  
 Amid the shades, I saw the pallid gods  
 And very night. My frozen blood stood still.  
 The savage band leaped forth, that warlike race 620  
 Of brothers sprung from Dirce's dragon's teeth,  
 Leaped into life full-armed ; th' Erinyes shrieked,  
 Horror, blind Fury, and whatever else  
 Eternal night creates and keeps concealed,—  
 Grief tearing out its hair, and dread disease 625  
 Propping its weary head, and dull old age,  
 And shrinking fear, and evil pestilence,  
 All eager to destroy the Theban land.  
 My spirit fainted ; Manto, who knew well  
 The ancient ceremonies, stood aghast ; 630  
 Her fearless father, by his blindness bold,  
 Called up from cruel Dis the bloodless throng—  
 Straightway they hover like a fleecy cloud,  
 And breathe free air beneath the open sky.  
 More than the falling leaves of Eryx' height, 635  
 Or flowers that bloom at Hybla in the spring  
 When bees swarm round them, more than waves that  
 break

Against the shores of the Ionian sea,  
 More than the birds that flee the Thracian cold  
 And, cleaving heaven, change the northern snows 640  
 For Nile's warm air, are they the prophet's voice  
 Evoked. The trembling spirits eagerly  
 Fly to the coverts of the leafy groves.  
 First Zethus rises from the earth, he grasps  
 The horns of a fierce bull in his right hand, 645  
 Then comes Amphion, whose left hand supports  
 The harp that with sweet music drew the rocks ;  
 The haughty child of Tantalus held up



Proudly among her sons her drooping head  
 And, safely glorying, beheld their shades ; 650  
 Insane Agave, yet more wretched, came,  
 The wild Bacchantes, who destroyed the king,  
 Behind her, and, still uttering horrid threats,  
 Poor, mangled Pentheus followed the mad train.  
 Often invoked, Laius last advanced 655  
 His shame-crowned head ; afar from all the train  
 He stands and hides himself ; the priest renewed  
 His Stygian prayers, until the shade revealed  
 To open day the face he fain would hide.  
 I tremble as I speak—with bloody limbs 660  
 Dreadful to look upon he stood, his hair  
 Unkempt and covered o'er with shameful filth.  
 With angry lips he spoke ; ' Cadmean house,  
 Savage and ever glad in kindred blood,  
 Shake the wild thyrsus, with inspired hand 665  
 'Twere better thou should'st rend thy sons ; the love  
 A mother bears her child is Thebes' worst crime.  
 Alas, my country, not by angry gods,  
 By sin art thou despoiled. No baleful wind  
 Breathed from the south it is that injures thee, 670  
 Nor does the earth, too little wet with showers,  
 Slay with dry breath ; a blood-stained king destroys,  
 Seizing upon a scepter, prize of crime,  
 And on his mother's marriage bed. Base son !  
 But yet more wretched than her son is she 675  
 Who twice was bearer of unhallowed seed.  
 He turned again to her who gave him birth  
 And has through her created odious sons,  
 Has done what beasts scarce do, unto himself  
 Begotten brothers,—evil intricate, 680  
 And prodigy more doubtful than his Sphinx.

O, thou who in thy right hand dost sustain  
 A bloody scepter, it is thee I seek,  
 And all thy realm ; a father unavenged,  
 I'll bring for bridesmaids to thy marriage-feast 685  
 The dread Erinyes, I will bring the scourge,  
 Thy home impure will ruin, crush thy house  
 With impious war. Drive therefore from thy land  
 In haste the exiled king, and let him bend  
 Whitherso'e'er he will his fatal steps ; 690  
 The earth will then grow green with flowery spring,  
 Her herbs revive, the vital air will breathe  
 Pure winds, and once again the forests know  
 Their former beauty. Ruin, pestilence,  
 Disaster, death, corruption, and distress, 695  
 His worthy henchmen, will with him depart ;  
 He shall desire with flying feet to leave  
 Our kingdom, but with wearisome delays  
 I'll stay his steps so he shall creep along  
 Uncertain of the road, shall grope his way 700  
 With the sad steps of age. Up, drive him forth  
 From earth—from heaven I will shut him out.

*Œdipus.* An icy trembling fills my flesh and bones,  
 Accused am I of doing what I feared ;  
 Merope joined with Polybus disproves 705  
 The crime of marriage ; Polybus unharmed  
 Absolves my hand from guilt of parricide ;  
 Father and mother prove me free from sin  
 Of murder and adultery, what room  
 Remains for crime? Thebes mourned for Laius'  
 death 710

Long ere my foot had touched Bœotia's land.  
 Is the seer mocked, or is the god himself  
 Faithless to troubled Thebes? Ah, now I know

The shrewd accomplices in guile ; the seer  
 Invents this lie, using the gods as cloak, 715  
 And promises my scepter shall be thine. [*To Creon.*]

*Creon.* Could I then wish my sister thus dethroned ?  
 If sacred ties of kinship held me not  
 Within my station, yet would Fortune's self,  
 Too often tempted, make me fear such deed. 720  
 Now may'st thou lay aside the weight of power,  
 Nor, laying it aside, be crushed. Oh, take  
 In safety now a place of lower rank.

*Ædipus.* Thou counselest me freely lay aside  
 This heavy scepter ?

*Creon.* Those who still might choose 725  
 I would advise, but thou must bear thy lot.

*Ædipus.* For those who wish to rule, the surest way  
 Is praise of moderate fortunes, ease, and sleep ;  
 The restless often counterfeit such calm. 729

*Creon.* Is faith so long maintained so little worth ?

*Ædipus.* Pretended faith has oftentimes made safe  
 The pathway to perfidious faithlessness.

*Creon.* Set free from all the burdens of the crown,  
 I still enjoy the benefits of power ;  
 The citizens come thronging to my door, 735  
 And no day rises with alternate change  
 On which our lares are not overflowed  
 With gifts from royal kindred : splendid feasts,  
 Rich clothing, safety by my favor won,  
 And countless offerings. Could I deem I lacked 740  
 Aught in such happy fortunes ?

*Ædipus.* Those thus blessed  
 Lack ever moderation.

*Creon.* Shall I then  
 Fall as if guilty, though my cause unheard ?

*Œdipus.* Has my life's fate been fully told to thee,  
Or has Tiresias heard me plead my cause ? 745  
Yet seem I guilty. Ye have led the way,  
I follow.

*Creon.* What if I am innocent ?

*Œdipus.* Kings ever fear uncertainty no less  
Than certain evils.

*Creon.* He whom empty fears  
Alarm, deserves the true.

*Œdipus.* Who once has sinned, 750  
When pardoned comes to be an enemy.  
Let all that's doubtful fall.

*Creon.* Thus enmity  
Is gendered.

*Œdipus.* He who fears such hate too much  
Has never learned to rule ; fear guards the realm.

*Creon.* The king who holds his throne with cruel  
sway 755  
Must fear the fearful ; on its author's head  
Will fear return.

*Œdipus.* [*To his followers.*] Shut up the criminal  
Within a rocky cave, and guard him well.  
I go to seek again my palace walls.

## SCENE II

*Chorus.*

Thou art not author of our many woes, 760  
'Tis not for thee Fate seeks Thebes' royal house ;  
'Tis the gods' ancient wrath pursues us still,  
Castalia's grove to the Sidonian guest

Gave shelter, Tyrian colonists were bathed  
 By Dirce's fount, when great Agenor's son, 765  
 Weary of seeking over all the world  
 The sister Jove had ravished, stood afraid  
 Beneath our trees, adoring Jove himself:  
 At Phœbus' bidding he forsook his flight,  
 Followed the footsteps of the straying cow 770  
 That never yet had felt the ploughshare's weight  
 Nor bent beneath the great cart's curving yoke;  
 He from the fatal heifer gave a name  
 To the new people. Since that time the land  
 Has ever borne new monsters; the dread snake, 775  
 Born in deep valley, o'er the aged oaks  
 Hisses, and rears above the pines its head,  
 While on the ground its greater length is spread;  
 Or earth by birth unnatural brings forth  
 That armored host: from winding horn there went 780  
 The signal, from the trumpet's twisted brass  
 The strident note, but not before the band  
 Had tried their ready lips with warlike noise  
 Of unknown speech. The field by kindred hosts  
 Was held, fit offspring of the scattered seed; 785  
 They measured out their life in one short day—  
 After the day-star paled were born, and fell  
 Ere Hesperus had risen. Horror seized  
 The stranger at such marvels, and he feared  
 The new-born nations' war, until they died 790  
 And earth, their mother, saw the sons she bore  
 Returned within her lap. Let civil war  
 Rise thence, and let the Thebes of Hercules  
 From them learn bitter fratricidal wars.  
 Why tell the lot that Cadmus' grandson bore, 795  
 When with the antlers of the longlived stag

His brow was hidden, and the hounds pursued  
Their master? Swift Actæon headlong fled  
Through woods and mountains, and, 'mid fields and  
rocks

Roaming with nimble feet, he feared to see 800  
A feather moved by Zephyr, feared the toils  
Himself had placed ; and, mirrored in the waves  
Of the untroubled fountain where had bathed  
The virgin goddess bitterly ashamed,  
He saw reflected bestial form and horns. 805

## ACT IV

### SCENE I

*Œdipus, Jocasta.*

*Œdipus.* My mind is full of cares which fear recalls.  
The gods of heaven and hell deem Laius slain  
By crime of mine, but still my guiltless soul,  
Known better to myself than to the gods,  
Denies the charge ; yet memory recalls 810  
Faintly how with my lifted staff I felled  
And gave to Dis that proud old man whose car  
Hindered my path ; but far from Thebes he fell  
Where in Phocæa's plain three pathways meet.  
I pray thee solve the riddle, dear-loved wife : 815  
Dying, how many years had Laius lived ?  
Fell he in bloom of youth, or weak with age ?

*Jocasta.* 'Twixt youth and age, but somewhat  
nearer age.

*Œdipus.* Were many in the train that followed him ?

*Jocasta.* Uncertain of the way, the greater part  
Were lost, a faithful few alone remained 821  
Beside his car.

*Œdipus.* Did any others fall,  
Partakers of the royal fate ?

*Jocasta.* Alas !  
One brave and faithful follower shared his lot. 824

*Œdipus.* Still I seem guilty. Number, place, agree.  
But when—

*Jocasta.* Since then ten harvests have been reaped.

## SCENE II

*Œdipus, An Old Citizen of Corinth.*

*Corinthian.* [To *Œdipus.*] King Polybus has found  
eternal rest,

And Corinth calls thee to thy father's throne.

*Œdipus.* How fortune buffets me on every side!

Tell me, I pray thee, by what fate he fell. 830

*Corinthian.* A quiet sleep set free the old man's  
soul.

*Œdipus.* Not murdered and yet dead my father lies.  
Bear witness: fearless now of any crime,  
As fits a son, I may lift up pure hands  
To heaven.—But of the destiny foretold 835  
That which I most have need to fear remains.

*Corinthian.* Thy father's throne will banish every  
fear.

*Œdipus.* My father's throne I willingly would take,  
But fear my mother.

*Corinthian.* Canst thou be afraid  
Of her who anxiously for thy return 840  
Is waiting?

*Œdipus.* Filial love has made me flee.

*Corinthian.* And wouldst thou leave her widowed?

*Œdipus.* Thou hast named  
The thing I dread.

*Corinthian.* Reveal the hidden fear  
That weighs upon thy mind, for I am wont  
To guard the secrets of my lords.

*Œdipus.* Alas! 845  
Warned by the Delphic oracle, I fear  
A mother's marriage bed.



*Corinthian.* Thy empty fears  
Put by, no longer tremble, Merope  
Was not thy mother.

*Ædipus.* In a spurious son  
What gain was hoped for?

*Corinthian.* Children make more firm 850  
A kingdom's proud security.

*Ædipus.* What means  
Hadst thou to learn the secrets of the bed?

*Corinthian.* A child, I gave thee to thy mother's  
arms.

*Ædipus.* Thou gavest me to her; who gave me  
thee?

*Corinthian.* A shepherd from Cithæron's snowy  
top. 855

*Ædipus.* What fortune took thee to those wooded  
heights?

*Corinthian.* I followed on the hills my horned flock.

*Ædipus.* Show some undoubted marks upon my  
flesh.

*Corinthian.* Thou borest deep-cut scars of iron  
bonds,

And from thy bruised and swollen feet arose 860  
Thy name.

*Ædipus.* Again I ask, what man was he  
Who gave my body to thee for a gift?

*Corinthian.* He fed the royal flocks and under him  
Was placed a company of humbler men.

*Ædipus.* His name?

*Corinthian.* Our earliest recollections fail 865  
With age, and, wearied, slip away with years.

*Ædipus.* Shouldst thou be able by his face and  
form

Sec. 1  
Sec. 2  
Sec. 3

To know again the man?

*Corinthian.* Perchance I might ;  
A trifle oft calls back a thing forgot.

*Œdipus.* Assemble all the herdsmen and their  
flocks 870

Before the altars ; slaves, go, hither call  
Swiftly the men who shepherd all the flock.

*Corinthian.* Permit the thing so long a time  
unknown

Still to lie hid, for often fraught with ill  
Is truth for him who drags her to the light. 875

*Œdipus.* What greater ill than this is possible?

*Corinthian.* That must be great which is with great  
toil sought.

Here meet the public safety and thy own,  
The two are equal, take a middle path ;  
Seek nothing, let the fates unfold themselves. 880

*Œdipus.* He who disturbs auspicious fate does ill,  
But when affairs are at their last extreme  
One acts with safety.

*Corinthian.* Seekest thou a race  
Nobler than that of kings? Look lest thou loathe  
When thou hast found thy parents.

*Œdipus.* I will know 885  
My birth, although it prove of little worth.

But Phorbas, keeper of the royal flocks,  
Comes ; dost thou know the old man's name or face?

*Corinthian.* His form awakes a memory, but his face  
Is yet not clearly known, though not unknown. 890

## SCENE III

*Œdipus, Corinthian, Phorbas.*

*Corinthian.* Didst thou upon Cithæron's summits  
herd

The fruitful flock when Laius ruled in Thebes?

*Phorbas.* Cithæron gave each summer to our flocks  
Her fertile meadows and rich pasturage. 894

*Corinthian.* Dost thou not know me?

*Phorbas.* Dimly I recall—

*Œdipus.* Speak, didst thou ever give to him a child?  
Thy cheeks change color, dost thou hesitate?  
What answer seekest thou? Truth shuns delay.

*Phorbas.* Thou stirrest memories that time had  
dimmed.

*Œdipus.* Speak out, lest pain compel thee to the  
truth. 900

*Phorbas.* I gave this man the child—a useless gift,  
The boy could not enjoy the light of heaven.

*Corinthian.* Far be the omen! Still he lives and  
still

Long may he live!

*Œdipus.* Why sayest thou the child  
No longer lives?

*Phorbas.* His tender limbs were bound 905  
By iron bonds that pierced through both his feet,  
The wound had caused a swelling, and the flesh  
Was even then by foul corruption touched.

*Œdipus.* [*Aside.*] What wouldst thou further? Do  
the fates draw near?

[*To Phorbas.*] Who was the child?

*Phorbas.* A promise seals my lips. 910

*Œdipus.* What, ho! bring fire; let flames draw  
forth the truth.

*Phorbas.* Through such inhuman ways shall truth  
be sought?

I pray thee, be content with ignorance.

*Œdipus.* If fierce I seem to thee, and uncontrolled,  
Thou hast a ready vengeance. Speak the truth, 915  
Who was the child? What mother gave him birth?  
His father, who?

*Phorbas.* His mother is thy wife.

*Œdipus.* Earth, open! Prince of darkness, king  
of shades,

Take back to shades Tartarean the fate  
That overthrows the laws of lineage! 920

Cast stones at this base head, ye men of Thebes;  
Slay me with darts; let sons and fathers come  
With lifted sword; ye brothers, husbands, wives,  
Take arms against me; and ye, plague-sick men,  
Snatch from the pyres the brands to hurl at me. 925

A shame to men and hated of the gods  
I wander, overthrowing holy laws,  
Already worthy death when breathing first  
The unfamiliar air. Give back at last  
Thy baneful life; dare now to do some deed 930  
Worthy thy crimes; haste with swift steps to seek  
The royal palace, wish thy mother joy  
Of home and children.

## SCENE IV

*Chorus.*

If I could govern at my will my lot,  
 Soft Zephyr only on my sails should blow, 935  
 Nor should my trembling sailyards feel the gale ;  
 A light and soft-breathed air should gently waft  
 My fearless boat ; my path of life should lie  
 Along the safe mid course. The foolish youth  
 Who feared the Cretan king, to untried ways 940  
 Trusted himself, sought like true bird to guide  
 Through air his flight, but with unnatural wings :  
 He gave the waters where he fell a name.  
 Old Dædalus more shrewdly winged his way  
 Through middle air, and, stooping 'neath the clouds,  
 Waited his nursling (as the bird collects 946  
 Its scattered young that fly the hawk in fear)  
 Until the boy, in ocean struggling, moved  
 Hands he had shackled for his daring flight.  
 Whoever dares just limits to exceed 950  
 Hangs poised in place unsure. But what is this ?  
 The door creaks, see, the palace servant comes ;  
 He sadly shakes his head. [*To the servant.*] What  
 word dost bring ?

## ACT V

### SCENE I

*Chorus, Messenger.*

*Messenger.* When overtaken by his fate foretold,  
He recognized his loathsome origin, 955  
And stood convicted of his crime, the king  
Condemned himself and sought with hasty steps  
The hated house. So rages through the land  
The Lybian lion that with threatening front 959  
Shakes back its tawny mane. His eyes were wild,  
His face with anger stern; he sighed and groaned  
And over all his limbs a cold sweat ran;  
His foaming lips gave forth mad threatenings,  
His anguish overflowed, and in its depths 964  
O'erwhelmed him; raging, with himself he planned  
Some evil monstrous as his monstrous fate.  
'Why hinder punishment,' he cried, 'the sword  
Should pierce this cursed breast; with scorching flame  
Or stones let one subdue it; what fierce bird,  
What tiger will upon my vitals feed? 970  
Thou that hast been a harbor wide of crime,  
Sacred Cithæron, from thy forests send  
Wild beasts or rabid dogs to do me ill.  
Give back Agave. Soul, why fear'st thou death?  
'Tis death alone can snatch me from my fate 975  
Guiltless.' He spoke and on his sword-hilt leaned  
His impious hand, and drew the sword;—'To die,—

Canst thou with such brief punishment atone  
 Crimes such as thine ; with one blow pay for all ?  
 Die ! For thy father, surely 'tis enough.— 980  
 But for thy mother, for the loathsome sons  
 Thou causedst to see light, thy mourning land  
 Which suffers for thy crime with widespread death ;  
 What wilt thou give for these ? Thou canst not pay ;  
 Thou art a bankrupt. Nature's very self, 985  
 Who, Œdipus, for thee alone reversed  
 Her changeless laws of birth, for thee must find  
 New punishment. Oh, could I live again,  
 And die again, and ever be reborn,  
 And offered ever to new punishment ! 990  
 Poor wretch, thy subtlest wit is needful here,  
 The punishment that only once can fall  
 Must be enduring ; slow death must be sought.  
 Find out a place where mingled with the dead  
 Yet far from those who live, thou mayest roam. 995  
 Die, but not with thy father's death ! My soul,  
 Delayest thou ?' A sudden rain of tears  
 O'erflowed his face, his cheeks were wet with grief.  
 'Is it enough to weep ? Enough that thus  
 My eyes should flow with tears ? The eyes themselves  
 Shall follow, from their sockets shall be torn ; 1001  
 Ye gods of marriage, is not this enough ?'  
 His threat'ning face with savage fire glowed red,  
 His eyeballs hardly seemed to hold their place  
 Within their sockets ; furious, desperate, 1005  
 Enraged of mien and wild, he cried aloud,  
 And turned his vengeful hand against himself ;  
 His eyes expectant stood, and willingly  
 Followed his fingers, rushed to meet the wound.  
 With eagerness his crook'd hands sought his eyes, 1010

Digged out the eyeballs by their deepest roots,  
 Then, lingering still within the vacant space,  
 Tore with their nails the empty sockets' folds  
 And hollow corners, raging overmuch  
 And vainly. Then he raised his head to seek 1015  
 The day, and scanning heaven with sightless eyes  
 Found night; whatever from his mangled brow  
 Still hung he rent away, and conquering cried  
 To all the gods: 'Behold, I pray thee, spare  
 My country, I have paid the debt was due, 1020  
 Have borne the penalty was merited;  
 A night that fits my marriage has been found.'  
 Foul drops bedewed his face, his mangled head  
 Poured from the broken veins a stream of blood.

*Chorus.* The sport of fate are we, yield then to fate.  
 Unquiet cares ne'er changed that distaff's thread, 1026  
 Whatever we, the race of men, endure,  
 Whatever we may do, comes from above;  
 Lachesis, with a hand that turns not back  
 Her distaff, spinneth out the thread of life; 1030  
 All walk a path prepared, and man's first day  
 Foretells his last; not Jupiter himself  
 May make the spindle of the fates turn back;  
 The order of her turning, fixed for all,  
 No prayers can change. Fear oftentimes has proved  
 To many fatal, many meet their fate 1036  
 When most they fear and shun it. Hark, the gates  
 Open, the sightless king comes sadly forth  
 Without a leader.



## SCENE II

*Œdipus, Chorus.*

*Œdipus.* 'Tis well ; 'tis finished ; I have paid in  
full 1040

All that was due my father. Welcome night !  
What god appeased has scattered on my head  
Black darkness ? Who forgives the criminal ?  
I have escaped the day's all-seeing eye.  
The murderer of thy father to thy hand 1045  
Owes nothing. Light has fled thee ; such a face  
Is meet for Œdipus.

*Chorus.* Behold ! Behold !  
Jocasta rushes forth, with rapid steps,  
Frantic and wild ; thus wild and frantic once  
A Theban mother rent her son and learned, 1050  
Too late, her crime. She fears and hesitates,  
Yet longs to speak to the afflicted king.  
Her shame gives place to sorrow, but her words  
Come hesitating from her lips.

## SCENE III

*Œdipus, Jocasta, Chorus.*

*Jocasta.* What shall I call thee ? Son ? Why  
hesitate ? 1055  
Thou art my son, why blush to hear the name ?  
Speak to me, son, although unwillingly ;—  
Why turn away thy head, thy sightless eyes ?  
*Œdipus.* Who is it who forbids me to enjoy

My darkness, gives me back again my sight? 1060  
 A mother's voice! Alas, my work is lost!  
 It is no longer lawful we should meet;  
 Vast seas shall separate the criminals,  
 And unknown lands shall part them; and if one  
 Stay here, the other under alien stars 1065  
 And distant suns must dwell.

*Jocasta.* The fault was Fate's, *Am v*  
None sins in living out his destiny.

*Œdipus.* O mother, spare thy words, and spare my  
 ears;  
 By what remains of this my mangled form,  
 By all the fatal tokens of our race, 1070  
 By all the good and evil of our name,  
 I do beseech thee.

*Jocasta.* What, my soul, dost sleep?  
 Why to the sharer of his crime refuse  
 Due punishment? Incestuous one, through thee  
 The beauty of the laws of human kind, 1075  
 Confused, hath perished; die, and let the sword  
 Cut short thy sinful life. If, shaking heaven,  
 The father of the gods himself should hurl  
 With savage hand his flashing thunderbolt,  
 A mother infamous, I could not still 1080  
 Endure sufficient penalty for crime.  
 I long to die, let but a way be found;  
 If thou hast slain thy father, lend thy hand  
 No less to me thy mother. This last deed  
 Remains; draw now thy sword, by that sword fell 1085  
 My husband. Why not freely speak his name?  
 He is my husband's father,—shall I thrust  
 Within my breast the sword, or plunge it deep  
 Into my ready throat? Ah, knowest thou not

To choose the place where thou shalt strike the blow?  
 Seek out, my hand, the fruitful womb that bore 1091  
 Husband and sons.

*Chorus.* She falls, struck down by death ;  
 Her hand still lingers in the wound, the blood  
 Drives out the sword.

*Œdipus.* Foreteller of the truth,  
 And god of truth, I make my prayer to thee : 1095  
 Only a father's murder was foretold,  
 But twice a parricide, beyond my fear  
 Guilty, I've slain my mother ; she lies dead  
 Through this my guilt. O Phœbus, lying god,  
 I have exceeded all the ills foretold. 1100  
 With fearful steps tread now thy gloomy way ;  
 Through nights obscure, with hesitating feet,  
 Advance and with thy trembling hand feel out  
 Thy pathway ; hasten on with trembling steps ;  
 Fly hence !—Yet stay, lest o'er thy mother's corpse  
 Thou fall. Ye weary ones, with fell disease 1106  
 Burdened, behold I go ; draw breath again,  
 Lift up your heads : a milder sky will shine  
 When I am gone ; whoever still retains  
 His life, though weak and prostrate, still shall draw  
 Lightly the breath of life. Hence, end thy work ! 1111  
 The earth's death-dealing poison I will take ;  
 Harsh fates, the black and haggard plague, the chill  
 Of dreadful sickness, and wild grief shall come  
 With me,—with me! Such guides for me are meet. 1115

# AGAMEMNON

*DRAMATIS PERSONÆ*

GHOST OF THYESTES.

AGAMEMNON.

ÆGISTHUS.

EURYBATES.

STROPHIUS.

ORESTES.

PYLADES.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

ELECTRA.

CASSANDRA.

NURSE OF CLYTEMNESTRA.

CHORUS OF TROJAN WOMEN

CHORUS OF ARGIVE WOMEN.

*SCENE: Before the palace of Agamemnon.*

# AGAMEMNON

## ACT I

### SCENE I

#### *The Ghost of Thyestes.*

LEAVING the dark abode of gods of hell,  
I come from depths profound of Tartarus,  
Uncertain which abode I hate the more ;  
Thyestes flees both heaven and hell. My soul  
Is filled with dread, I tremble ; lo, I see 5  
My father's home—nay, more, my brother's home !  
This is the portal of the ancient house  
Of Pelops ; here Pelasgia's kingly crown  
Is consecrated ; here upon their throne  
They sit who wield the scepter, this the place 10  
Where meets the great assembly, this the place  
Of feasting. I am glad I have returned !  
Were it not better by the mournful streams  
To dwell ? Were not the watch-dog of the Styx  
That shakes his threefold necks and inky manes 15  
Better ? Where, bound upon the flying wheel,  
That form is borne ; where oft that useless toil  
By the still backward rolling wheel is mocked ;  
Where on the heart that ever grows anew  
The eager birds feed ever ; where, consumed 20  
With burning thirst, he stands amid the waves

Whose lips deceived still seek the flying stream,  
 Grim penalty for other feasts— how small  
 Compared with ours is that old man's crime !  
 Let us consider all those guilty ones 25  
 Who by the Gnosian judge have been condemned :  
 Thyestes overtops them all in crime.  
 By my own brother I was overcome,  
 With my three sons was sated, they in me  
 Have found a sepulcher ; my flesh and blood 30  
 I ate. And not this only ; Fortune stained  
 The father, but another, greater crime  
 Was added to that sin—Fate bade me seek  
 With my own daughter union infamous ;  
 Nor did I, fearful, shrink from her behest, 35  
 I did the deed. So, that I might make use  
 Of flesh of all my children, she, my child,  
 Compelled by fate, bore fruit of me, her sire,  
 Most worthy. So is nature backward turned ;  
 So have I by my crime confusion made, 40  
 Have father's father with the father blent,  
 The father with the husband, with the son  
 The grandson, day with night ! But now, though late,  
 And coming after death to one long tried  
 With evil fortunes, the dark prophecy's 45  
 Uncertain promise is at length fulfilled.  
 The king of kings, the one of leaders lord,  
 Dread Agamemnon, following whose flag  
 A thousand vessels broidered with their sails  
 The Trojan seas, now, after ten long years, 50  
 Troy being conquered, is at home again,  
 About to give him to his wife's embrace.  
 Now shall the house in blood of vengeance swim :  
 I see sword, spear, and battle-ax ; I see

The royal head divided by the blow 55  
 Of two-edged ax, already crimes are near,  
 Already guile, blood, slaughter ; yea, and feasts  
 Are spread. Ægisthus, now the hour draws nigh  
 For which thou wast begot. Why droops the head  
 In shame? Why, doubtful, shrinks the trembling  
 hand? 60

Why with thyself take counsel, turn away,  
 And ask if this is right for thee to do?  
 Behold thy mother ; know that it is so.  
 Why suddenly does summer's fleeting night  
 Linger as does the winter's longer dark? 65  
 Why holds it in the sky the failing stars?  
 Do I delay the coming of the sun?

↳ Let daylight to the world return again. [Goes out.]

## SCENE II

### *Chorus of Argive Women.*

O Fortune, how deceitful are thy gifts!  
 The lofty thou dost place in doubtful seats 70  
 And hazardous, the sceptered never know  
 A rest serene, nor can they for a day  
 Be certain of their power, care on care  
 Fatigues them, ever new storms vex their souls.  
 The waters of the Libyan Syrtes rage 75  
 Less wildly in the change of ebb and flood ;  
 Less wildly from its lowest depths heaved up,  
 Surges the water of the Euxine sea,  
 Northward, where never dipped in waters blue  
 Boötes drives his starry wain, than turns 80  
 The headlong fate of kings on Fortune's wheel.



All things that make them fear, they long to have  
 Yet tremble to possess ; refreshing night  
 Brings not to them repose, and conquering sleep  
 Frees not their breasts from care. What citadel 85  
 Has not by mutual treachery been o'erthrown,  
 Or vexed by impious war? Law, modesty,  
 The sacred faithfulness of marriage vows,  
 Forsake the court ; with hand that thirsts for blood,  
 Bellona, baleful goddess, follows it, 90  
 And follows, too, that fury who inflames  
 The proud, attendant on those o'er-proud homes  
 That from their lofty height shall sometime fall.  
 If arms were idle and deceit should cease,  
 They yet would sink beneath their very weight, 95  
 And fortune underneath its own load fail.  
 The sails on which the favoring south wind blows  
 Too fiercely fear the breeze ; the lofty tower  
 Whose summit pierces to the very clouds  
 Is beaten by the tempests, and the grove 100  
 That spreads abroad its heavy shadow sees  
 Its old oaks shattered ; lofty halls are struck  
 By thunderbolts ; great bodies are exposed  
 The more to sickness, when the lean herds roam  
 The arid pastures ; 'tis the broadest back 105  
 That feels the wound.  
 Whatever Fortune to the heights has raised  
 Is lifted up but for a deeper fall,  
 But moderate possessions longer bide.  
 Happy the man contented with his lot 110  
 Among the common throng, who skirts the shore  
 Before safe winds, and, daring not to trust  
 His vessel to the open ocean, sails  
 Near land.

## ACT II

### SCENE I

*Clytemnestra, Nurse.*

*Clytemnestra.* Why waver, slow of heart? Why  
seek safe plans? 115

The better way is closed. Unstained I kept  
My marriage vows, my widowed scepter held  
In chaste fidelity ; now, virtue, law,  
Fidelity and honor, piety,  
And modesty which gone comes not again, 120  
All these have perished. Give the rein to lust,  
Let loose thy passions, crime must make crime safe.  
Whatever faithless wife, with secret love  
Made mad, whatever stepdame's hand, has dared ;  
Whate'er that ardent and unnatural maid 125  
Who fled from Colchis in Thessalian boat  
Has dared : sword, poison.—With thy lover leave  
Mycena and thy home in secret flight !  
Why, timid one, of secrecy, and flight,  
And exile, speak? Those things thy sister sought, 130  
A greater crime is more befitting thee.

*Nurse.* O Argive queen, of Leda's race renowned,  
Why broodest thou in silence? Of control  
Impatient, why with swelling heart resolve  
So fiercely? Thou art silent, but thy grief 135  
Speaks in thy face ; therefore, whate'er it be,

Give thyself time and space ; delay oft heals  
 What reason cannot heal.

*Clytemnestra.* So great the pains  
 That torture me, I cannot brook delay.  
 The flames are burning up my heart and reins ; 140  
 Fear, mingled with my grief, applies the scourge ;  
 Hate drives me on, and base desire's yoke  
 Presses upon me, nor will be denied.  
 And midst the fires that thus besiege my soul,  
 Shame, wearied, sunken, conquered, once again 145  
 Rises. By varying tempests am I driven !  
 As when the winds and tides drive different ways  
 The depths of ocean, and the doubtful seas  
 Know not to whether evil they must bow,  
 So I have dropped the rudder from my hands, 150  
 And wheresoever rage, or hope, or grief  
 May bear me, thither do I go ; my boat  
 Is given to the waves. When one knows not  
 The way, 'tis best to follow chance.

*Nurse.* Who seeks  
 In chance a leader, he is blindly rash. 155  
*Clytemnestra.* He has no need to fear a doubtful  
 chance,  
 Whose fortunes are at lowest ebb.

*Nurse.* Thy crime  
 Will be unknown and safe, if so thou wilt.  
*Clytemnestra.* The sins of royal houses shine abroad.  
*Nurse.* Repentest thou the old crime, planning  
 yet 160

A new ?

*Clytemnestra.* The man is fool indeed who keeps  
 A limit in his sinning.

*Nurse.* He, who hides

His crime with crime, increases what he fears.

*Clytemnestra.* The sword and fire are oft best medicine.

*Nurse.* But no one tries at first the uttermost. 165

*Clytemnestra.* In evil one must seize the quickest way.

*Nurse.* Ah, let the sacred name of wife deter.

*Clytemnestra.* For ten years looked I on my husband's face?

*Nurse.* The children that thou barest him call to mind.

*Clytemnestra.* My daughter's marriage torches I recall, 170

My son-in-law Achilles. Here, indeed,

Maternal faithfulness abides.

*Nurse.* She freed  
From long delay the fleet becalmed, she stirred  
The sluggish languor of the moveless sea.

*Clytemnestra.* O grief, O shame! A child of Tyndarus, 175

Of heavenly race, I bore a child to be  
A lustral offering for the Doric fleet!  
I think upon my daughter's marriage-bed,  
Which, worthy Pelop's house, was then prepared  
When he, her father, at the altar stood, 180

The sacrificing priest! What nuptial fires!  
The prophet Calchas at his own response  
Recoiled, the altars shrank away. O house,  
Still overcoming crime with crime, with blood  
We purchase favoring winds, buy war with death. 185  
But were a thousand ships by her death freed,  
The ships were not set free by favoring god,  
'Twas Aulis drove the impious vessels forth.

With auspices like these he wages not  
 A warfare fortunate. A slave's slave made 190  
 By love, unmoved by prayers, that old man held  
 The booty from Apollo Smintheus torn,  
 Already burning for the sacred maid.  
 Dauntless Achilles could not with his threats  
 Bend him, nor he who saw (none else) earth's fate— 195  
 The prophet to us faithful, to the slave  
 Most mild, nor troubled people, nor the pyres  
 Relighted. Conquered, though by no foe's hand,  
 Midst the last ruins of the falling Greeks  
 He slept, had time for lust, renewed his loves. 200  
 Nor ever was his lonely couch unpressed  
 By barbarous mistress; he it was who took  
 The virgin of Lernessus, rightful spoil  
 Of great Achilles, not ashamed to seize  
 The maiden from the hero's bosom torn. 205  
 Lo, this is Priam's enemy! And now  
 He feels again the wounds of love, inflamed  
 With passion for the Phrygian prophetess;  
 The winner of the Trojan trophies turns  
 Again toward Ilium, husband of a slave, 210  
 And son-in-law of Priam! Up, my soul!  
 No easy war is that thou now wouldst wage!  
 Crime must be used. O weak and slow of heart,  
 What day dost thou await? Till Phrygian maid  
 Shall hold the scepter in great Pelop's house? 215  
 Do orphaned virgins keep thee still at home?  
 Or does Orestes keep thee, he so like  
 His father? All the ill about to come  
 Upon them, all the storms that overhang,  
 Shall move thee. Wretched one, why longer pause? 220  
 The raging stepdame of thy sons is here.

If thou canst do no otherwise, the sword  
Shall pierce thy side, shall slay both thee and him.  
Now mingle blood with blood ; in dying, kill  
Thy husband ; 'tis not misery to die, 225  
When thou art with thy enemy destroyed.

*Nurse.* Queen, curb thy spirit, cease from wrath,  
recall

How great the day : he comes, the conqueror  
Of savage Asia, Europe's punisher,  
Who drags in triumph captured Pergamus 230  
And Phrygians all too long victorious.  
Wouldst thou with secret crime attack him now,  
Whom Hercules, although his eager hand  
Was grimly armed, touched not with cruel sword,  
Nor Ajax, though he deemed that death was sure, 235  
Nor Hector, to the Greeks the sole delay  
In war, nor Paris' weapon surely aimed,  
Nor Memnon black, nor Xanthus bearing down  
Bodies and armor mingled in its waves,  
Nor Simois' stream that flowed encarnadined 240  
With slaughter, nor the ocean god's white son,  
Cygnus, nor Thracian phalanx led to war  
By Rhesus, nor the bucklered Amazon  
With ax and quiver? Dost thou think to slay  
This one, returned? To stain with murder base 245  
The altars? Will victorious Greece endure  
This crime and not avenge? See now the steeds,  
And weapons, and the sea thick strewn with ships,  
The soil with blood of noble Greeks made wet,  
And all the fate of Troy, turned back on us! 250  
Restrain thy fiery passion, calm thy soul.

## SCENE II

*Ægisthus, Clytemnestra, Nurse.*

*Ægisthus.* The time that ever with my heart and  
soul

I feared, is here indeed—for me the end.  
Why turn away? Why, at the first attack,  
Lay down thy arms? Thou mayest certain be 255  
That vengeful gods prepare a fearful fate  
And dread disaster for thee. Thy vile head  
Make bare, Ægisthus, for all martyrdoms ;  
Receive with ready breast the sword and flame ;  
One finds in death so met no punishment. 260  
My comrade oft in danger, Leda's child,  
Be thou my ally now ; that leader base,  
That father harsh, shall give thee blood for blood.  
But wherefore dost thou tremble? Wherefore flies  
A pallor to thy cheeks? With drooping lids 265  
Why stand amazed?

*Clytemnestra.* The love I owe as wife  
Conquers and turns me back. To fealty  
From which it was not ever right to turn  
I'm brought again, again I seek chaste truth ;  
For never is the hour too late to seek 270  
The path of virtue, who repents his sin  
Is almost innocent.

*Ægisthus.* Thou art insane ;  
Dost thou believe or hope there yet remains  
For thee, with Agamemnon, marriage truth?  
Though nought within thy soul should make thee  
fear, 275  
Yet, arrogant and by too strong a breath  
Of favoring fortune borne, his pride would swell

Beyond control ; while Troy yet stood, his men  
 Ill brooked his pride, why trust a nature fierce  
 Now Troy is his? He was Mycena's king ; 280  
 He comes as tyrant, for prosperity  
 Increases pride. Surrounded by a throng  
 Of concubines, he comes ; but midst the throng  
 The servant of the truth-foretelling god  
 Is eminent and holds Mycena's king. 285  
 If thou wouldst with another woman share  
 Thy husband's bed, yet she, perchance, would not.  
 The greatest ill a wife can know is this :  
 A concubine possessing openly  
 Her husband's home. Nor mistresses, nor kings 290  
 Can share their power.

*Clytemnestra.* Why wouldst thou drive me back,  
 Ægisthus, to the steep, why fan the rage  
 That lives already in the flame? Perchance  
 The victor has allowed himself to use  
 Some licence t'ward the captive maid—'tis meet 295  
 Neither for mistress of the house nor wife  
 To think on that. The throne has other laws  
 Than has the humbler couch. Of shameful crime  
 Conscious, my soul may not too harshly judge  
 My husband's sins. He readily forgives, 300  
 Who needs forgiveness.

*Ægisthus.* Is it so indeed?  
 Is mutual indulgence then allowed?  
 Are then the laws of kings unknown to thee,  
 Or new? To us harsh judges, to themselves  
 Most mild, they deem their greatest pledge of power  
 To be the right to do what is forbid 306  
 To others.

*Clytemnestra.* Helen's sin has been forgiven,



With Menelaus she returns again  
Through whom on Europe and on Asia came  
Like dangers.

*Ægisthus.* But no woman ever filled 310  
With secret passion Menelaus' heart,  
Nor made him faithless to his wife. This man  
Seeks crime in thee, desires to find excuse ;  
And if, indeed, thou hadst done nothing base,  
What profits innocence and blameless life ? 315  
When thy lord hates thee he inquires not—  
Thou must be guilty. Exiled, fugitive,  
Wouldst seek Eurotas, Sparta, and thy home ?  
Whom kings divorce are not allowed to flee,  
With empty hopes thou wouldst allay thy fears. 320

*Clytemnestra.* None but the true have knowledge  
of my sin.

*Ægisthus.* None true e'er cross the threshold of a  
king.

*Clytemnestra.* With wealth I'll buy fidelity.

*Ægisthus.* The faith  
That can with gold be bought, more gold can shake.

*Clytemnestra.* My former shame arises in my breast,  
Why harass with thy words ? With kindly voice 326  
Why urge thy evil counsels ? Dost thou think  
The noble queen who braves the king of kings  
Will marry thee, an exile ?

*Ægisthus.* Why should I  
Less noble seem to thee than Atreus' son, 330  
I who was born Thyestes' son ?

*Clytemnestra.* Say too  
His grandson, if the son is not enough.

*Ægisthus.* I was begotten by Apollo's will ;  
I need not blush, since such my ancestry.

*Clytemnestra.* Dost call Apollo source of that base  
stock ? 335

Thou drov'st him from the sky, night fell again,  
And he recalled his steeds. Why make the gods  
The sharers of dishonor? Taught by fraud  
To steal the pleasures of another's bed,  
Whom through illicit love alone we proved 340  
A man, begone, and take from out my sight  
My home's dishonor ; leave the palace pure  
For king and husband.

*Ægisthus.* I am used to ills,  
And exile is not new ; if thou, O queen,  
Commandest, not alone from home I go 345  
And Argos—I delay not at thy word  
To pierce with steel this heart weighed down with  
grief.

*Clytemnestra.* A bloody child of Tyndarus, indeed,  
Would I become should I allow this deed ;  
She owes thee fealty who sinned with thee. 350  
Come with me, that together we may find  
A means to free us from the threatening storm.

### SCENE III

*Chorus of Argives.*

Sing songs in praise of Phœbus, noble youths !  
For thee the festal throng enwreathe their hair,  
For thee the unwed Argives wave the boughs 355  
Of laurel and their tresses virginal  
Unbind. O ye who drink the icy wave  
Of Erasinus' or Eurotas' stream,  
Or of Ismenus flowing silently

Between green banks ; thou too, O Theban guest, 360  
 Join in our chorus ; so Tiresias' child,  
 Foreknowing Manto, bade with sacred feasts  
 To venerate the gods, Latona's twins.  
 Victorious Phœbus, peace once more restored,  
 Unbend thy bow, and from thy shoulder loose 365  
 Thy quiver heavy with swift shafts, and smite  
 With fingers swift the tuneful lute, I would  
 That it may sound no stern or lofty strain,  
 But as thou usest to the gentle lyre  
 To modulate a simple melody, 370  
 When to the strain the skilful muse gave ear.  
 Sound too the graver chords as thou hast sung  
 When gods beheld the Titans overcome  
 By thunder ; or when mountains superposed  
 On mountains built a pathway to the skies 375  
 For monsters fierce—Ossa on Pelion stood,  
 Pineclad Olympus weighed upon them both.  
 O sharer of the greater sovereignty—  
 Both wife and sister, Juno, queen, be near !  
 Thy chosen band who in Mycena dwell, 380  
 We honor thee. Thou only dost protect  
 Thy troubled Argos that now prays to thee.  
 Thou holdest peace and war within thy hand,  
 Take, Victress, Agamemnon's laurels now.  
 To thee the boxwood flute with many stops 385  
 Sounds now the sacred notes of praise ; to thee  
 The maidens touch the tuneful strings in song  
 Of sweet accord ; the Grecian matrons wave  
 To thee the votive torch ; before thy shrine  
 Is slain the snow-white consort of the bull, 390  
 Untaught to plow, whose neck has never felt  
 The yoke. And thou, O child of mighty Jove,

Illustrious Pallas, thou who oft hast sought  
 The Trojan turrets with thy hostile spear,  
 Thee, in the woman's chorus, old and young      395  
 Adore ; thy priestess, at thy coming, opes  
 The temple doors, the great procession comes.  
 Wearied and bent with years, the aged bring  
 To thee their thanks for wishes gratified,  
 And pour with trembling hand the wine to thee.      400  
 Thee too, as we are wont, we supplicate,  
 Diana of the crossways ; thou didst first,  
 Lucina, bid thy native Delos stand,  
 That here and there among the Cyclades  
 Was driven by the winds, nor rooted fast—      405  
 Her land is fixed, she yields not to the winds  
 That once she followed, offers vessels now  
 Firm haven. Number now, victorious one,  
 The deaths that Niobe bewailed, she stands  
 A mournful rock on Sipylus' high top,      410  
 And from the ancient marble ever flow  
 New tears ; both men and maids pay reverence due,  
 Twin goddess, to thy bright divinity.  
 O guide and father, with thy thunderbolt  
 Excelling, at whose nod the heavens bow,      415  
 O Jove, great author of our race, accept,  
 Thou more than all, the gifts we offer thee ;  
 Look kindly on thy not degenerate sons.  
 But see, a soldier comes with hasty steps,  
 And bears the evidence of joy, for lo,      420  
 His spear is wreathed with laurel ; he is here,  
 The ever-faithful servant of the king.

## ACT III

### SCENE I

*Eurybates, Clytemnestra.*

*Eurybates.* O shrines and altars of the heavenly  
ones,

O lares of my fatherland, sore worn  
And scarcely crediting myself, I stand 425  
A suppliant, after many weary years,  
And worship thee! Pay now thy vows to God,  
The glory of Argolis comes at length,  
The victor Agamemnon, to his own.

*Clytemnestra.* Glad words I hear. Through ten  
long years desired, 430  
Where tarries he? Upon the land or sea?

*Eurybates.* Unharm'd, with glory rich, with honor  
great,  
He sets his foot upon the longed-for shore.

*Clytemnestra.* Let us with sacred offerings celebrate  
This late-come, prosperous day, and reverence 435  
Gods slow if favoring. Tell me, lives he yet—  
My husband's brother? Say where now abides  
My sister?

*Eurybates.* Better fate is theirs than ours,  
I hope and pray, yet cannot surely tell,  
Since most uncertain are the changing seas. 440  
The scattered fleet was smitten by the waves,

Nor ship saw ship, and Atreus' son himself  
 Bore greater ills at sea than in the war.  
 The victor comes as vanquished, bringing back  
 Few ships of all his fleet and these half wrecked. 445

*Clytemnestra.* What chance befell our ships? Upon  
 the deep

How were our leaders parted?

*Eurybates.* Bitter news

Thou askest. Thou wouldst have me mix with joy  
 Most grievous tidings, and my spirit fears  
 To tell the sorrows, trembles at the woe. 450

*Clytemnestra.* Yet tell me all. Who shuns to know  
 his loss

Increases fear; the ills that torture most  
 Are those half known.

*Eurybates.* When Pergamus had fall'n

Before the Doric brands, and all the spoil  
 Had been divided, each one sought the sea 455  
 In haste; the soldier, wearied with the sword,  
 Unbound it from his side, through all the poop  
 The bucklers lay neglected; to the oar  
 The warriors put their hands, and each delay  
 Seemed long to those who hasted to be gone. 460

Again the standard on the royal ship  
 Shone out, again the trumpet's silver note  
 Recalled the joyful rowers, and again  
 The golden prow marked out the way, made plain  
 The pathway which a thousand ships should take. 465  
 At first a gentle air impels the ship,  
 Touching the sails, the tranquil waves scarce stir  
 Beneath light Zephyr's sighing breath. The sea  
 Is splendid with the fleet that covers it.  
 With joy we look on Troy's deserted shores, 470

With joy we leave behind Sigeum's waste.  
 The youths make haste to ply the ready oar  
 And aid the winds; they move their sinewy arms  
 With strokes alternate, and the furrowed waves  
 Flash up and strike against the vessel's sides, 475  
 The white foam covers up the ocean's blue.  
 But when a stronger breeze fills up the sails,  
 They lay aside the oars and to the winds  
 They trust the ships. The soldiers stretch themselves  
 Upon the rowing benches, or from far 480  
 They watch how fast the vessel leaves behind  
 The flying land, or tell the deeds of war :  
 Brave Hector's threats, the chariot, and the corpse  
 Brought back by Priam for the funeral pyre,  
 And Jupiter Herceus' altars, red 485  
 With blood of kings. Then dolphins on the foam  
 Sported and leaped across the swelling waves  
 With curving backs, and played about the sea,  
 And moved in circles, and beside the keel  
 Swam, joying now to follow, now to lead 490  
 The fleet, now capered round the first ship's beak  
 The choric band, now round the thousandth frisked.  
 Already all the coast had disappeared,  
 The shore was hidden and Mount Ida's top  
 Was dim with distance, and the smoke of Troy 495  
 Appeared an inky cloud which keenest sight  
 Alone could see. Already from the yoke  
 Was Titan setting free his weary steeds,  
 Already day was done, and mid the stars  
 The daylight was departing; a light cloud, 500  
 Increasing ever from an inky spot,  
 Made dim the bright rays of the setting sun ;  
 The many colored sunset made us fear

A storm. At first, night showed a starry sky,  
 The sails, deserted by the wind, dropped loose. 505  
 Then from the summits of the hills there fell  
 A murmur deep that threatened graver things,  
 And the long shore and rocky headlands groaned,  
 The waves rolled up before the coming wind ;  
 Then suddenly the moon is hid, the stars 510  
 Vanish, and to the skies the deep is tossed,  
 The heavens disappear. 'Tis doubly night,  
 A thick mist hides the darkness, all light flees,  
 And sea and sky are mingled. From all sides  
 The winds together blow upon the sea 515  
 And hurl the waters from their lowest depths—  
 The east and west winds strive, the north and south,  
 Each sends his darts, and all in hostile wise  
 Stir up the straits, a whirlwind sweeps the sea.  
 The Thracian northwind whirls the snow about, 520  
 The Libyan southwind drives along the sands,  
 Nor holds the south wind ; Notus blows along  
 Dense rain clouds, adds its waters to the waves,  
 And Eurus shakes the orient, stirs the realm  
 Of Nabathæa and the eastern straits. 525  
 How from the sea wild Corus lifts his head !  
 You would believe the world to be hurled down  
 From every quarter and the gods themselves  
 To be from out their inner heavens torn,  
 And in the night of Chaos all things lost. 530  
 The stormy sea attacks the stormy sky,  
 The winds hurl back the waves, the ocean's bed  
 Is all too small, the rain clouds and the waves  
 Mingle their floods. In such calamity  
 This comfort even fails : to see, at least, 535  
 And know, the evil by whose means we die ;



For darkness weighs upon us, and the night  
 Of Hades, and ill-omened Styx is there.  
 Yet fires shine forth and from the rent clouds gleams  
 The baneful lightning ; to our burdened hearts 540  
 This fearful light is sweet, its glare desired.  
 The fleet destroys itself, prow batters prow,  
 And side 'gainst side is driven. Opening wide,  
 The yawning ocean swallows up a ship,  
 Then spews it forth again upon the deep ; 545  
 Here sinks a vessel with its freight, and here  
 One to the waters yields its shattered hulk ;  
 A great wave covers one, one floats despoiled  
 Of all its rigging, neither sails nor oars  
 Nor upright masts that bear the lofty yards 550  
 Remain, it tosses on th' Icarian sea  
 A broken wreck. Experience brings no aid,  
 Nor reason ; skill avails not in such ills.  
 Cold terror seizes all, the sailors leave  
 Their post of duty, stupefied with fear ; 555  
 The hand lets fall the oar ; the dread of death  
 Compels the wretched ones to pay their vows  
 To heaven, and Greeks and Trojans make one prayer.  
 What may not fate accomplish ! Pyrrhus now  
 Envies his father ; great Ulysses feels 560  
 Envy of Ajax ; Atreus' younger son  
 Of Hector ; Agamemnon fain would share  
 The lot of Priam. Whoso fell at Troy  
 Is now called happy, who at honor's post  
 Deserved to die, who lives to fame and lies 565  
 Beneath the conquered soil. ' Shall sea and waves  
 O'erwhelm us where no noble deed is dared,  
 And shall a coward's fate consume the brave ?  
 Must death be useless ? Whatsoever god

Thou art who art not yet, with all our ills, 570  
 Appeased, calm now at length thy face divine ;  
 Troy even would have tears for our distress.  
 If still thy wrath endures and thou wouldst send  
 The Doric race to ruin, why must these  
 On whose account we perish, with us die ? 575  
 Oh, calm the hostile sea ! This fleet contains  
 Both Greeks and Trojans.' So they cried, nor more  
 Were able, for the waters drowned their words.  
 Behold another woe : Athena comes  
 Armed with the thunderbolt of angry Jove, 580  
 And threats with all the power her spear may claim,  
 Her ægis and the Gorgon's wrath, or fire  
 Of Jove, her father ; tempests blow anew.  
 Ajax alone is still invincible,  
 And wrestles with the storm ; while yet he strives 585  
 With straining rope to guide his vessel's sails,  
 The lightning strikes him ; then another bolt  
 Is levelled : Pallas, imitating Jove,  
 With hand drawn back lets drive with all her force  
 This well-aimed bolt, it passes through the ship 590  
 And Ajax, and bears down both it and him ;  
 He, nothing moved, firm as the rugged cliff,  
 Rises half burned from out the briny deep,  
 Divides the boisterous sea, and breasts the waves,  
 And seizing with his hand the vessel's side, 595  
 He seems to draw the flame, and Ajax stands  
 Shining above the dark expanse of sea  
 Which mirrors back his glory. When at length  
 A rock is reached, he madly cries aloud :  
 ' Glad am I to have conquered sea and flame, 600  
 Glad am I to have vanquished sky and sea,  
 The thunderbolt and Pallas ; I fled not

In fear before the war god, nor drew back  
 Before the darts of Phœbus. I o'ercame  
 These with the Phrygians, shall I now know fear? 605  
 Thou sent'st another's weapon with weak hand.  
 But what if he himself should send a dart?'  
 Further he in his madness would have dared,  
 When Father Neptune, lifting up his head  
 Above the waters, with his trident smote 610  
 The cliff and overturned it, broke away  
 The crag, and he who in its fall was crushed  
 Lies overwhelmed by earth and sea and fire.  
 Another greater trouble waits for us,  
 Poor shipwrecked ones. There is a shallow sea, 615  
 With rough shoals treach'rous, where false Caphareus  
 Covers her hidden rocks with whirlpools swift ;  
 The waters boil against the cliffs, the waves  
 Seethe ever with alternate change. Above,  
 A fortress frowns, it overlooks both seas ; 620  
 Thy Pelops' shores on one side and, curved back,  
 The isthmus which divides th' Ionian seas  
 From Phryxus' waves ; upon the other lies  
 Lemnos, by crime made great, Chalcedon too,  
 And Aulis which so long delayed the fleet. 625  
 This fortress Palamedes' father holds,  
 Upon its highest pinnacle he sets,  
 With impious hand, a blazing torch, whose light  
 Draws to the treacherous cliffs the Grecian fleet.  
 The ships are caught upon the pointed rocks, 630  
 Part go to pieces in the shoals, a part  
 Cling to the rocks, their prows are torn away ;  
 One vessel strikes another as it turns,  
 And by the wrecked ship is the other wrecked.  
 They fear the land, prepare for open sea. 635

Toward dawn the storm's rage fell away ; for Troy  
 Due satisfaction had been rendered back ;  
 Phœbus returned and daylight showed the wreck  
 Of that sad night.

*Clytemnestra.* Shall I be sad or glad  
 For husband given back? In his return 640  
 I take delight, but I am forced to weep  
 The heavy losses of our realm. Give back,  
 O father, shaking with thy thunderbolts  
 The realms sublime, give back the favoring gods  
 To Greece. [*To the Chorus.*] Now bind the brows  
                   with festal wreaths, 645  
 And let the sacred flute pour forth sweet tones,  
 Before great altars let white victims fall.  
 But see the Trojans come, a mournful band,  
 With hair unkempt, while high above them all  
 Apollo's untamed prophetess waves high 650  
 The laurel of the god.

## SCENE II

*Chorus of Trojan Captives, led by Cassandra.*

Alas, how sweet a woe to man is given  
 In love of life, when open lies the way  
 To flee from all misfortunes, when free death,  
 That haven tranquil with eternal calm, 655  
 Invites the wretched—there no terrors fright,  
 No storms of fortune rage, nor thunderbolts  
 Of mighty Jove ; its deep peace fears no league  
 Of restless citizens, nor angry threats  
 Of foes victorious, nor the stormy seas 660  
 When Corus blows, nor hostile battle line,

Nor dust cloud raised before the coming ranks  
 Of savage horsemen, nor a city's fall  
 Or nation's, when the hostile flames lay waste  
 The walls, nor savage war. 665  
 Disdainful of the fickle god, he breaks  
 All bondage, who can unafraid behold  
 Black Acheron and gloomy Styx, and dares  
 To put an end to life—that man to kings  
 Is equal, yea is equal to the gods. 670  
 How wretched he who knows not how to die!  
 We saw our country's fall on that dread night,  
 When ye, O Doric flames, laid hold on Troy.  
 Not overcome by war nor arms she fell ;  
 As once before, Herculean arrows smote. 675  
 Not Thetis' son and Peleus', not the friend  
 Too well beloved by Peleus' warlike son,  
 Conquered, when feigned Achilles glorious shone  
 In borrowed armor ; not Achilles' self  
 When in his fiery heart he suffered grief, 680  
 And on the ramparts Trojan women feared  
 His swift attack. In evil case she lost  
 Misfortune's utmost honor : to go down,  
 By brave deeds vanquished. Twice five years she stood,  
 To perish by the treach'ry of a night. 685  
 We saw the seeming gift, the mighty mole  
 The Grecians left, and, credulous, we brought  
 Within the city walls, with our right hands,  
 The fatal offering. At the gateway oft  
 The great horse trembled, bearing in its womb 690  
 Leaders and war concealed. It might have been  
 That we had turned their guile against themselves,  
 So that the Greeks had died by their own fraud.  
 Oft rang the shaken shields, and on our ears

A gentle murmur smote as Pyrrhus groaned, 695  
 Glow to submit him to Ulysses' will.  
 Secure from fear the Trojan youths rejoice  
 To touch the sacred ropes. Astyanax  
 Leads here a company, his peers in age ;  
 The maiden to Thessalian funeral pyre 700  
 Betrothed advances with another band—  
 These maids, those youths ; glad mothers bring the  
     gods  
 Their votive offerings ; to the altars go  
 Glad fathers ; through the city, on each face  
 One look is seen, and—what has never been 705  
 Since Hector's funeral pyre—sad Hecuba  
 Rejoices. O unhappy grief, what first,  
 What last, dost thou make ready to bewail ?  
 The city walls which hands of gods built up,  
 But thy hand overthrew ? The temples burned 710  
 Above their gods ? There is no time to weep  
 Those ills ! The Trojan women weep thy fate,  
 Great Father ! In the old man's throat I saw,  
 I saw the sword of Pyrrhus, the slow blood  
 Scarce tinged the steel. 715

## ACT IV

### SCENE I

*Cassandra, Chorus of Trojan Women.*

*Cassandra.* O Trojan women, check thy tears that  
flow,  
Demanded ever by the passing hours ;  
Or weep your own misfortunes, mine reject  
Companion, cease laments for my distress ;  
I may myself suffice for all our ills. 720

*Chorus.* Whom secret griefs disturb, they sorrow  
most ;  
We joy to mingle tears with tears, to weep  
Together for our own, nor canst thou weep  
Such ruin worthily, though thou art brave,  
Heroic, and hast suffered many woes. 725  
Not the sad song which from the vernal boughs  
The mournful nightingale in varying strains  
To Itys sings, not that in which laments  
The Thracian swallow, who in querulous tones  
Tells from the roofs her husband's impious loves, 730  
Could worthily bewail thy fallen house ;  
Should shining Cygnus, 'mongst the snow-white swans  
Abiding on the Ister and the Don,  
His death-song sound ; or halcyons join lament  
For the lost Ceyx with the murmuring waves, 735  
When to the tranquil deep they trust again

And anxiously above their wavering nests  
 Cherish their young ; or, should the mournful throng  
 Of Cybele which, by the shrill flute stirred, 739  
 Smite on their breasts and Phrygian Atys mourn—  
 Should these lament and lacerate their arms  
 'Twere not enough. Our tears no limit have,  
 Cassandra, since our suffering knows no bounds.  
 Why from thy forehead tear the sacred bands?  
 I think the wretched most should fear the gods. 745

*Cassandra.* Misfortunes now have conquered every  
 fear,

Nor lift I any prayer to those in heaven ;  
 Should they desire, they have no way to harm.  
 Fortune has robbed herself of all her power.  
 No father, land, or sister now is mine, 750  
 The graves and altars drank my people's blood.  
 Where is that joyous band of brothers now ?  
 The palace of the sad old king is left  
 Empty ; among so many marriage-beds  
 All save the Spartan woman's now are seen 755  
 Widowed ; the mother of so many kings,  
 The fruitful Thracian queen, who furnished forth  
 So many fires of death, sad Hecuba,  
 Using new laws, assumes an aspect wild ;  
 Madly she howls around her ruined home, 760  
 Outliving Hector, Priam, Troy, herself.

*Chorus.* Apollo's priestess suddenly is still,  
 Her cheeks are pale, a trembling strikes her limbs,  
 Her fillet bristles, her soft locks rise up  
 In horror, with a stifled murmur sounds 765  
 Her throbbing heart, uncertain is her glance,  
 Her eyes turn to and fro or gaze unmoved ;  
 Higher than is her wont she holds her head



Toward heaven, and moves along with haughty step ;  
 Now the wild Mænad, raging with the god, 770  
 Unlocks her struggling lips or strives in vain  
 To close them on the message of the god.

*Cassandra.* Why dost thou to Parnassus' sacred  
 height

Impel me, goaded by the stinging lash  
 Of inspiration new, beside myself? 775  
 Depart, O Phœbus, I am thine no more.  
 Quench the prophetic fire in my breast.  
 For whom now shall I rove in holy rage?  
 For whom now celebrate the bacchanal?  
 Now Troy is fallen, why should I remain 780  
 A seer whose prophecies are not believed?  
 Where am I? Sweet light flies and night obscures  
 My sight, the sky lies hidden in the dark.  
 But see, day brightens with a twofold sun,  
 And Argos rises double. Ida's woods 785  
 I see ; the shepherd, fatal arbiter,  
 Between the potent goddesses as judge  
 Is seated. Fear, ye kings, I warn ye fear  
 The bastard child ; that nursling of the woods  
 Shall be the one to overthrow your home. 790  
 Why bears that mad one in her woman's hand  
 The hostile spear? With Amazonian sword  
 Whom seeks the Spartan woman's murderous hand?  
 What other face is that which draws my eyes?  
 The lion of Marmorica lies low, 795  
 The conqueror of wild beasts, his lofty neck  
 Brought down by tooth of an inglorious foe ;  
 The daring lioness' bloodthirsty bite  
 He has endured. O shades of those I loved,  
 Why call ye me, the only one unharmed 800

Of all my race? O father, thee I seek,  
 I who have seen the burial of Troy.  
 O brother, terror of the Greeks, Troy's aid,  
 I see no more thy former grace, see not  
 Those hands made hot by burning of the fleet, 805  
 But lacerated limbs and grievous wounds,  
 Torn by the heavy chain : I follow thee,  
 O Troilus! Too soon thou didst engage  
 In battle with Achilles! Thou didst bear,  
 Deiphobus, a face of fear, 'twas given 810  
 By thy new bride. My soul is glad to pass  
 The Stygian fens, to see the savage dog  
 Of Tartarus, the realm of eager Dis!  
 To-day the boat of gloomy Phlegethon  
 Carries across the river royal souls, 815  
 The victor and the vanquished. O ye shades,  
 To you I pray ; thou flood by which the gods  
 Make oath, to thee I pray no less ; draw back  
 The covering of the dusky world awhile,  
 That toward Mycenæ Phrygia's spirit horde 820  
 May turn their eyes. Behold, unhappy ones,  
 The fates are put to flight.  
 The squalid sisters threat, they wildly lash  
 Their bloody whips, the left hand swings the brand,  
 Around their shrunken limbs the sable robe 825  
 Of mourning clings, and terrors of the night  
 Are heard, and giant bones through time corrupt  
 Lie in the slimy fen. The worn old man,  
 Who mourns the murders that shall be, forgets  
 His thirst, nor strives to drink the wanton stream ; 830  
 And father Dardanus in solemn dance  
 Exults.

*Chorus.* Already is her passion spent,

She falls on bended knee, as falls the bull  
 Before the altars, bearing in its neck  
 A heavy wound. Her drooping form lift up. 835  
 But lo, where Agamemnon comes at length,  
 With victor laurels crowned, to venerate  
 His gods ; his wife went forth with joyous steps  
 To meet him, and as one with him returns.

## SCENE II

*Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Cassandra, Chorus of  
 Argive Women.*

*Agamemnon.* At length, unharmed, I find my  
 native land. 840  
 Hail, soil beloved ! To thee has spoil been given  
 By countless foreign nations, unto thee  
 Submits at last great Asia's Troy, so long  
 Successful. [*Sees Cassandra.*] Why stretched out  
 upon the earth  
 With drooping head lies here Apollo's maid ? 845  
 Slaves, lift her up ; with water cool restore  
 Her strength. With shrinking glance she lifts her lids.  
 Lift up thy heart ! That longed-for port of rest  
 Is here. It is a day of solemn joy.

*Cassandra.* There was a day of solemn joy for  
 Troy. 850

*Agamemnon.* Before the altars reverence due we pay.

*Cassandra.* Before the altars has my father died.

*Agamemnon.* We pray alike to Jove.

*Cassandra.* Hercean Jove ?

*Agamemnon.* Thinkst thou, thou seest Ilium once  
 again ?

*Cassandra.* And Priam.

*Agamemnon.* 'Tis not Troy.

*Cassandra.* Where Helen is 855

Is Troy.

*Agamemnon.* Fear not the lady, hapless slave.

*Cassandra.* My freedom waits.

*Agamemnon.* No danger threatens thee.

*Cassandra.* Great danger thee.

*Agamemnon.* What can a victor fear?

*Cassandra.* What fears he not?

*Agamemnon.* O faithful band of slaves,

Restrain her till the god departs from her, 860

Lest in her helpless raving she should sin.

O father, who dost hurl the lightning's wrath,

Who drivest in thy train the clouds, who reignst

In earth and heaven, to whom the victor brings

His spoil in triumph, thee I venerate ; 865

And thee, Argolic Juno, sister, wife

Of mighty Jove, with votive offerings

And gifts from Araby, on bended knee,

I gladly worship.

### SCENE III

#### *Chorus of Argive Women.*

O Argos, by thy noble citizens 870

Ennobled, Argos ever well beloved

By angry stepdame, thou dost foster still

Great nurslings. Once unequal, thou dost now

Equal the gods: thy glorious Hercules

Has by his twelve great labors won a place 875

In heaven; for him Jove, shattering nature's laws,

Doubled the hours of the dewy night,  
 And bade the sun to drive his flying car  
 Later, and bade thy steeds to turn again  
 Slowly, O pale Diana. That bright star, 880  
 Whose name alternately is changed, returned  
 And marveled to be called the evening star.  
 Aurora stirred at the accustomed hour,  
 But sinking back she laid her drowsy head  
 Upon her aged husband's breast. The east 885  
 Felt, and the west, that Hercules was come.  
 Not in a single night was such an one  
 Begotten. The swift moving world stood still  
 For thee, O child, inheritor of heaven.  
 The lion of Nemæa, by thy arm 890  
 Pressed earthward, knew thee as the Thunderer's son ;  
 And the Parrhasian stag, that so laid waste  
 Arcadia's meadows, knew thee ; the fierce bull,  
 That groaning left Dictæan pastures, knew ;  
 Killed by Alcides was the fruitful snake, 895  
 He bade it ne'er again to rise from death.  
 With taunts he crushed beneath his falling club  
 The brothers twain and the three monsters dread,  
 From one breast borne, and to the east he brought  
 His Spanish spoil—the three-formed Geryon. 900  
 He drove the Thracian steeds ; the tyrant fed  
 Not with the grass that grows by Strymon's stream  
 Or Hebrus' banks his herd ; that cruel one  
 Offered his savage beasts the blood of guests ;  
 The ruler's blood at last made red those jaws. 905  
 Untamed Hippolyte beheld the spoil  
 Snatched from her breast ; the fierce Stymphalian birds  
 Fell smitten from the clouds ; the tree, that bore  
 The golden apples never plucked before,

Feared greatly, and fled back into the air 910  
With lightened boughs. The sleepless guardian heard  
With fear the rattling of the golden fruit  
Only when Hercules, enriched with spoil,  
Of yellow gold, had left the orchards bare.  
Dragged to the light of day by triple chain, 915  
The dog of hell was silent and barked not  
From any mouth—he feared the unknown day.  
The lying house of Dardanus succumbed  
Before thee, learned thy bow was to be feared.  
When thou wast leader, in as many days 920  
Troy fell, as it had taken years before.

## ACT V

### SCENE I

*Cassandra, Chorus.*

*Cassandra.* Great deeds are being done within ;  
not less

Than those of Troy's ten years. Ah, what is this?  
Up, up, my soul! take thou the seer's reward:  
We conquered Phrygians conquer! It is well! 925  
Troy rises from its ashes! In thy fall,  
Great parent, thou hast dragged Mycenæ down,  
Thy conqueror flees. To my foreseeing eye  
Ne'er came a clearer vision: lo, I see,  
Am present, in the vision I rejoice. 930  
No doubtful dream deceives me now, I see!  
Tables are spread within the kingly halls,  
As once the Phrygian's last feast was spread;  
The couch with Ilian purple shines, they drink  
From gold the wine of old Assaracus. 935  
Lo, decked in brodered suit the proud one lies,  
He wears the kingly robe that Priam wore;  
His wife entreats him now to put aside  
The garments of his foes and wear instead  
The toga woven by his faithful spouse. 940  
I fear, my spirit at the vision shrinks;  
Will he, the exile and adulterer, slay

The king and husband? Vengeance comes at last!  
The festival shall see the master's death,  
And blood shall be commingled with the wine ; 945  
The garment at the murderer's wish put on  
Shall give him over, bound by treachery,  
To death ; its meshes bind his hands, his head  
Its loose impenetrable folds surround ;  
Manlike she stabs his side, but with a hand 950  
That trembles, nor stabs deep, the dagger stops  
Midway the wound. But as in lofty wood  
The bristling boar, when captured, strives in vain  
For freedom and in struggling tighter draws  
His chains and rages vainly, so he strives 955  
To loose the flowing folds that everywhere  
Imprison, seeks to find his enemy.  
The child of Tyndarus in madness grasps  
The two-edged ax ; as sacrificing priest  
Before the altar fixes with his eyes 960  
The bullock's neck before he strikes the blow,  
So either way she aims her weapon's stroke.  
It falls, 'tis done. His partly severed head  
Hangs by a slender thread, here from his trunk  
Gushes the blood, there fall his groaning lips. 965  
Not yet the murderers cease, the lifeless form  
He seeks and mangles, she adds needless stabs ;  
Each in such crime is worthy of his own,  
He is Thyestes' son, the sister she  
Of Helen. Lo, the sun uncertain stands 970  
Whether he pass along his wonted way,  
Whether the Thyestean path he take.



## SCENE II

*Orestes, Cassandra, Electra, Chorus.*

*Electra.* O one avenger of thy father's death,  
 Fly, fly, and shun thy foes' death-dealing hands ;  
 Our house is ruined and the kingdom falls ! 975  
 What guest is this that drives his flying car ?  
 O brother, in my garments hide thyself.  
 Yet, fool, why fly ? A stranger dost thou fear ?  
 Fear those at home. Orestes, put aside  
 Thy fears, it is a friend whom I behold, 980  
 A sure and faithful friend.

## SCENE III

*Strophius, Pylades, Orestes, Electra, Cassandra,  
 Chorus.*

*Strophius.* I, Strophius, am from Phocis come  
 again ;  
 Honored at Elis with the victor's crown,  
 I come to welcome back with joy the friend  
 By whose hand smitten, after ten long years, 985  
 At last has Ilium fallen. Who is this  
 Whose mournful face is numbed with sorrow's tears ?  
 What sorrowful and fearful maid is this ?  
 I know the royal child ; what cause to weep,  
 Electra, in this house of joy ?  
*Electra.* Alas ! 990  
 My father, by my mother's crime destroyed,  
 Lies dead, and now to share his father's death  
 The son is sought. Ægisthus now controls  
 The palace, where he came with base desires. 994  
*Strophius.* Alas ! No happiness abides for long !

*Electra.* I pray thee, by my father's memory,  
And by the scepter known through all the world,  
And by the fickle gods, take far away  
Orestes; hide him, 'tis a pious theft.

*Strophius.* Though Agamemnon's murder makes  
me fear 1000  
Like slaughter, I will hide thee willingly,  
Orestes. From my forehead take the crown,  
The decoration of Olympic games;  
And in thy right hand take the victor's palm,  
Hiding thy head behind the leafy branch, 1005  
And may this palm, gift of Pisæan Jove,  
Offer at once an omen and a shield.  
And thou, Pylades, in thy father's car  
Sitting as comrade, of thy father learn  
The faithfulness that friendship ever owes. 1010  
Ye steeds whom Greece has testified are swift,  
Flee, flee this dreadful spot, in headlong flight.

## SCENE IV

*Electra, Cassandra, Chorus.*

*Electra.* He goes, he has escaped, the flying car  
Already disappears before my gaze.  
My enemies I now can safely wait; 1015  
Freely I offer now my hand to death.  
The bloody conqueror of her husband comes,  
Her garments dyed with slaughter, even now  
Her hands are red with recent blood, her face  
Is dark with murder. To the altars' foot 1020  
I go. Cassandra, priestess, let me kneel  
With thee, since equally with thee I fear.

## SCENE V

*Ægisthus, Clytemnestra, Electra, Cassandra, Chorus.*

*Clytemnestra.* Foe of thy mother, bold and impious  
child,

What custom is it bids a virgin seek  
This public place?

*Electra.* A virgin, I have fled 1015  
The dwelling of adulterers.

*Clytemnestra.* Who believes  
In thy virginity?

*Electra.* Because thy child?

*Clytemnestra.* Be humble with thy mother.

*Electra.* Dost thou teach  
Thy daughter duty?

*Clytemnestra.* Thou hast manly force,  
A haughty heart, but thou shalt learn to show, 1030  
Subdued by torture, all thy woman's soul.

*Electra.* Perchance I am deceived, yet seems the  
sword

A woman's weapon.

*Clytemnestra.* Mad one, dost thou think  
That thou with us art equal?

*Electra.* Sayest thou, us?  
What other Agamemnon hast thou found? 1035  
Speak as a widow, husband hast thou none.

*Clytemnestra.* An impious maid's unbridled tongue  
the queen

Will tame. Make answer swift, where is my son?  
Thy brother, where?

*Electra.* Beyond Mycenæ gone. 1039

*Clytemnestra.* Now give me back my son.

*Electra.* Give back to me  
My father.

*Clytemnestra.* Tell me where he is concealed.

*Electra.* In safety ; calm, and fearing no new reign.  
For honorable mother 'tis enough.

*Clytemnestra.* Not for an angry one. To-day thou diest.

*Electra.* Yet die I by thy hand. Behold I leave  
The altars, if it pleases thee to plunge 1046  
Within my heart the steel, I face the blow ;  
Or wouldst thou, as one smites the sacrifice,  
My bowed neck smite? Ready it waits the wound.  
All things have been made ready for the crime ; 1050  
In this blood wash that foul right hand made wet  
With husband's murder.

*Clytemnestra.* Sharer of my realm  
And of my danger, come ; Ægisthus, come.  
Undutifully does my child insult  
And wound her mother, and she hides my son. 1055

*Ægisthus.* Mad girl, no more assail thy mother's  
ears

With words insulting and with hateful speech.

*Electra.* Will even one most skilled in basest  
crimes,

One born through crime, of name ambiguous,  
At once his father's grandchild, sister's son, 1060  
Instruct?

*Clytemnestra.* Ægisthus, dost thou hesitate  
To shear away her impious head with steel?  
Let her give up her brother or her life.

*Ægisthus.* In a dark prison shall she pass her years,  
And torn by every torture shall desire, 1065  
Perchance, to render up the one she hides.  
Helpless, imprisoned, poor, and sunk in filth,  
Before her marriage widowed, and by all

Hated, an exile, heaven's air denied,  
Though late, she will at last succumb to ills. 1070

*Electra.* Grant death.

*Ægisthus.* If thou wouldst shun it, I would grant.  
Who puts an end to punishment by death  
Is skill-less tyrant.

*Electra.* Is aught worse than death?

*Ægisthus.* Life, if thou long'st for death. Slaves,  
seize the maid

And having carried her afar from here, 1075  
Beyond Mycenæ, to the realm's last bound,  
Chain her within a cavern fenced about  
With gloomy night, that so imprisonment  
May finally subdue the restless maid.

*Clytemnestra.* The captive mistress, the king's con-  
cubine, 1080

Shall pay the penalty of death ; away !  
Drag her away, that she may follow still  
The husband torn from me.

*Cassandra.* Nay drag me not,  
I will myself precede thee, for I haste  
To be the first who to my Phrygian friends 1085  
Shall bear the news: the sea with wreckage strewn,  
Mycenæ taken, and the king who led  
A thousand leaders dead by his wife's hand,  
Cut down by lust and fraud. I would not stay.  
Oh, snatch me hence ! I thank you and rejoice 1090  
That I have lived so long beyond the fall  
Of dear-loved Troy.

*Clytemnestra.* Peace, raging one.

*Cassandra.* Like rage.  
Shall fall on thee.

THYESTES

*DRAMATIS PERSONÆ*

ATREUS.

THYESTES.

SPIRIT OF THE ELDER TANTALUS.

PLISTHENES,

TANTALUS, } Sons of Thyestes.

A BOY,

MEGÆRA.

MESSENGER.

SERVANT.

CHORUS OF MEN OF MYCENÆ.

SCENE: *Before the Palace of Atreus.*

# THYESTES

## ACT I

### SCENE I

*Spirit of Tantalus, Megæra.*

*Spirit.* Who drags me from my place among the  
shades,

Where with dry lips I seek the flying waves  
What hostile god again shows Tantalus  
His hated palace? Has some worse thing come  
Than thirst amid the waters or the pangs 5  
Of ever-gnawing hunger? Must the stone,  
The slippery burden borne by Sisyphus,  
Weigh down my shoulders, or Ixion's wheel  
Carry my limbs around in its swift course,  
Or must I fear Tityus' punishment? 10  
Stretched in a lofty cave he feeds dun birds  
Upon his vitals which they tear away,  
And night renews whatever day destroyed,  
And thus he offers them full feast again.  
Against what evil have I been reserved? 15  
Stern judge of Hades, whosoe'er thou art  
Who metest to the dead due penalties,  
If something can be added more than pain,  
Seek that at which the grim custodian  
Of this dark prison must himself feel fear, 20



Something from which sad Acheron shall shrink,  
 Before whose horror I myself must fear ;  
 For many sprung from me, who shall outsin  
 Their house, who, daring deeds undared by me,  
 Make me seem innocent, already come. 25  
 Whatever impious deed this realm may lack  
 My house will bring ; while Pelops' line remains  
 Minos shall never be unoccupied.

*Magæra.* Go, hated shade, and drive thy sin-  
 stained home

To madness ; let the sword try every crime, 30  
 And pass from hand to hand ; nor let there be  
 Limit to rage and shame ; let fury blind  
 Urge on their thoughts ; let parents' hearts be hard  
 Through madness, long iniquity be heaped  
 Upon the children, let them never know 35  
 Leisure to hate old crimes, let new ones rise,  
 Many in one ; let sin while punished grow ;  
 From the proud brothers let the throne depart,  
 Then let it call the exiled home again.  
 Let the dark fortunes of a violent house 40  
 Among unstable kings be brought to naught.  
 Let evil fortune on the mighty fall,  
 The wretched come to power ; let chance toss  
 The kingdom with an ever-changing tide  
 Where'er it will. Exiled because of crime, 45  
 When god would give them back their native land  
 Let them through crime reach home, and let them  
 hate

Themselves as others hate them. Let them deem  
 No crime forbidden when their passions rage ;  
 Let brother greatly fear his brother's hand, 50  
 Let parents fear their sons, and let the sons

Feel fear of parents, children wretched die,  
 More wretchedly be born ; let wife rebel  
 Against her husband, wars pass over seas,  
 And every land be wet with blood poured forth ; 55  
 Let lust, victorious, o'er great kings exult  
 And basest deeds be easy in thy house ;  
 Let right and truth and justice be no more  
 'Twixt brothers. Let not heaven be immune—  
 Why shine the stars within the firmament 60  
 To be a source of beauty to the world ?  
 Let night be different, day no more exist.  
 O'erthrow thy household gods, bring hatred, death,  
 Wild slaughter, with thy spirit fill the house,  
 Deck the high portals, let the gates be green 65  
 With laurel, fires for thy advent meet  
 Shall glow, crimes worse than Thracian shall be done.  
 Why idle lies the uncle's stern right hand ?  
 Thyestes has not yet bewept his sons ;  
 When will they be destroyed ? Lo, even now 70  
 Upon the fire the brazen pot shall boil,  
 The members shall be broken into parts,  
 The father's hearth with children's blood be wet,  
 The feast shall be prepared. Thou wilt not come  
 Guest at a feast whose crime is new to thee : 75  
 To-day we give thee freedom ; satisfy  
 Thy hunger at those tables, end thy fast.  
 Blood mixed with wine shall in thy sight be drunk,  
 Food have I found that even thou wouldst shun.  
 Stay ! Whither dost thou rush ?  
*Spirit.* To stagnant pools, 80  
 Rivers and waters ever slipping by,  
 To the fell trees that will not give me food.  
 Let me go hence to my dark prison-house,

Let me, if all too little seems my woe,  
 Seek other shores ; within thy channels' midst 85  
 And by thy floods of fire hemmed about,  
 O Phlegethon, permit me to be left.  
 O ye who suffer by the fates' decree  
 Sharp penalties, O thou who, filled with fear,  
 Within the hallowed cave dost wait the fall 90  
 Of the impending mountain, thou who dreadst  
 The ravening lion's open jaws, the hand  
 Of cruel furies that encompass thee,  
 Thou who, half burned, dost feel their torch applied,  
 Hear ye the voice of Tantalus who knows : 95  
 Love ye your penalties ! Ah, woe is me,

(When shall I be allowed to flee to hell ?)

*Megara.* First into dread confusion throw thy  
 house,

Bring with thee battle and the sword and love,  
 Strike thou the king's wild heart with frantic rage. 100

*Spirit.* 'Tis right that I should suffer punishment,

But not that I myself be punishment.

{ Like a death-dealing vapor must I go  
 Out of the riven earth, or like a plague  
 Most grievous to the people, or a pest 105  
 Widespread, I bring my children's children crime.

Great father of the gods, our father too—

However much our sonship cause thee shame—

Although my too loquacious tongue should pay  
 Due punishment for sin, yet will I speak : 110

Stain not, my kinsmen, holy hands with blood,

The altars with unholy sacrifice

Pollute not. I will stay and ward off crime.

[*To Megara.*] Why dost thou terrify me with thy  
 torch,

And fiercely threaten with thy writhing snakes? 115  
 Why dost thou stir the hunger in my reins?  
 My heart is burning with the fire of thirst,  
 My parched veins feel the flame.

*Megara.* Through all thy house  
 Scatter this fury; thus shall they, too, rage,  
 And, mad with anger, thirst by turns to drink 120  
 Each other's blood. Thy house thy coming feels  
 And trembles at thy execrable touch.  
 It is enough; depart to hell's dark caves  
 And to thy well-known river. Earth is sad  
 And burdened by thy presence. Backward forced,  
 Seest thou not the waters leave the streams, 126  
 How all the banks are dry, how fiery winds  
 Drive the few scattered clouds? The foliage pales,  
 And every branch is bare, the fruits are fled.  
 And where the Isthmus has been wont to sound 130  
 With the near waters, roaring on each side,  
 And cutting off the narrow strip of land,  
 Far from the shore is heard the sound remote.  
 Now Lerna's waters have been backward drawn,  
 Sacred Alpheus' stream is seen no more, 135  
 Cithæron's summit stands untouched with snow,  
 And Argos fears again its former thirst.  
 Lo, Titan's self is doubtful—shall he drive  
 His horses upward, bring again the day?  
 It will but rise to die. 140

## SCENE II

*Chorus.*

If any god still cherish love for Greece,  
 Argos, and Pisa for her chariots famed,

If any cherishes the Isthmian realm,  
 And the twin havens, and the parted seas,  
 If any love Taygetus' bright snows 145  
 That shine afar, which northern winter lays  
 Upon its highest summits and the breath  
 Of summer trade winds welcome to the sails  
 Melts, let him whom Alpheus' ice-cold stream  
 Touches, well known for his Olympic course, 150  
 Wield the calm influence of his heavenly power,  
 Nor suffer crimes in constant series come.  
 Let not a grandson, readier for that crime  
 E'en than his father's father, follow him,  
 Nor let the father's error please the sons. 155  
 Let thirsty Tantalus' base progeny,  
 Wearied at length, give up their fierce attempts ;  
 Enough of crime ! No more is right of worth,  
 And common wrongs of little moment seem ;  
 The traitor Myrtilus betrayed his lord 160  
 And slew him—by such faith as he had shown  
 Himself dragged down, he gave the sea a name ;  
 To ships on the Ægean never tale  
 Was better known. Met by the cruel sword,  
 Even while he ran to gain his father's kiss, 165  
 The little son was slain ; he early fell  
 A victim to the hearth, by thy right hand,  
 O Tantalus, cut off that thou mightst spread  
 Such feasts before the gods. Eternal thirst  
 And endless famine followed on the feast ; 170  
 Nor can a worthier punishment be found  
 For savage feast like that. With empty maw  
 Stands weary Tantalus, above his head  
 Hangs ready food, more swift to take its flight  
 Than Phineus' birds ; on every side it hangs ; 175

The tree beneath the burden of its fruit  
Bending and trembling, shuns his open mouth ;  
He though so eager, brooking no delay,  
Yet oft deceived, neglects to touch the tree,  
And drops his head and presses close his lips, 180  
And shuts his hunger in behind clenched teeth.  
The ripe fruit taunts him from the languid boughs,  
And whets his hunger till it urges him  
To stretch again his hand oft stretched in vain.  
Then the whole harvest of the bended boughs 185  
Is lifted out of reach. Thirst rises then,  
More hard to bear than hunger, when his blood  
Is hot within him and his eyes aflame ;  
Wretched he stands striving to touch his lips  
To the near waters, but the stream retreats, 190  
Forsakes him when he strives to follow it,  
And leaves him in dry sands ; his eager lips  
Drink but the dust.

## ACT II

### SCENE I

*Atreus, Slave.*

*Atreus.* O slothful, indolent, weak, unavenged  
(This last I deem for tyrants greatest wrong 195  
In great affairs), after so many crimes,  
After thy brother's treachery to thee,  
After the breaking of all laws of right,  
Dost thou, O angry Atreus, waste the time  
In idle lamentations? All the world 200  
Should echo with the uproar of thy arms,  
And either sea should bear thy ships of war ;  
The fields and cities should be bright with flame ;  
The flashing sword should everywhere be drawn ;  
All Greece shall with our horsemen's tread resound ; 205  
Woods shall not hide the foe nor towers built  
Upon the highest summits of the hills ;  
Mycenæ's citizens shall leave the town  
And sing the warsong ; he shall die hard death  
Who gives that hated head a hiding-place. 210  
This palace even, noble Pelops' home,  
Shall fall, if it must be, and bury me  
If only on my brother too it fall.  
Up, do a deed which none shall e'er approve,  
But one whose fame none shall e'er cease to speak. 215  
Some fierce and bloody crime must now be dared,  
Such as my brother seeing shall wish his.

A wrong is not avenged but by worse wrong.  
 What deed can be so wild 'tis worse than his?  
 Does he lie humbled? Does he feel content 220  
 When fortune smiles, or tranquil when she frowns?  
 I know the tameless spirit of the man,  
 Not to be bent but broken, therefore seek  
 Revenge before he makes himself secure,  
 Renews his strength, lest he should fall on me 225  
 When I am unaware. Or kill, or die!  
 Crime is between us to be seized by one.

*Slave.* Fearest thou not the people's hostile words?

*Atreus.* Herein is greatest good of royal power:  
 The populace not only must endure 230  
 Their master's deeds, but praise them.

*Slave.* Fear shall make  
 Those hostile who were first compelled to praise;  
 But he who seeks the fame of true applause  
 Would rather by the heart than voice be praised.

*Atreus.* The lowly oft enjoy praise truly meant, 235  
 The mighty ne'er know aught but flattery.  
 The people oft must will what they would not.

*Slave.* The king should wish for honesty and right;  
 Then there is none who does not wish with him.

*Atreus.* When he who rules must wish for right  
 alone 240

He hardly rules, except on sufferance.

*Slave.* When reverence is not, nor love of law,  
 Nor loyalty, integrity, nor truth,  
 The realm is insecure.

*Atreus.* Integrity,  
 Truth, loyalty, are private virtues; kings 245  
 Do as they will.

*Slave.* O deem it wrong to harm



A brother, even though he be most base.

*Atreus.* No deed that is unlawful to be done  
 Against a brother but may lawfully  
 Be done against this man. What has he left 250  
 Untainted by his crime? Where has he spared  
 To do an impious deed? He took my wife  
 Adulterously, he took my realm by stealth,  
 The earnest of the realm he gained by fraud,  
 By fraud he brought confusion to my home. 255  
 There is in Pelops' stalls a noble sheep,  
 A magic ram, lord of the fruitful herd ;  
 O'er all his body hangs the golden fleece.  
 In him each king sprung from the royal line  
 Of Tantalus his golden scepter holds, 260  
 Who has the ram possesses too the realm,  
 The fortunes of the palace follow him.  
 As fits a sacred thing, he feeds apart,  
 In a safe meadow which a wall surrounds  
 Hiding the pasture with its fateful stones. 265  
 The faithless one, daring a matchless crime,  
 Stole him away and with him took my wife,  
 Accomplice in his sin. From this has flowed  
 Every disaster ; exiled and in fear  
 I've wandered through my realm ; no place is safe 270  
 From brother's plots ; my wife has been defiled,  
 The quiet of my realm has been disturbed,  
 My house is troubled, and the ties of blood  
 Are insecure, of nothing am I sure  
 Unless it be my brother's enmity. 275  
 Why hesitate? At length be strong to act.  
 Look upon Tantalus, on Pelops look ;  
 To deeds like theirs these hands of mine are called.  
 Tell me, how shall I slay that cursed one ?

*Slave.* Slain by the sword let him spew forth his  
soul. 280

*Atreus.* Thou tellest the end of punishment, I wish  
The punishment itself. Mild tyrants slay ;  
Death is a longed-for favor in my realm.

*Slave.* Hast thou no piety?

*Atreus.* If e'er it dwelt  
Within our home, let piety depart. 285  
Let the grim company of Furies come,  
Jarring Erinnys and Megæra dread  
Shaking their torches twain. My breast burns not  
With anger hot enough. I fain would feel  
Worse horrors.

*Slave.* What new exile dost thou plot, 290  
In thy mad rage?

*Atreus.* No deed that keeps the bounds  
Of former evils, I will leave no crime  
Untried, and none is great enough for me. ]

*Slave.* The sword?

*Atreus.* 'Tis poor.

*Slave.* Or fire?

*Atreus.* 'Tis not enough.

*Slave.* What weapon then shall arm such hate as  
thine? 295

*Atreus.* Thyestes' self.

*Slave.* This ill is worse than hate.

*Atreus.* I own it. In my breast a tumult reigns ;  
It rages deep within, and I am urged  
I know not whither, yet it urges me.  
Earth from its lowest depths sends forth a groan, 300  
It thunders though the daylight is serene,  
The whole house shakes as though the house were rent,  
The trembling Lares turn away their face.

This shall be done, this evil shall be done,  
Which, gods, ye fear.

*Slave.* What is it thou wilt do? 305

*Atreus.* I know not what great passion in my heart,  
Wilder than I have known, beyond the bounds  
Of human nature, rises, urges on

My slothful hands. I know not what it is,  
'Tis something great. Yet be it what it may, 310

Make haste, my soul! Fit for Thyestes' hand  
This crime would be; 'tis worthy Atreus, too,  
And both shall do it. Tereus' house has seen  
Such shocking feasts. I own the crime is great,  
And yet it has been done; some greater crime 315

Let grief invent. Inspire thou my soul  
O Daulian Procne, thou wast sister too;  
Our cause is like, assist, impel my hand.  
The father, hungrily, with joy shall tear  
His children, and shall eat their very flesh; 320

'Tis well, it is enough. This punishment  
Is so far pleasing. But where can he be?  
And why is Atreus so long innocent?  
Already all the sacrifice I see,

As in a picture, see the morsels placed 325  
Within the father's mouth. Wherefore, my soul,  
Art thou afraid? Why fail before the deed?  
Forward! It must be done. Himself shall do  
What is in such a deed the greater crime.

*Slave.* But captured by what wiles, will he consent  
To put his feet within our toils? He deems 331  
That all are hostile.

*Atreus.* 'Twere not possible  
To capture him but that he'd capture me.  
He hopes to gain my kingdom; through this hope

He will make haste to meet the thunderbolts 335  
 Of threatening Jove, in this hope will endure  
 The swelling whirlpool's threats, and dare to go  
 Within the Lybian Syrtes' doubtful shoals,  
 To see again his brother, last and worst  
 Of evils deemed ; this hope shall lead him on. 340

*Slave.* Who shall persuade him he may come in  
 peace ?

Whose word will he believe ?

*Atrous.* Malicious hope  
 Is credulous, yet I will give my sons  
 A message they shall to their uncle bear :  
 ' The wandering exile, leaving chance abodes, 345  
 May for a kingdom change his misery,  
 May reign in Argos, sharer of my throne.'  
 But if Thyestes sternly spurn my prayers,  
 His artless children, wearied by their woes  
 And easily persuaded, with their plea 350  
 Will overcome him ; his old thirst for rule,  
 Beside sad poverty and heavy toil,  
 With weight of evil, will subdue his soul  
 However hard it be.

*Slave.* Time will have made  
 His sorrow light.

*Atrous.* Thou errest ; sense of ills 355  
 Increases daily. To endure distress  
 Is easy, but to bear it to the end  
 Is hard.

*Slave.* Choose others for thy messengers  
 In this dread plan.

*Atrous.* Youth freely dares the worst.

*Slave.* What now thou teachest them in enmity 360  
 Against their uncle, they may later do

Against their father ; evil deeds return  
Full oft upon their author.

*Atreus.* If they learned  
The way of treachery and crime from none,  
Possession of the throne would teach it them. 365  
Art thou afraid their natures will grow base ?  
So were they born. That which thou callest wild  
And cruel, and deemst hardly to be done,  
Ruthless, nor showing honor for god's laws,  
Perchance is even now against ourselves 370  
Attempted.

*Slave.* Shall thy sons know what they do ?

*Atreus.* Discretion is not found with so few years.  
They might perhaps discover all the guile ;  
Silence is learned through long and evil years.

*Slave.* The very ones through whom thou wouldst  
deceive 375  
Another thou deceivest ?

*Atreus.* That themselves  
May be exempt from crime or fault of mine ;  
Why should I mix my children in my sins ?  
My hatred shall unfold itself in me.  
Yet say not so, thou doest ill, my soul ; 380  
If thine thou sparest, thou sparest also his.  
My minister shall Agamemnon be,  
And know my plan, and Menelaus too  
Shall know his father's plans and further them.  
Through this crime will I prove if they be mine ; 385  
If they refuse the contest nor consent  
To my revenge, but call him uncle, then  
I'll know he is their father. It shall be.  
But oft a frightened look lays bare the heart,  
Great plans may be unwillingly betrayed ; 390

They shall not know how great affairs they aid.  
Hide thou our undertaking.

*Slave.* Scarce were need  
That I should be admonished ; in my breast  
Both fear and loyalty will keep it hid,  
But loyalty the rather.

395

## SCENE II

*Chorus.*

The ancient race of royal Inachus  
At last has laid aside fraternal threats.  
What madness drove you, that by turns you shed  
Each other's blood and sought to mount the throne  
By crime? You know not, eager for high place, 400  
What kingly station means. It is not wealth  
That makes the king, nor robes of Tyrian dye,  
'Tis not the crown upon the royal brow,  
Nor gates made bright with gold ; a king is he  
Whose hard heart has forgotten fear and pain, 405  
Whom impotent ambition does not move,  
Nor the inconstant favor of the crowd,  
Who covets nothing that the west affords,  
Nor aught that Tagus' golden waves wash up  
From its bright channels, nor the grain thrashed out  
Upon the glowing Libyan threshing-floors, 411  
Who neither fears the falling thunderbolt,  
Nor Eurus stirring all the sea to wrath,  
Nor windy Adriatic's swelling rage ;  
Who is not conquered by a soldier's lance, 415  
Nor the drawn sword ; who seated on safe heights,  
Sees everything beneath him ; who makes haste

Freely to meet his fate, nor grieves to die.  
Let kings who vex the scattered Scythians come,  
Who hold the Red Sea's shore, the pearl-filled sea,  
Or who intrenched upon the Caspian range 421  
To bold Sarmatians close the way, who breast  
The Danube's waves, or those who dare pursue  
And spoil the noble Seres where'er they dwell.  
The mind a kingdom is ; there is no need 425  
Of horse, or weapon, or the coward dart  
Which from afar the Parthian hurls and flees—  
Or seems to flee, no need to overthrow  
Cities with engines that hurl stones afar,  
When one possesses in himself his realm. 430  
Whoever will may on the slippery heights  
Of empire stand, but I with sweet repose  
Am satisfied, rejoice in gentle ease,  
And, to my fellow citizens unknown,  
My life shall flow in calm obscurity, 435  
And when, untouched by storm, my days have passed,  
Then will I die, a common citizen,  
In good old age. Death seemeth hard to him  
Who dies but too well known to all the world,  
Yet knowing not himself. 440

## ACT III

### SCENE I

*Thyestes, Plisthenes, Tantalus, A boy.*

*Thyestes.* The longed-for dwelling of my native land  
And, to the wretched exile greatest boon,  
Rich Argos and a stretch of native soil,  
And, if there yet be gods, my country's gods  
I see at last ; the Cyclop's sacred towers, 445  
Of greater beauty than the work of man ;  
The celebrated race-course of my youth  
Where oft, well known, I drove my father's car  
And carried off the palm. Argos will come  
To meet me, and the people come in crowds, 450  
Perchance my brother Atreus too will come !  
Rather return to exile in the woods  
And mountain pastures, live the life of brutes  
Among them. This bright splendor of the realm  
With its false glitter shall not blind my eyes. 455  
Look on the giver, not the gift alone.  
In fortunes which the world deemed hard I lived  
Joyous and brave, now am I forced to fear,  
My courage fails me, fain would I retreat,  
Unwillingly I go.

*Tantalus.* What see I here ? 460  
With hesitating step my father goes,  
He seems uncertain, turns away his head.

*Thyestes.* Why doubt, my soul ? or why so long revolve



Deliberations easy to conclude ?  
 In most uncertain things dost thou confide 365  
 And in thy brother's realm, and stand in fear  
 Of ills already conquered and found mild ?  
 Dost fly the troubles thou hast learned to bear ?  
 Now to be wretched with the shades were joy,  
 Turn while thou yet hast time.

*Tantalus.* Why turn away ? 470  
 From thy loved country ? Why deny thyself  
 So much of happiness ? His wrath forgot,  
 Thy brother gives thee back the kingdom's half  
 And to the jarring members of his house  
 Brings peace, restores thee once more to thyself. 475

*Thyestes.* Thou askest why I fear ; I do not know.  
 I see not aught to fear and yet I fear.  
 Fain would I go and yet with slothful feet  
 I waver and am borne unwillingly  
 Whither I would not ; thus the ship propelled 480  
 By oar and sail is driven from its course  
 By the opposing tide.

*Tantalus.* Whatever thwarts  
 Or hinders thee, o'ercome ; see what rewards  
 Are waiting thy return. Thou mayst be king.

*Thyestes.* Since I can die.

*Tantalus.* The very highest power—

*Thyestes.* Is naught, if thou hast come to wish  
 for naught. 486

*Tantalus.* Thy sons shall be thy heirs.

*Thyestes.* No realm can have  
 Two kings.

*Tantalus.* Does one who might be happy choose  
 Unhappiness ?

*Thyestes.* Believe me, with false name

Does power deceive ; and vain it is to fear 490  
 Laborious fortunes. High in place, I feared,  
 Yea, feared the very sword upon my side.  
 How good it is to be the foe of none,  
 To lie upon the ground, in safety eat.  
 Crime enters not the cottage ; without fear 495  
 May food be eaten at the humble board,  
 Poison is drunk from gold. I speak known truth—  
 Ill fortune is to be preferred to good.  
 The humble citizen fears not my house :  
 It is not on the mountain summit placed, 500  
 Its high roofs do not shine with ivory ;  
 No watchman guards my sleep ; we do not fish  
 With fleets, nor drive the ocean from its bed  
 With massive walls, nor feed vile gluttony  
 With tribute from all peoples ; not for me 505  
 Are harvested the fields beyond the Getes  
 And Parthians ; men do not honor me  
 With incense, nor are altars built for me  
 Instead of Jove ; upon my palace roofs  
 No forests nod, no hot pools steam for me ; 510  
 Day is not spent in sleep nor night in crime  
 And watching. Aye, none fears me and my home,  
 Although without a weapon, is secure.  
 Great peace attends on humble circumstance ;  
 He has a kingdom who can be content 515  
 Without a kingdom.

*Tantalus.* If a favoring god  
 Give thee a realm, it should not be refused,  
 Nor should it be desired. Thy brother begs  
 That thou wouldst rule.

*Thyestes.* He begs? Then I must fear.  
 He seeks some means whereby he may betray. 520

*Tantalus.* Full often loyalty that was withdrawn  
Is given back, and true affection gains  
Redoubled strength.

*Thyestes.* And shall his brother love  
Thyestes? Rather shall the ocean wet  
The northern Bear, and the rapacious tides 525  
Of the Sicilian waters stay their waves,  
The harvest ripen in Ionian seas,  
And black night give the earth the light of day;  
Rather shall flame with water, life with death,  
The winds with ocean join in faithful pact. 530

*Tantalus.* What fraud dost thou still fear?

*Thyestes.* All. Where may end  
My cause for fear? His hate is as his power.

*Tantalus.* What power has he to harm thee?

*Thyestes.* For myself  
I do not fear; my sons, for you I dread  
My brother Atreus.

*Tantalus.* Dost thou fear deceit? 535

*Thyestes.* It is too late to seek security  
When one is in the very midst of ill.  
Let us begone. This one thing I affirm:  
I follow you, not lead.

*Tantalus.* God will behold  
With favor thy design; boldly advance. 540

## SCENE II

*Atreus, Thyestes, Plisthenes, Tantalus, A boy.*

*Atreus.* [*Aside.*] At last the wild beast is within  
my toils;  
Lo, I behold him with his hated brood.

My vengeance now is sure, into my hands  
 Thyestes has completely fall'n ; my joy  
 Scarce can I temper, scarcely curb my wrath. 545  
 Thus when the cunning Umbrian hound is held  
 In leash, and tracks his prey, with lowered nose  
 Searching the ground, when from afar he scents  
 By slightest clue the bear, he silently  
 Explores the place, submitting to be held, 550  
 But when the prey is nearer, then he fights  
 To free himself, and with impatient voice  
 Calls the slow huntsman, straining at the leash.  
 When passion hopes for blood it will not own  
 Restraint ; and yet my wrath must be restrained ! 555  
 See how his heavy, unkempt hair conceals  
 His face, how loathsome lies his beard. Ah, well !  
 Faith shall be kept. [*To Thyestes.*] To see my brother's  
 face

How glad I am ! All former wrath is past.  
 From this day loyalty to family ties 560  
 Shall be maintained, from this day let all hate  
 Be banished from our hearts.

*Thyestes.* [*Aside.*] O wert thou not  
 Such as thou art, all could be put aside.  
 [*To Atreus.*] Atreus, I own, I own that I have done  
 All thou believest ; this day's loyalty 565  
 Makes me seem truly base : he sins indeed  
 Who sins against a brother good as thou.  
 Tears must wash out my guilt. See at thy feet  
 These hands are clasped in prayer that ne'er before  
 Entreated any. Let all anger cease, 570  
 Let swelling rage forever be dispelled ;  
 Receive these children, pledges of my faith.

*Atreus.* No longer clasp my knees, nay, rather seek

My warm embrace. Ye, too, the props of age,  
 So young, my children, cling about my neck. 575  
 And thou, put off thy raiment mean and coarse ;  
 Oh, spare my sight, put on these royal robes  
 Like mine, and gladly share thy brother's realm.  
 This greater glory shall at last be mine :  
 To my illustrious brother I give back 580  
 His heritage. One holds a throne by chance,  
To give it up is noble.

*Thyestes.* May the gods  
 Give thee, my brother, fair return for all  
 Thy benefits. Alas, my wretchedness  
 Forbids me to accept the royal crown, 585  
 My guilty hand shrinks from the scepter's weight ;  
 Let me in lesser rank unnoted live.

*Atræus.* This realm recovers its two kings.

*Thyestes.* I hold,  
 O brother, all of thine the same as mine.

*Atræus.* Who would refuse the gifts that fortune gives ?

*Thyestes.* He who has learned how swiftly they  
 depart. 591

*Atræus.* Wouldst thou refuse thy brother such  
 renown ?

*Thyestes.* Thy glory is fulfilled, but mine still waits :  
 Firm is my resolution to refuse  
 The kingdom.

*Atræus.* I relinquish all my power 595  
 Unless thou hast thy part.

*Thyestes.* I take it then.  
 I'll wear the name of king, but law and arms  
 And I shall be thy slaves, for evermore.

*Atræus.* Wear then upon thy head the royal crown.  
 I'll give the destined victim to the gods. 600

## SCENE III

*Chorus.*

Who would believe it? Atreus, fierce and wild,  
Savage and tameless, shrank and was amazed  
When he beheld his brother. Stronger bonds  
Than nature's laws exist not. Wars may last  
With foreign foes, but true love still will bind 605  
Those whom it once has bound. When wrath, aroused  
By some great quarrel, has dissevered friends  
And called to arms, when the light cavalry  
Advance with ringing bridles, here and there  
Shines the swift sword which, seeking fresh-shed  
blood, 610  
The raging war-god wields with frequent blows ;  
But love and loyalty subdue the sword,  
And in great peace unite unwilling hearts.  
What god gave sudden peace from so great war ?  
Throughout Mycenæ rang the crash of arms 615  
As though in civil strife, pale mothers held  
Their children to their bosoms, and the wife  
Feared for her steel-armed husband, when the sword,  
Stained with the rust acquired in long peace,  
Unwillingly obeyed his hand. One sped 620  
To strengthen falling walls, to build again  
The tottering towers, to make fast the gates  
With iron bars ; and on the battlements  
The pale watch waked through all the anxious night.  
The fear of war is worse than war itself. 625  
But threatenings of the cruel sword have ceased,  
The trumpet's deep-toned voice at last is stilled,  
The braying of the strident horn is hushed,

And to the joyous city peace returns.  
 So when the northwest wind beats up the sea 530  
 And from the deep the swelling waves roll in,  
 Scylla from out her smitten caverns roars  
 And sailors in the havens fear the flood  
 That ravening Charybdis vomits forth,  
 And the fierce Cyclops, dwelling on the top 635  
 Of fiery *Ætna*, dreads his father's rage,  
 Lest whelmed beneath the waves, the fires that roar  
 Within his immemorial chimney's throat  
 Should be profaned, and poor *Laertes* thinks,  
 Since *Ithaca* is shaken, that his realm 640  
 May be submerged ; then, if the winds subside,  
 More quiet than a pool the ocean lies,  
 Scattered on every side gay little skiffs  
 Stretch the fair canvas of their spreading sails  
 Upon the sea which, late, ships feared to cut ; 645  
 And there where, shaken by the hurricane,  
 The *Cyclades* were fearful of the deep,  
 The fishes play. No fortune long endures :  
 Sorrows and pleasures each in turn depart,  
 But pleasure soonest ; from the fairest heights 650  
 An hour may plunge one to the lowest depths ;  
 He who upon his forehead wears a crown,  
 Who nods and *Medians* lay aside the sword,  
*Indians*, too, near neighbors of the sun,  
 And *Dacians* that assail the *Parthian* horse, 655  
 He holds his scepter with an anxious hand,  
 Foresees the overthrow of all his joy,  
 And fears uncertain time and fickle chance.  
 Ye whom the ruler of the earth and sea  
 Has given power over life and death, 660  
 Be not so proud, a stronger threatens you

With whatsoever ills the weaker fears  
From you ; each realm is by a greater ruled.  
Him whom the rising sun beholds in power  
The setting sees laid low. Let none confide  
Too much in happiness, let none despair  
When he has fallen from his high estate,  
For Clotho blends the evil with the good ;  
She turns about all fortunes on her wheel ;  
None may abide. Such favoring deities  
No one has ever found that he may trust  
To-morrow ; on his flying wheel a god  
Spins our swift changing fortunes.

665

67c





Who it may be, but which. Now quickly tell. 695  
*Messenger.* Upon the heights a part of Pelops' house  
 Faces the south ; the further side of this  
 Lifts itself upward like a mountain top  
 And overlooks the city ; thence their kings  
 May hold the stubborn people 'neath their sway. 700  
 Here shines the great hall that might well contain  
 An army, vari-colored columns bear  
 Its golden architraves ; behind the room  
 Known to the vulgar, where the people come,  
 Stretch chambers rich and wide, and far within 705  
 Lies the arcana of the royal house,  
 The sacred penetralia ; here no tree  
 Of brilliant foliage grows, and none is trimmed ;  
 But yews and cypress and black ilex trees  
 Bend in the gloomy wood, an ancient oak 710  
 Rises above the grove and, eminent  
 Over the other trees, looks down on all  
 From its great height. Here the Tantalides  
 Are consecrated kings, and here they seek  
 Aid in uncertain or untoward events 715  
 Here hang their votive offerings, clear-toned trumps,  
 And broken chariots, wreckage of the sea,  
 And wheels that fell a prey to treachery,  
 And evidence of every crime the race  
 Has done. Here Trojan Pelops' crown is hung, 720  
 Here the embroidered robe from barbarous foes  
 Won. In the shade trickles a sluggish rill  
 That in the black swamp lingers lazily,  
 Like the unsightly waters of black Styx  
 By which the gods make oath. 'Tis said that here 725  
 The gods of the infernal regions sigh  
 Through all the dark night, that the place resounds

With rattling chains, and spirits of the dead  
 Go wailing up and down. Here may be seen  
 All dreadful things ; here wanders the great throng 730  
 Of spirits of the ancient dead sent forth  
 From antique tombs, and monsters fill the place  
 Greater than have been known, and oft the wood  
 With threefold baying echoes, oftentimes  
 The house is terrible with mighty forms. 735  
 Nor does the daylight put an end to fear,  
 Night is eternal in the grove, and here  
 The sanctity of the infernal world  
 Reigns in the midst of day. Here sure response  
 Is given those who seek the oracle ; 740  
 From the adytum with a thundering noise  
 The fatal utterance finds a passage out,  
 And all the grot reëchoes the god's voice.  
 Here raging Atreus entered, dragging in  
 His brother's sons ; the altars were adorned— 745  
 Ah, who can tell the tale ? The noble youths  
 Have their hands bound behind them and their brows  
 Bound with the purple fillet ; incense too  
 Is there, and wine to Bacchus consecrate,  
 And sacrificial knife, and salted meal ; 750  
 All things are done in order, lest such crime  
 Should be accomplished without fitting rites.

*Chorus.* Whose hand took up the sword ?

*Messenger.*

He is himself

The priest : He sang himself with boisterous lips  
 The sacrificial song, those given to death 755  
 He placed, he took the sword and wielded it ;  
 Nothing was lacking to the sacrifice.  
 Earth trembled, all the grove bent down its head,  
 The palace nodded, doubtful where to fling

Its mighty weight, and from the left there shot 760  
 A star from heaven, drawing a black train.  
 The wine poured forth upon the fire was changed  
 And flowed red blood ; the royal diadem  
 Fell twice, yea thrice ; within the temple walls  
 The ivory statues wept : all things were moved 765  
 At such a deed ; himself alone unmoved,  
 Atreus stood firm and faced the threatening gods.  
 And now delay at last was put aside ;  
 He stood before the altar, sidelong, fierce  
 In gaze. As by the Ganges, in the woods, 770  
 The hungry tiger stands between two bulls,  
 Uncertain which one first shall feel his teeth—  
 Eager for both, now here now there he turns  
 His eyes and in such doubt is hungry still—  
 So cruel Atreus gazes on the heads 775  
 Devoted sacrifices to his rage :  
 He hesitates which one shall first be slain,  
 And which be immolated afterward ;  
 It matters not and yet he hesitates,  
 And in the order of his cruel crime 780  
 Takes pleasure.

*Chorus.* Which is first to feel the sword ?

*Messenger.* Lest he should seem to fail in loyalty  
 First place is given to his ancestor—  
 The one named Tantalus is first to fall.

*Chorus.* What courage showed the youth ? How  
 bore he death ? 785

*Messenger.* He stood unmoved, no useless prayers  
 were heard.

That cruel one hid in the wound the sword,  
 Pressing it deep within the victim's neck,  
 Then drew it forth ; the corpse was upright still :

It hesitated long which way to fall, 790  
 Then fell against the uncle. Atreus then,  
 Dragging before the altar Plisthenes,  
 Hurried him to his brother : with one blow  
 He cut away the head ; the lifeless trunk  
 Fell prone and with a whispered sound the head 795  
 Rolled downward.

*Chorus.* Double murder thus complete,  
 What did he then ? Spared he the other boy ?  
 Or did he heap up crime on crime ?

*Messenger.* Alas !  
 As crested lion in Armenian woods  
 Attacks the herd, nor lays aside his wrath 800  
 Though sated, but with jaws that drip with blood  
 Follows the bulls, and satisfied with food  
 Threatens the calves but languidly ; so threats  
 Atreus, so swells his wrath, and holding still  
 The sword with double murder wet, forgets 805  
 Whom he attacks ; with direful hand he drives  
 Right through the body and the sword, received  
 Within the breast, passes straight through the back.  
 He falls and with his blood puts out the fires ;  
 By double wound he dies.

*Chorus.* O savage crime ! 810

*Messenger.* Art horrified ? If there the work had  
 ceased,  
 It had been pious.

*Chorus.* Could a greater crime  
 Or more atrocious be by nature borne ?

*Messenger.* And dost thou think this was the end of  
 crime ?  
 'Twas its beginning.

*Chorus.* What more could there be ? 815

Perchance he threw the bodies to wild beasts  
That they might tear them, kept from funeral fire?

*Messenger.* Would he had kept, would that no grave  
might hide

The dead, no fire burn them, would the birds  
And savage beasts might feast on such sad food ! 820

That which were torment else is wished for here.  
Would father's eyes unburied sons might see !

O crime incredible to every age !

O crime which future ages shall deny !

The entrails taken from the living breast 825

Tremble, the lungs still breathe, the timid heart

Throbs, but he tears its fibre, ponders well

! What it foretells and notes its still warm veins.

When he at last has satisfied himself

About the victims, of his brother's feast 830

He makes secure. The mangled forms he cuts,

And from the trunk he separates the arms

As far as the broad shoulders, savagely

Lays bare the joints and cleaves apart the bones ;

The heads he spares and the right hands they gave 835

In such good faith. He puts the severed limbs

Upon the spits and roasts them by slow fire ;

The other parts into the glowing pot

He throws to boil them. From the food the fire

Leaps back, is twice, yea thrice, replaced and forced

At last reluctantly to do its work. 841

The liver on the spit emits shrill cries,

I cannot tell whether the flesh or flame

Most deeply groaned. The troubled fire smoked,

The smoke itself, a dark and heavy cloud, 845

Rose not in air nor scattered readily ;

The ugly cloud obscured the household gods.

O patient Phœbus, thou hast backward fled  
 And, breaking off the light of day at noon,  
 Submerged the day, but thou didst set too late. 850  
 The father mangles his own sons, and eats  
 Flesh of his flesh, with sin polluted lips ;  
 His locks are wet and shine with glowing oil ;  
 Heavy is he with wine ; the morsels stick  
 Between his lips. Thyestes, this one good 855  
 Amid thy evil fortunes still remains :  
 Thou knowest it not. But this good too shall die.  
 Let Titan, turning backward on his path,  
 Lead back his chariot and with darkness hide  
 This foul new crime, let blackest night arise 860  
 At midday, yet the deed must come to light.  
 All will be manifest.

## SCENE II

*Chorus.*

Oh, whither, father of the earth and sky,  
 Whose rising puts the glory of the night  
 To flight, oh, whither dost thou turn thy path, 865  
 That light has fled at midday? Phœbus, why  
 Hast thou withdrawn thy beams? The evening star,  
 The messenger of darkness, has not yet  
 Called forth the constellations of the night,  
 Not yet the westward turning course commands 870  
 To free thy horses that have done their work,  
 The trumpet has not yet its third call given,  
 The signal of declining day, new night.  
 The plowman is amazed at the swift fall  
 Of supper-time, his oxen by the plow 875

Are yet unwearied ; from thy path in heaven ,  
 What drives thee, O Apollo? What the cause  
 That forces from their wonted way thy steeds?  
 Though conquered, do the giants strive again  
 In war, hell's prison being opened wide? 880  
 Or does Tityus in his wounded breast  
 Renew his ancient wrath? The mountains rent,  
 Does Titan's son, Typhceus, stretch again  
 His giant body? Is a pathway built  
 By Macedonian giants to the sky, 885  
 On Thracian Ossa is Mount Pelion piled?  
 The ancient order of the universe  
 Has perished! rise and setting will not be!  
 Eos, the dewy mother of the dawn,  
 Wont to the god of day to give the reins, 890  
 Sees with amaze her kingdom overthrown,  
 She knows not how to bathe the wearied steeds,  
 Nor dip the smoking horses in the sea.  
 The setting sun himself, amazed, beholds  
 Aurora, and commands the darkness rise 895  
 Ere night is ready, the bright stars rise not,  
 Nor do the heavens show the faintest light,  
 Nor does the morn dissolve the heavy shades.  
 Whate'er it be would it were only night!  
 Shaken with mighty fear my bosom quakes, 900  
 Lest all the world to ruin should be hurled,  
 And formless chaos cover gods and men,  
 And nature once again enfold and hide  
 The land and sea and starry firmament.  
 With the upspringing of its deathless torch 905  
 Bringing the seasons, never more shall come  
 The king of stars and give the waiting world  
 Changes of summer and of winter's cold ;



No more shall Luna meet the sun's bright flame  
 And take away the terror of the night, 910  
 And running through a briefer circuit pass  
 His brother's car ; into one gulf shall fall  
 The heaped-up throng of gods.  
 The zodiac, pathway of the sacred stars,  
 Which cuts the zones obliquely, shall behold 915  
 The falling stars and fall itself from heaven.  
 Aries, who comes again in early spring  
 And with warm zephyr swells the sails, shall fall  
 Headlong into the sea through which he bore  
 Timorous Hella ; and the Bull, that wears 920  
 The Hyades upon its shining brow,  
 Shall with himself drag down the starry Twins  
 And Cancer's claws ; the Lion, glowing hot,  
 That Hercules once conquered, shall again  
 Fall from the skies ; and to the earth she left 925  
 The Virgin too shall fall, and the just Scales,  
 And with them drag the churlish Scorpion.  
 Old Chiron, who holds fixed the feathered dart  
 In the Thessalian bow, shall loose his shaft  
 From the snapped bowstring, and cold Capricorn 930  
 Who brings the winter's cold shall fall, and break  
 For thee, whoe'er thou art, thy water-jug,  
 Thou Water-bearer ; with thee too shall fall  
 The Fishes, last of stars ; and Charles's Wain,  
 That never yet has sunk below the sea, 935  
 Falling shall plunge beneath the ocean wave.  
 The slippery Dragon, that between the Bears  
 Winds like a winding river, shall descend ;  
 And, with the Dragon joined, the Lesser Bear  
 So icy cold, and slow Boötes too, 940  
 Already tottering to his overthrow,

Shall fall from heaven with his heavy wain.

Out of so many do we seem alone

Worthy to be beneath the universe

Buried, when heaven itself is overthrown ?

945

In our day has the end of all things come ?

Created were we for a bitter fate,

Whether we've banished or destroyed the sun.

Let lamentation cease, depart base fear ;

Eager for life is he who would not die

950

Even though with him all the world should fall.

## ACT V

### SCENE I

*Atreus.*

High above all and equal to the stars  
I move, my proud head touches heaven itself ;  
At last I hold the crown, at last I hold  
My father's throne. Now I abandon you, 955  
Ye gods, for I have touched the highest point  
Of glory possible. It is enough.  
Ev'n I am satisfied. Why satisfied ?  
No shame withholds me, day has been withdrawn ;  
Act while the sky is dark. Would I might keep 960  
The gods from flight, and drag them back by force  
That all might see the feast that gives revenge.  
It is enough the father shall behold.  
Though daylight be unwilling to abide,  
Yet will I take from thee the dark that hides 965  
Thy miseries ; too long with merry look  
Thou liest at thy feast : enough of wine,  
Enough of food, Thyestes. There is need,  
In this thy crowning ill, thou be not drunk  
With wine. Slaves, open wide the temple doors, 970  
And let the house of feasting open lie.  
I long to see his color when he sees  
His dead sons' heads, to hear his words that flow  
With the first shock of sorrow, to behold  
How, stricken dumb, he sits with rigid form. 975

This is the recompense of all my toil.  
 I do not wish to see his wretchedness  
 Save as it grows upon him. The wide hall  
 Is bright with many a torch ; supine he lies  
 On gold and purple, his left hand supports 980  
 His head that is so heavy now with wine ;  
 He vomits. Mightiest of the gods am I,  
 And king of kings ! my wish has been excelled !  
 Full is he, in the silver cup he lifts  
 The wine. Spare not to drink, there still remains 985  
 Some of the victims' blood, the old wine's red  
 Conceals it ; with this cup the feast shall end.  
 His children's blood mixed with the wine he drinks ;  
 He would have drunken mine. Lo, now he sings,  
 Sings festal songs, his mind is dimmed with wine. 990

## SCENE II

*Atreus, Thyestes.*

*Thyestes.* By long grief dulled, put by thy cares, my  
 heart,  
 Let fear and sorrow fly and bitter need,  
 Companion of thy timorous banishment,  
 And shame, hard burden of afflicted souls.  
 Whence thou hast fallen profits more to know 995  
 Than whither ; great is he who with firm step  
 Moves on the plain when fallen from the height ;  
 He who, oppressed by sorrows numberless  
 And driven from his realm, with unbent neck  
 Carries his burdens, not degenerate 1000  
 Or conquered, who stands firm beneath the weight  
 Of all his burdens, he is great indeed.

Now scatter all the clouds of bitter fate,  
 Put by all signs of thy unhappy days,  
 In happy fortunes show a happy face, 1005  
 Forget the old Thyestes. Ah, this vice  
 Still follows misery: never to trust  
 In happy days; though better fortunes come,  
 Those who have borne afflictions find it hard  
 To joy in better days. What holds me back, 1010  
 Forbids me celebrate the festal tide?  
 What cause of grief, arising causelessly,  
 Bids me to weep? What art thou that forbids  
 That I should crown my head with festal wreath?  
 It does forbid, forbid! Upon my head 1015  
 The roses languish, and my hair that drips  
 With ointment rises as with sudden fear,  
 My face is wet with showers of tears that fall  
 Unwillingly, and groans break off my song.  
 Grief loves accustomed tears, the wretched feel 1020  
 That they must weep. I would be glad to make  
 Most bitter lamentation, and to wail,  
 And rend this robe with Tyrian purple dyed.  
 My mind gives warning of some coming grief,  
 Presages future ills. The storm that smites 1025  
 When all the sea is calm weighs heavily  
 Upon the sailor. Fool! What grief, what storm,  
 Dost thou conceive? Believe thy brother now.  
 Be what it may, thou fearest now too late,  
 Or causelessly. I do not wish to be 1030  
 Unhappy, but vague terror smites my breast?  
 No cause is evident and yet my eyes  
 O'erflow with sudden tears. What can it be,  
 Or grief, or fear? Or has great pleasure tears?

## SCENE III

*Atreus, Thyestes.*

*Atreus.* Brother, let us together celebrate 1035  
 This festal day : this day it is which makes  
 My scepter firm, which binds the deathless pact  
 Of certain peace.

*Thyestes.* Enough of food and wine !  
 This only could augment my happiness,  
 If with my own I might enjoy my bliss. 1040

*Atreus.* Believe thy sons are here in thy embrace.  
 Here are they and shall be, no single part  
 Of thy loved offspring shall be lost to thee. *iron*  
 Ask and whate'er thou wishest I will give,  
 I'll satisfy the father with his sons ; 1045  
 Fear not, thou shalt be more than satisfied.  
 Now with my own thy young sons lengthen out  
 The joyous feast : they shall be sent for ; drink  
 The wine, it is an heirloom of our house.

*Thyestes.* I take my brother's gift. Wine shall be  
 poured 1050  
 First to our fathers' gods, then shall be drunk.  
 But what is this ? My hands refuse to lift  
 The cup, its weight increases and holds down  
 My right hand, from my lips the wine retreats,  
 Around my mouth it flows and will not pass 1055  
 Within my lips, and from the trembling earth  
 The tables leap, the fire scarce gives light,  
 The air is heavy and the light is dim  
 As between day and darkness. What is this ?  
 The arch of heaven trembles more and more, 1060  
 To the dense shadows ever thicker mist

Is added, night withdraws in blacker night,  
 The constellations flee. Whate'er it is,  
 I pray thee spare my sons, let all the storm  
 Break over my vile head. Give back my sons! 1065  
*Atreus.* Yea, I will give them back, and never more  
 Shalt thou be parted from them. [Exit.]

## SCENE IV

*Thyestes.*

What distress  
 Seizes my reins? Why shake my inward parts?  
 I feel a burden that will forth, my breast  
 Groans with a groaning that is not my own. 1070  
 Come, children, your unhappy father calls;  
 Come, might I see you all this woe would flee.  
 Whence come these voices?

## SCENE V

*Atreus, Thyestes, Slave bearing a covered charger.*

*Atreus.* Father, spread wide thy arms, they come,  
 they come.  
 Dost thou indeed now recognize thy sons? 1075  
 [*charger is uncovered.*]

*Thyestes.* I recognize my brother: Canst thou bear  
 Such deeds, O earth? O Styx, wilt thou not break  
 Thy banks and whelm in everlasting night  
 Both king and kingdom, bearing them away  
 By a dread path to chaos' awful void? 1080  
 And, plucking down thy houses, fallest thou not,  
 O city of Mycenæ, to the ground?

We should already be with Tantalus !  
 Earth, ope thy prisons wide on every side ;  
 If under Tartarus, below the place 1085  
 Where dwell our kinsmen, rests a lower deep,  
 Within thy bosom let a chasm yawn  
 Thitherward, under all of Acheron  
 Hide us ; let guilty souls roam o'er our heads  
 Let Phlegethon that bears its fiery sands 1090  
 Down through its glowing channels, flow o'er me !  
 Yet earth unmoved lies but a heavy weight,  
 The gods have fled.

*Atrous.* Take, rather, willingly  
 Those whom thou hast so long desired to see ;  
 Thy brother does not hinder thee. Rejoice ; 1095  
 Kiss them, divide thy love between the three. *among ?*

*Thyestes.* This is thy compact ? This thy brother's  
 faith ?

Is this thy favor ? Layst thou thus aside  
 Thy hate ? I do not ask to see my sons  
 Unharm'd ; what wickedness and deathless hate 1100  
 May give, a brother asks : grant to my sons  
 Burial ; give them back, thou shalt behold  
 Straightway their burning. Lo, I ask thee naught,  
 The father will not have but lose his sons.

*Atrous.* Thou hast whate'er remains, whate'er is  
 lost. 1105

*Thyestes.* And do they furnish food for savage birds ?  
 Are they destroyed by monsters, fed to beasts ?

*Atrous.* Thyself hast banqueted upon thy sons,  
 An impious feast.

*Thyestes.* 'Tis this that shamed the gods !  
 This backward drove the daylight whence it came !  
 Me miserable ! What cry shall I make, 1111



What wailing? What words will suffice my woe?  
 I see the severed heads, the hands cut off,  
 Greedy and hungry, these I did not eat!  
 I feel their flesh within my bowels move; 1115  
 Prisoned, the dread thing struggles, tries to flee,  
 But has no passage forth; give me the sword,  
 Brother, it has already drunk my blood:  
 The sword shall give a pathway to my sons.  
 It is denied? Then rending blows shall sound 1120  
 Upon my breast. Unhappy one, refrain  
 Thy hand, oh, spare the dead! Who e'er beheld  
 Such hideous crime? Not wandering tribes that dwell  
 On the unkindly Caucasus' rough cliffs,  
 Or fierce Procrustes, dread of Attica. 1125  
 Behold, the father feasts upon his sons,  
 The sons lie heavy in him—is there found  
 No limit to thy base and impious deeds?  
*Atreus.* Crime finds a limit when the crime is done,  
 Not when avenged. Even this is not enough. 1130  
 Into thy mouth I should have poured the blood  
 Warm from the wounds; thou shouldst have drunk  
 the blood  
 Of living sons. My hate betrayed itself  
 Through too much haste. I smote them with the sword,  
 I slew them at the altar, sacrificed 1135  
 A votive offering to the household gods,  
 From the dead trunks I cut away the heads,  
 And into tiniest pieces tore the limbs;  
 Some in the boiling pot I plunged, and some  
 I bade should be before a slow flame placed; 1140  
 I cut the flesh from the still living limbs,  
 I saw it roar upon the slender spit,  
 And with my own right hand I plied the fire.

All this the father might have better done :  
 All of my vengeance falls in nothingness ! 1145  
 He ate his sons with impious lips indeed,  
 Alas, nor he nor they knew what he did !  
*Thyestes.* Hear, O ye seas, stayed by inconstant  
 shores ;  
 Ye too, ye gods, wherever ye have fled,  
 Hear what a deed is done ! Hear, gods of Hell, 1150  
 Hear, Earth, and heavy Tartarean night  
 Dark with thick cloud ! Oh, listen to my cry !  
 Thine am I, Hell, thou only seest my woe,  
 Thou also hast no star. I do not make  
 Presumptuous prayer, naught for myself I ask— 1155  
 What could be given me ? I make my prayer  
 For you, my sons. Thou ruler of the heavens,  
 Thou mighty king of the ethereal courts,  
 Cover the universe with horrid clouds,  
 Let winds contend on every side, send forth 1160  
 Thy thunders everywhere ; not with light hand,  
 As when thou smitest with thy lesser darts  
 Innocent homes ; but as when mountains fell  
 And with their threefold ruin overwhelmed  
 The Giants—use such power, send forth such fires,  
 Avenge the banished day, where light has fled 1166  
 Fill up the darkness with thy thunderbolts.  
 Each one is evil,—do not hesitate—  
 Yet if not both, I sure am base ; seek me  
 With triple dart, through this breast send this brand :  
 If I would give my sons a funeral pyre 1171  
 And burial, I must give myself to flames.  
 If nothing moves the gods, if none will send  
 His darts against this sinful head, let night,  
 Eternal night, abide and hide the crime 1175

In everlasting shadows. If thou, Sun,  
No longer shinest, I have naught to ask.

*Atrous.* Now in my work I glory, now indeed  
I hold the victor's palm. I would have lost  
My crime's reward unless thou thus wert grieved. 1180  
I now believe my sons were truly mine—  
Now may I trust again in a chaste bed.

*Thyestes.* What evil have my children done to thee?

*Atrous.* They were thy sons.

*Thyestes.* The children of their sire—

*Atrous.* Undoubted sons; 'tis this that makes me  
glad. 1185

*Thyestes.* I call upon the gods who guard the right  
To witness.

*Atrous.* Why not call upon the gods  
Who guard the marriage-bed?

*Thyestes.* Who punishes  
A crime with crime?

*Atrous.* I know what makes thee mourn :  
Another first accomplished the grim deed, 1190  
For this thou mournest ; thou art not distressed  
Because of thy dread feast, thou feelest grief  
That thou hast not prepared such feast for me.  
This mind was in thee : to provide like food  
For thy unconscious brother, and to slay 1195  
My children with their mother's aid. One thing  
Withheld thee—thou believedst they were thine.

*Thyestes.* Th' avenging gods will come and punish  
thee ;  
To them my prayers commit thee.

*Atrous.* To thy sons  
I give thee over for thy punishment. 1200

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HERCULES ON CETA

*DRAMATIS PERSONÆ*

HERCULES.

HYLLUS.

PHILOCTETES.

DEJANIRA.

ALCMENA.

IOLE.

NURSE.

CHORUS OF CÆCHALIAN MAIDENS.

CHORUS OF CÆTOLIAN MATRONS.

SCENE: *Act I, Cæchalia,*  
*Act II et seq., Trachina.*

# HERCULES ON CETA

## ACT I

### SCENE I

*Hercules, Iole, Chorus of Æchalian Maidens.*

*Hercules.* O father of the gods, whose thunderbolt  
Both homes of Phœbus, east and west, do know,  
Reign now secure, for I have brought thee peace  
Wherever Nereus checks the spread of land.  
There is no need to thunder, perjured kings           5  
And cruel tyrants lie o'erthrown. I've slain  
Whatever might have felt thy thunderbolt.  
But father, why is heaven to me denied?  
In all things, surely, I have worthy proved  
Of Jove, my stepdame even witnesses           10  
My heavenly birth. Why longer make delay?  
Dost fear? Could Atlas not support the skies  
If Hercules were there? Why still refuse  
The star? Death sent me back to thee, all ills  
That earth or sea or air or hell bring forth           15  
Have yielded : through Arcadian streets no more  
The lion wanders ; the Stympalian birds  
Are dead ; there is no stag of Mænalus ;  
The dying dragon sprinkled with his blood  
The golden groves ; the Hydra yields his life ;       20  
Beside the river Hebrus I destroyed

That well-known herd, with blood of slaughtered guests  
 Made fat ; and from Thermodon bore away  
 The spoils of war ; I saw the silent shades,  
 Nor thence returned alone. The trembling day 25  
 Behold black Cerberus. He saw the sun.  
 Busiris was before his altars slain ;  
 By this one hand fell Geryon, and by this  
 The bull, the terror of a hundred lands ;  
 Whatever hostile thing the earth brought forth 30  
 Has perished, by my right hand overcome.  
 If earth denies wild beasts to Juno's wrath,  
 Give back, I pray, a father to thy son,  
 Or give a constellation to the brave.  
 I do not ask that thou shouldst show the road, 35  
 If thou permit me, I will find a way ;  
 Or if thou fear'st lest earth conceive wild beasts,  
 Then speed the evil while she has and sees  
 Thy Hercules : who else would dare assail  
 Such foes, or be, in any Argive town, 40  
 Worthy of Juno's hate ? There is no land  
 That does not speak my fame, the frost-bound race  
 Of Scythians in the north, the men of Ind  
 Exposed to Phœbus' rays, the Libyans, too,  
 Beneath the constellation of the crab, 45  
 Have felt my hand ; bright Titan, thee I call  
 To witness, I have gone with thee where'er  
 Thou sheddest light—thy light could not pursue  
 My triumphs, for beyond the sun's bright world  
 I passed : day was not where my metes were set, 50  
 Nor nature, earth was wanting to my steps,  
 She first was wearied. Night assailed my eyes,  
 And utmost chaos. I have come again  
 From whence none other ever has returned.

The threats of ocean I have borne, no storms      55  
 Could wreck my boat, wherever I have gone.  
 The empty ether cannot now suffice  
 The hatred of thy wife ; earth fears to yield  
 Wild beasts for me to conquer, does not give  
 New monsters, none remain, and Hercules      60  
 Stands in their place. How many evil things  
 Have I, unarmed, destroyed. All dreadful forms  
 That rose against me, I, alone, o'erthrew,  
 Nor feared as babe or boy to meet wild beasts.  
 The toils commanded me seemed light, no day      65  
 Shone fruitless for me. Oh, how many ills  
 I vanquished, when no king commanded me,—  
 My valor drove me more than Juno's wrath.  
 What profit to have made the race secure ?  
 Gods have not peace ; the earth is free, but sees      70  
 All things it had to fear secure in heaven,  
 Juno translates the brutes : the crab, though slain,  
 Moves in a burning pathway, has been made  
 A Libyan constellation, ripening  
 The grain ; the lion to Astræa gives      75  
 The flying year, he shakes his fiery mane,  
 Dries up the moist south wind, dispels the clouds,  
 Behold even now has each wild beast attained  
 The skies, and so outstripped me. From the earth  
 I still, though victor, must behold my foes.      80  
 To brutes and monsters Juno gives a star  
 That she may make the skies a dreaded place  
 For me. Aye, let her waste the earth and make  
 The heav'ns more terrible than earth or hell,  
 Yet still Alcides shall be given room.      85  
 If after war, if after conquered beasts  
 And Stygian dog, I still am deemed unmeet



For heavenly heights, Hesperia shall touch  
 Peloris, and the two lands be but one ;  
 I'll put the seas to flight—or dost thou bid 90  
 That they be joined? Let Isthmus no more part  
 The waves, and on united seas let ships  
 Be borne by new-found paths to Attica.  
 Let earth be changed: the Ister flow along  
 Through channels new, the Tanais find new ways. 95  
 Grant, Jupiter, at least, that I may guard  
 The gods; thou needst not hurl thy thunderbolt  
 Where I shall be the guardian. Though thou bid  
 That I protect the realms of heat and cold,  
 Believe, the gods are safe in that abode. 100  
 The dragon slain, Apollo merited  
 A Delphian temple and a heavenly home,—  
 How many Pythons in the Hydra lay!  
 Bacchus and Perseus have attained the skies,  
 How small a region was the east he quelled! 105  
 How many monsters in the Gorgon lived?  
 What son of thine, of Juno born, deserved  
 A constellation by his glorious deeds?  
 The realm I on my shoulders bore I seek.  
 But thou, O Lichas, comrades of my toils, 110  
 Herald my triumph, of the conquered home  
 And fallen realm of great Eurytus tell.  
 [*To his servants.*] Drive ye the victims quickly to the  
 fanes  
 Built to Cenæan Jove where wild with storms  
 The feared Eubæan ocean hurls its waves. 115

## SCENE II

*Iole, Chorus of Æchalian Maidens.*

*Chorus.* The equal of immortal gods is he  
 Whose life and fortune travel hand in hand ;  
 But he who slowly drags his life along  
 With heavy groans, believes it worse than death.  
 He who beneath his feet put eager fates, 120  
 And steered the boat on the dark river's flood,  
 Shall never give to chains his captive arms,  
 Nor ever grace the tyrant's triumph car.  
 He to whom death is easy never finds  
 Life wretched : though his vessel in mid seas 125  
 Desert him, when old Boreas in his might  
 Drives back the south wind, or when Eurus strives  
 With Zephyr, when the waters seem to part,—  
 He may not gather up the broken beams  
 Of his wrecked ship that, in the waters' midst, 130  
 He may yet hope for land ; he cannot know  
 Shipwreck, who freely can forgo his life.

Base weakness, tears, locks sordid with the dust  
 Of my dear fatherland are mine, not flames  
 Nor crash of fortune strike me down. O Death, 135  
 Thou comest to the happy ; wretched men  
 Thou fleest. Still I live ; my fatherland,  
 Alas ! shall lapse to wilderness and woods,  
 Its fallen temples yield to sordid huts,  
 The cold Dolopian thither lead his flock 140  
 Where yet Æchalia's growing ashes lie ;  
 Thessalian shepherds, to the very town  
 Bringing their unskilled pipes, in doleful lays  
 Retell the mournful story of our times,

And ere a few more generations pass 145  
 The world shall seek in vain the place where stood  
 My country. Happy once, I made my home  
 By no unfruitful hearth nor dwelt among  
 Thessalia's barren acres ; now I go  
 To Trachin, land of rocks and heavy brakes, 150  
 Parched mountain summits, groves the mountain goat  
 Scarce loves to haunt. But if a milder fate  
 Await the slave, if Inachus' swift stream  
 Shall bear him on its bosom, if he dwell  
 By Dirce's fountain where the languid stream 155  
 Ismenos flows, a slender thread—'twas there  
 The mother of proud Hercules was wed.

False is the fable of the double night,  
 When longer in the heavens shone the stars,  
 When Hesperus arose for Lucifer, 160  
 And slow Diana long delayed the sun.  
 What rocks or cliffs of Scythia nourished thee?  
 Did Rhodope's wild mountain bring thee forth  
 A Titan ; or Mount Athos' rugged steeps ;  
 Or the stern mountains by the Caspian shore ? 165  
 What tiger's spotted breast has suckled thee ?  
 He cannot feel a wound, the spear grows dull,  
 The steel is softened, shattered is the sword  
 That smites his naked body, and the stones  
 Fly back ; he does not fear the fates, invites 170  
 With flesh unconquerable death itself ;  
 Spears may not pierce him, nor the Scythian shafts  
 From the tense bowstring shot, nor any dart  
 The cold Sarmatians bear, nor can they wound  
 Who eastward, near the Habatæans, dwell, 175  
 Where arrows truer than the Cretan's fly—  
 The Parthian's. With his body he o'erthrew

Æchalia's walls, against him naught can stand.  
 What he prepares to conquer is o'ercome.  
 His hostile face brings death, to have but seen 180  
 The wrath of Hercules is woe enough.  
 Could vast Briareus, or could Gyas huge,  
 Who, standing on Thessalian mountains, stormed  
 The skies with snake-armed hands, make him afraid?  
 Beside great evils lie his great rewards, 185  
 No more of ill is left, we have beheld—  
 Unhappy we—great Hercules in wrath.

*Iole.* Me miserable! Not that temples lie  
 With gods and homes o'erthrown, that in the flames  
 Fathers with sons, divinities with men, 190  
 The temple with the tombs, are burned to dust—  
 We mourn no common woe; my tears are caused  
 By other sorrows, fortune bids me weep  
 For other ruins. What first shall I mourn?  
 What most demands my tears? All equally! 195  
 Earth hath not breasts enough to sound with blows  
 Worthy these sorrows. O ye gods above,  
 Make me a mournful Sipylean rock;  
 Or place me by the banks of Po where sounds  
 The murmur of the trees, the sisters sad 200  
 Of Phaethon, or on Sicilian rocks  
 Where I, a siren, may lament the fate  
 Of Thessaly; or to the Thracian woods  
 Bear me, where like a swallow Procne sits  
 Beneath Ismavian shade and mourns her son. 205  
 Give me a form fit for my bitter tears,  
 And let harsh Trachin echo with my woe.  
 Still Cyprian Myrrha weeps, and Ceyx' wife  
 Grieves for her husband, Niobe outlives  
 Herself, and Thracian Philomela flees 210

And, a sad nightingale, laments her son.  
 Oh, happy, happy were I, if my home  
 Might be the woods, if I, a bird, might rest  
 Within my country's meadows and bemoan  
 My fate with querulous murmur, and fame tell 215  
 Of winged Iole. I saw, I saw  
 My father's wretched fate, when smitten down  
 By Hercules' death-dealing club, he lay  
 Through all the courtyard scattered. If the fates  
 Had given thee a tomb, where had I sought, 220  
 O father, for thy members? Have I borne  
 To see thy death, O Toxeus, when not yet  
 Thy tender cheeks with manly beard were decked,  
 Nor yet man's blood was coursing through thy veins?  
 But why, my parents, should I mourn your fate 225  
 Whom friendly death holds safe? My fate demands  
 My tears. A captive, I am forced to drive  
 The distaff and the spindle for my lord.  
 Oh, cruel beauty, comeliness of form  
 That brought me death! My home for this alone 230  
 Fell ruined, since my father would not give  
 His daughter to Alcides, feared to be  
 Akin by marriage to great Hercules.  
 But I must seek my mistress' proud abode.  
*Chorus.* Why foolishly recall thy father's realm 235  
 And thy sad fate? Forget thy former lot,  
 He only can be happy who has learned  
 To keep, as king or slave, an equal mind,  
 And suffer varying fortunes. He has snatched  
 The heaviness from ill, strength for himself, 240  
 Who bears whate'er befalls with steadfast soul.

## ACT II

### SCENE I

*The Nurse, alone.*

What cruel raging seizes woman's heart  
When one roof covers wife and concubine!  
Charybdis, Scylla, in Sicilian straits,  
Need less be feared; less wild the savage beast. 245  
For when the beauty of the captive shone,  
And Iole was bright as cloudless day,  
Or like the stars that shine in nights serene,  
The wife of Hercules like one insane,  
With fierce look stood. As lying with her young 250  
Within a cavern in Armenia's land,  
The tigress, at an enemy's approach,  
Springs forth, or as the mænad, god-inspired,  
When bidden wave the thyrsus, for a time  
Stands doubtful whither she shall turn her steps, 255  
So rages through the house of Hercules  
His wife, nor does the house give room enough;  
She rushes up and down, roams to and fro,  
Then pauses, in her cheeks all sorrows burn,  
Naught is within her bosom hid; swift tears 260  
Follow her threats, nor does one mood endure,  
Nor is she with a single phase of wrath  
Contented: now her cheeks are like a flame,  
Now pallor drives away the red, her grief

Takes every form, she weeps, laments, implores. 265  
 The door creaks, see, with headlong steps she comes,  
 Telling with words confused her inmost thoughts.

## SCENE II

*Dejanira, Nurse.*

*Dejanira.* O wife of Jove, wherever thou may'st be  
 Within thy airy home, send thence, I pray,  
 Against Alcides such a savage beast 270  
 As may suffice me. If a dragon lives  
 Unconquered, vaster, with more fruitful head ;  
 If any beast exists so huge and dire,  
 So terrible, that Hercules himself  
 Averts his eyes, let this from some vast cave 275  
 Come forth ; or if wild beasts must be denied,  
 I pray thee to some terror change this form—  
 With this mind I can do whatever ill  
 Thou wouldst. Oh, make my form express my woe !  
 My bosom will not hold the wrath I feel. 280  
 Why searchest thou the ends of earth ? Why turn  
 The world about ? Why seek for plagues in Dis ?  
 Within this bosom wilt thou find all ills  
 Which need be feared, with this shaft arm thy hate ;  
 I too may be a stepdame. Thou canst slay 285  
 Alcides, use this hand for what thou wilt.  
 Why pause ? Use me, the mad one, what new crime  
 Dost thou command ? Say on, why hesitate ?  
 'Tis well that thou shouldst rest, this wrath does all.

*Nurse.* O foster-child, a little calm thyself. 290  
 Restrain thy complaints, control thy fiery rage,  
 And curb thy grief, now show thyself indeed

The wife of Hercules.

*Dejanira.*                    Shall Iole,  
 The captive maid, give brothers to my sons,  
 The slave become the daughter of great Jove?    295  
 Not in one bed can flame and torrent flow,  
 The northern bear may not in ocean's blue  
 Be wet—not unavenged will I remain.  
 What though thy shoulders bore the sky, though earth  
 Must thank thee for its peace? There yet remains 300  
 A greater terror than the Hydra's rage :  
 The anger of an injured wife. Burn thus  
 The flames of glowing Etna? This my wrath  
 Can conquer all thy conquests, shall a slave  
 Seize on my marriage-bed? Till now I feared.    305  
 Dread monsters, none remain, those plagues are gone,  
 In place of beasts there comes the hated slave.  
 By Titan, by the ruler of the gods,  
 I was Alcides' wife but while he feared!            309  
 The prayers I made the gods, they grant the slave,  
 I was successful for the concubine!  
 Ye heard my prayers, ye gods, but for her sake,  
 And for her sake he came again unharmed.  
 O anguish that no vengeance can assuage,  
 Seek some revenge unthought, unspeakable,        315  
 And dreadful, teach great Juno how to hate ;  
 She knows not how to rage. For me he warred,  
 For me made red the Acheloiüs' waves  
 With his own blood, he overcame the snake,  
 He turned his threats against the bull, and slew    320  
 A thousand foes in one. But now no more  
 He finds me pleasing, and a captive maid  
 Has been preferred to me—but shall not be!  
 The day that ends our marriage ends his life.



Yet what is this? My courage fails, my wrath 325  
 Declines, my anger ceases, wretched one,  
 Why languid? Wherefore lose thy rage? Wouldst  
 keep

A woman's patient constancy? What law  
 Forbids add fuel to the flame? What force  
 Subdues the fire? O strength of wrath, abide! 330  
 Peers shall we be, I have no need of vows,  
 A stepdame will be with me who will guide  
 My hands aright, though she be uninvoked.

*Nurse.* What crime preparest thou, O heart insane?  
 Wouldst slay thy husband, him whose glory spreads  
 From east to west, his fame from earth to heaven?  
 The land of Greece would rise 'gainst such a deed, 337  
 His father's house, the whole Ætolian race  
 Would grieve, and all the earth avenge his death.  
 What canst thou do alone? Though thou shouldst  
 think 340

T' escape the vengeance of the earth and man,  
 The father of Alcides wields his bolts.  
 See, see his threatening torches in the sky,  
 The thunder-riven heavens! Fear death itself,  
 In which thou hop'st thou yet mayst safety find. 345  
 There rules the uncle of thy Hercules;  
 Wherever thou wouldst turn, unhappy one,  
 Thou findest there thy husband's kindred gods.

*Dejanira.* The crime is great, I own, but grief  
 impels,

*Nurse.* Thou'lt die.

*Dejanira.* But yet the wife of Hercules. 350  
 No day shall rise to find me widowed wife,  
 No captive concubine enjoy my couch.  
 The day shall sooner rise from out the west,

The Indian beneath the northern sky  
 Shall sooner pale, and sooner Phœbus' rays 355  
 Make dark the Scythian than Thessalian maids  
 See me deserted ; with my blood I'll quench  
 Their marriage torches. He shall die or I ;  
 To savage beings slain he yet may add  
 A wife, and I among his mighty deeds 360  
 Be numbered. Yet in death I'll still embrace  
 The couch of Hercules. Alcides' wife  
 May freely pass among the shades, but goes  
 Not unavenged ; should Iole conceive  
 A child by Hercules, these hands of mine 365  
 Shall tear it from her womb, yea through the blaze  
 Of marriage torches I will seize the maid.  
 What though in anger, on his wedding day,  
 He make of me the victim, if I fall  
 Above the lifeless form of Iole ? 370  
 Who falls upon the forms of those he hates  
 Dies happy.

*Nurse.* Why add fuel to the flame ?  
 Why feed thy boundless sorrow ? Wretched one,  
 Why needlessly afraid ? He chose the maid  
 While yet her father reigned ; he sought in her 375  
 The daughter of a king, but when the queen  
 Declined into a slave, love lost its force  
 And her misfortune took away her charm :  
 Forbidden things are loved, what one may have  
 One willingly foregoes.

*Dejanira.* Her lowered state 380  
 Inflames a greater love ; he loves her still.  
 Although she lacks a home, although her hair  
 Hangs unadorned with gold or precious gems.  
 Perchance his pity loves her very grief.

This is his wont, to love his captive ones. 385

*Nurse.* Dardanian Priam's sister, whom he loved,  
He gave away ; recall how many wives,  
How many virgins he has loved before,  
Inconstant ever. While she wove the dance

In Pallas' honor, the Arcadian maid, 390

Augeia, suffered from Alcides' lust—

She died and Hercules remembered not

His former love. Need I of others speak?

The muses have no lover, brief the flame

Which burned for them within Alcides' breast. 395

A guest upon Timolus, he caressed

The Lydian maid, and, still the slave of love,

He sat beside the wheel and lightly turned

With unaccustomed hand the moistened thread ;

He laid from off his neck the lion's spoil, 400

The Lydian fillet bound his shaggy locks

That dripped with myrrh from Saba. Everywhere

He feels the heat of love, but brief the flame.

*Dejanira.* A gallant ever follows wandering flames.

*Nurse.* Could he prefer a slave, a foeman's child, 405  
To thee ?

*Dejanira.* As when the early sunshine clothes

The grove's bare boughs, the joyous woods put forth

New buds, but when the cold north wind drives back

The south wind and harsh winter cuts away

The leaves, and one beholds the bare brown trunks,

So we in running life's long journey lose 411

Some beauty ever and less lovely grow.

That way has love departed, what in us

He loved is gone, and pain and motherhood

Have robbed me of him. Seest thou not the slave

Has not yet lost her pristine comeliness? 416

Rich ornaments indeed she lacks, and sits  
 In squalor, yet her beauty shines through all,  
 And time and chance have taken from her naught  
 Except her kingdom. Therefore grief slays sleep.  
 I was the wife most honored everywhere, 421  
 And every woman looked with envious eyes  
 Upon my marriage ; when Argolic maids  
 Made prayers for aught to any of the gods,  
 I was the measure of the good they asked. 425  
 What father shall I have that equals Jove ?  
 What husband under heaven equals mine ?  
 Should he who gave Alcides his commands,  
 Eurystheus' self, espouse me, he is less.  
 To have been severed from a prince's bed 430  
 Were little ; she indeed is sorely reft  
 Who feels herself bereft of Hercules.

*Nurse.* The children oft win back the husband's  
 love.

*Dejanira.* Her child, perchance, will draw him from  
 my couch 434

*Nurse.* Perchance he brought her to thee for a gift.

*Dejanira.* The man thou seest pass among the  
 towns,

Illustrious, and bearing on his back  
 The tawny lion's skin, who from the proud  
 Takes realms and gives them to the sore distressed,  
 Who in his dread hand bears a mighty club, 440  
 Whose triumphs by the farthest lands are sung,  
 Are sung by all the peoples of the earth,  
 Is most inconstant ; nor does glory's grace  
 Incite him, through the world he wanders still,  
 Not as the peer of Jove, nor as the great 445  
 Should pass through Argive cities, but he seeks

One he may love, would gain a virgin's bed.  
 He ravishes whatever is denied,  
 Against the people's anger, from their wreck,  
 Procures his brides, and raging passion gains 450  
 The name of courage. Famed Œchalia fell ;  
 One day, one sun beheld the city safe  
 And ruined, Love the only cause of war.  
 As often as a father shall refuse  
 To give his daughter to great Hercules, 455  
 So oft he needs to fear. Who will not be  
 Alcides' father is Alcides' foe,  
 And if he be not made a son, he slays.  
 Why keep I then my hands in innocence,  
 Till, feigning madness, with his savage hands 460  
 He bends his bow and slays his son and me ?  
 So Hercules is wont to cast aside  
 His wives, so wont to break his marriage bond.  
 Nor can one count him guilty ; to the world  
 Juno appears the cause of all his crimes. 465  
 Why should inactive anger pause amazed ?  
 Anticipate his crime—up, hands, and smite,  
 While yet my wrath burns hot within my breast.  
*Nurse.* Wouldst slay a husband ?  
*Dejanira.* Yes, of concubines !  
*Nurse.* The Jove-begotten ?  
*Dejanira.* Of Alcmena's race. 470  
*Nurse.* Not with the sword ?  
*Dejanira.* The sword.  
*Nurse.* But if too weak ?  
*Dejanira.* By guile I'll kill him.  
*Nurse.* Oh, what madness this !  
*Dejanira.* My husband was the teacher.  
*Nurse.* Wilt thou slay

The man whom Juno could not?

*Dejanira.* Whom the gods  
Most hate they render wretched, whom men hate 475  
They bring to nothing.

*Nurse.* Spare him, wretched one,  
And fear.

*Dejanira.* Who does not stand in fear of death  
Fears nothing. I rejoice to meet his sword.

*Nurse.* O foster-child, thy grief is heavier  
Than's meet, the fault demands an equal hate 480  
Oh, why so harshly judge his light offence?  
Measure thy grieving by thy injury.

*Dejanira.* And is a mistress then a slight offence  
Against a wife? Whatever else she bears,  
This is indeed too heavy.

*Nurse.* Has thy love 485  
For great Alcides fled?

*Dejanira.* Nay, nurse, not fled  
Believe, it lives deep fixed within my heart,  
But angered love is anguish infinite.

*Nurse.* By magic arts and prayers have wives oft  
bound  
Their husbands. I have made the winter groves 490  
Grow green, the hurtling thunderbolt stand still,  
Have made the dry earth glad; the rocks gave  
place,  
The gates of hell flew back, the dead stood still,  
The gods infernal spoke at my command,  
The dog of hell was silent, midnight saw 495  
The sun, and day was overwhelmed in night,  
The earth and sea, the sky and Tartarus,  
Obeyed me, nothing kept its ancient seat  
Before my incantations. Let us seek

To bend his will, my songs will find a way. 500

*Dejanira.* What plants does Pontus nourish, or  
what grows

On Pindus underneath Thessalian rocks ?

Where shall I find a charm to conquer him ?

Though Luna at the magic of thy songs

Should leave the stars and hide within the earth, 505

And winter see the harvest ; though the flash

Of Jove's swift lightning pause at thy command ;

Though nature's order be reversed, and day

Should shine with many stars, he will not bend.

*Nurse.* Love conquers even the immortal gods. 510

*Dejanira.* This too, perchance, he'll conquer, gain  
this spoil,

And love may be Alcides' last great task.

By the divinity of all the gods,

By this my fear, I pray thee : keep concealed

Whate'er I do in secret, hide it well. 515

*Nurse.* What is it thou wouldst hide ?

*Dejanira.* Not spears, nor swords,

Nor yet avenging fires.

*Nurse.* I can and will

Keep silence, if such silence be not sin.

*Dejanira.* I pray thee look around, lest any hear

And keep a watchful eye on every side. 520

*Nurse.* The place is safe from any prying one.

*Dejanira.* In a far corner of this realm there lies

A hidden cave that keeps our secret well.

That place sees not the sun at morning's prime

Nor yet when Titan, bringer of the light, 525

Sinks with the spent day in the crimson sea.

There lies assurance of Alcides' love,

The charm from Nessus comes, whom Nephele

Conceived by the Thessalian king and bore  
 Where Pindus lifts its head among the stars, 530  
 Where rising o'er the clouds bald Othrys stands.  
 For when, exposed to dread Alcides' club,  
 Acheloüs took lightly every form,  
 But, having passed through all, stood forth at last  
 Subdued, with broken horns and wounded head, 535  
 The victor Hercules to Argos went  
 With me, his wife. Evenus' wandering stream  
 Swift through the meadows to the ocean bore  
 Its flood of waters, its impetuous waves  
 Already almost reached the line of woods. 540  
 The centaur Nessus, used to crossing floods,  
 Was eager for a prize, and bearing me  
 Upon his back where join the horse and man,  
 He stemmed the swelling water's threatening waves.  
 Alcides still was wandering in their midst 545  
 Cutting the eager depths with mighty strides.  
 Then when he saw Alcides still afar :  
 ' My spoil art thou,' he said, ' my wife shalt be,  
 The waves are passed.' Then holding me embraced,  
 His steps he hastened. But the waves no more 550  
 Detained great Hercules. ' Base ferryman,'  
 He said, ' though Ister and the Ganges flow  
 With mingled currents, I will conquer both,  
 My shafts will speed thy flight.' More swift his bow  
 Than words ; the arrow, flying to the wound, 555  
 Transfixed the centaur, ending flight in death.  
 Already searching blindly for the light  
 He caught the poison flowing from the wound,  
 And in his hoof, which with his savage hand  
 He boldly tore away, he gave it me. 560  
 Then spake he dying words : ' This charm,' he said,



' Can fix a wavering lover, so the brides  
 Of Thessaly were by Mycale taught—  
 She was the mage at whose command the moon  
 Deserted starry heaven to follow her, 565  
 A garment smeared with this, this very blood,  
 He said, ' give thou to fickle Hercules,  
 If e'er a hated mistress should usurp  
 Thy marriage rights, and he should give great Jove  
 Another daughter. It must see no light, 570  
 In darkness most remote lie things like this.  
 So only shall this blood retain its strength.'  
 Then did the sleep of death cut short his words,  
 And brought his weary members long repose.  
 O thou, to whom I trust, with whom I share 575  
 This secret, quickly go and bring the charm,  
 That, smeared upon his shining robe, its force  
 May enter through his heart and limbs, and pierce  
 His inmost marrow.

*Nurse.* Quickly I obey  
 Thy will, dear foster-child ; do thou invoke 580  
 With earnest prayer the god invincible  
 Who shoots with youthful hand his certain shafts.

## SCENE III

*Dejanira, alone.*

O thou whom earth and sea and heavenly powers  
 Adore in fear, who shakest Etna's fires,  
 I make my prayer to thee, O winged child, 585  
 Feared of thy ruthless mother ; with true aim  
 Make ready thy swift dart, no common shafts ;  
 I pray thee, choose the keenest, which not yet

Thy hands have aimed at any, there is need  
 Of such that Hercules may learn to love. 590  
 With firm hand draw the bow till both horns meet,  
 Shoot now the shaft that wounded once dread Jove  
 When casting down his thunderbolt, the god  
 Put on a horned and swelling front, and cleft  
 The raging seas, and as a bull bore off 595  
 The fair Assyrian maid. Oh, pierce with love,  
 A love more keen than any yet have felt !  
 Let Hercules learn love for me his wife.  
 And if the charms of Iole should set  
 The fire of love aflame within his heart, 600  
 Oh, let it drink the love of me and die.  
 Thou oft hast conquered thunder-bearing Jove,  
 And him who in the land of shadows wields  
 The dusky scepter, ruler of the Styx  
 And leader of the great majority. 605  
 More strong than angered stepdame, take, O god,  
 This triumph—thou alone—quell Hercules.

## SCENE IV

*Dejanira, Nurse.*

*Nurse.* The charm is ready, and the shining web  
 That wearied all thy damsels' hands to weave.  
 Smear now the poison, let Alcides' robe 610  
 Drink in the blood, I'll strengthen with my prayers  
 Its magic power. But see where Lichas comes,  
 The charm must be concealed, nor our device  
 Be known.

## SCENE V

*Dejanira, Nurse, Lichas.*

*Dejanira.* In palaces of kings is rarely found 615  
 A faithful servant ; faithful Lichas, take  
 This garment which with my own hands I spun  
 While Hercules was wandering through the world,  
 Or drunk with wine was holding on his breast  
 The Lydian maid, or seeking Iole. 620  
 Yet peradventure, having well deserved,  
 I may win back the rugged hero's heart,  
 For merit often overcometh ill.  
 Command my husband not to wear the robe  
 Until with incense he has fed the flames, 625  
 And reconciled the gods, and on wet locks  
 Has bound a wreath of silver poplar leaves.  
 Within the palace I will make my prayers  
 To Venus, mother of unconquered love.  
 Ye Calydonian women, friends who came 630  
 From home with me, lament my mournful fate.

## SCENE VI

*Chorus of Ætolian Women.*

O daughter of Oineus, thy childhood's friends,  
 We weep thy hapless marriage, honored one.  
 We, who with thee were wont to wade the shoals  
 Of Acheloius, when with passing spring 635  
 Its swollen waters ebbed, and with slow sweep  
 Its slender current wound, and when no more  
 The yellow waters of Lycormas rolled,

A headlong, turgid river ; we were wont  
To seek Minerva's altars, and to join 640  
The virgin chorus ; we with thee were wont  
To bear the holy emblems treasured up  
Within the Theban ark, when winter's cold  
Had passed, and thrice the sun called summer forth,  
When the grain-giver Ceres' sacred seat 645  
Eleusis shut the priest within her shrines.  
Whatever fate thou fearest, let us still  
Remain the faithful sharers of thy lot.  
When happier fortune smiles, fidelity  
Is rare. Though all the people throng thy courts, 650  
Though hundreds cross thy threshold, though thou pass  
Surrounded by a crowd of followers,  
Yet hardly shalt thou find among them all  
One faithful friend ; the dread Erinnyes hold  
The gilded portals, and when great men's gates 655  
Are opened fraud and craft and treachery  
And lurking murder enter, and abroad  
Thou goest among the people companied  
By envy. Oft as morning drives out night,  
Believe, so often is a monarch born. 660  
Few serve the king and not his kingly power,  
The glory of the court is dear to most :  
One seeks to be the nearest to the king  
And pass illustrious through the city streets ;  
And one with glory's lust is burnt, and one 665  
Would sate his thirst with gold—nor all the tracts  
Of Ister, rich in gems, suffice his greed,  
Nor Lydia quench his thirst, nor all the land  
Where Zephyr sighs and golden Tagus flows ;  
Nor were the Hebrus his, flowed through his fields  
The rich Hydaspes, if the Ganges' flood 671

Within his borders ran ; the world itself  
 Is all too small to serve the covetous.  
 Kings and kings' palaces one cultivates,  
 Not that to drive the plough with bended back 675  
 The ploughmen never cease, or thousands till  
 The fields—he only longs for heaped-up wealth.  
 One serves the king that he may trample all,  
 May ruin many and may strengthen none ;  
 He longs for power but to use it ill. 680  
 How few death finds at fulness of their fame ;  
 Whom Cynthia beholds in happiness,  
 The new-born day sees wretched ; rare it is  
 To grow old happy. Softer is the sod  
 Than Tyrian robe and brings a fearless sleep, 685  
 But golden roofs disturb repose, and kings  
 Must lengthen out the watches of the night.  
 Oh, if the rich man's heart were visible,  
 How many fears fair fortune stirs within !  
 The Bruttian waters, tossed by northwest winds, 690  
 Are port more peaceful. With untroubled heart  
 The poor may rest, his cup and plate, indeed,  
 Are only birchwood, but with fearless hand  
 He holds them ; easily his simple food  
 Is gathered, and he fears no waiting sword : 695  
 In cup of gold the drink is mixed with blood.  
 The wife who weds a man of humble means  
 May wear no costly necklace nor be decked  
 With Red Sea's gift, nor carry in her ears  
 The choicest gems of eastern waves, nor wear 700  
 Soft wool twice dipped in rich Sidonian dyes,  
 Nor with Mæonian needle broider it—  
 The Seres, dwelling near the rising sun,  
 To eastward, made the needle from the trees.

What though with common plants she dye the weft  
 Her unskilled hands have woven, she enjoys 706  
 Untroubled marriage. Whom the people praise  
 The dread Erinnys follows with her scourge,  
 And poverty itself is scarcely glad  
 Until it sees the fortunate o'erthrown. 710  
 The man who will not keep the middle course  
 Ne'er finds his pathway safe. When once he sought  
 To drive his father's car and bring the day,  
 The boy kept not the wonted road, but found  
 With wandering wheel a way among the stars 715  
 Unknown to flaming Phœbus—in his fall  
 The world was ruined. While he ploughed through  
 heaven

A middle course, bold Dædalus steered safe  
 Through peaceful climes, nor gave the sea a name,  
 But Icarus despised his father's flight 720  
 And dared to fly beyond the birds themselves,  
 Close to the sun. He gave an unknown sea  
 His name. Great deeds are recompensed by ill.  
 Be others known as fortunate and great,  
 But let no crowd hail me as powerful, 725  
 Let no great gale compel my slender ships  
 To sail broad seas, small boats should keep near shore;  
 Misfortune passes by the quiet ports  
 And seeks the ships that ride the deep, whose sails  
 Knock at the clouds. But why with pallid face, 730  
 Like mænad drunk with Bacchus, stands the queen?  
 Speak, wretched one, what grief does Fortune's wheel  
 Roll round for thee? Though thou refuse to speak  
 Thy face would tell the sorrows thou wouldst hide.

## ACT III

### SCENE I

*Dejanira, Nurse, Chorus.*

*Dejanira.* A trembling shakes my terror-smitten  
limbs, 735

My hair with horror stands erect, and fear  
Benumbs the soul till now so madly tossed ;  
Aghast and terrified, my heart leaps up,  
With throbbing veins my liver palpitates ;  
As when the storm-blown sea still tosses high, 740  
Although the day has calmed and languid airs  
Breathe softly, so my mind that hitherto  
Has swelled with fear is still with dread oppressed ;  
When once god turns against the fortunate  
Misfortune follows fast. Such end awaits 745  
Performance of great deeds.

*Nurse.* What cruel fate  
Turns now the wheel for thee, O wretched one ?

*Dejanira.* When I had smeared the robe with  
Nessus' blood  
And sent it, and had sadly turned to seek  
My chamber, sudden fear, I know not why, 750  
Assailed me—fear of fraud. I'll test the charm.  
Fierce Nessus bade me keep the charmed blood  
From flame or sun, this artifice itself  
Foreboded treachery. Undimmed by cloud,

The glowing sun was ushering in bright day ; 755  
 Fear hardly yet permits me speak ! I cast  
 Within the fiery beams of Titan's light  
 The blood with which the palla had been wet,  
 The vestments smeared. The blood I threw away  
 Quivered, and, hardly yet by Phœbus' beams 760  
 Made warm, blazed up. I scarce can tell the tale !  
 As Eurus or warm Notus melts the snow  
 That slips from sparkling Mimas in the spring ;  
 As the Leucadian headland breaks the waves  
 That roll against it from the Ionian sea, 765  
 And all the wearied surf breaks into foam ;  
 Or as the bitter incense melts away  
 Upon the glowing altar of the gods,  
 So all the wool was withered and destroyed,  
 And while I wondered, that which gave me cause 770  
 For wonder vanished, but the earth was moved  
 Like foam, and everything the poison touched  
 Shrank into nothingness. But swift of foot  
 And terrified, I see my son approach.

## SCENE II

*Hyllus, Dejanira, Nurse, Chorus.*

*Dejanira.* What tidings dost thou bring me ?  
 Speak, I pray. 775

*Hyllus.* Fly, fly, if any hiding-place remains  
 On earth, or sea, or ocean, in the skies  
 Or Hades, mother, fly beyond the hand  
 Of Hercules.

*Dejanira.* 'Tis what my soul presaged !

*Hyllus.* Oh, seek the realm of the victorious one, 780



Seek Juno's shrine, this still is free to thee,  
All sanctuaries else are snatched away.

*Dejanira.* Oh, speak, what fate awaits me innocent ?

*Hyllus.* That glory of the earth, the only guard  
The fates have given to a stricken world 785  
In place of Jove himself, is gone ; there burns  
Within the trunk and limbs of Hercules  
Some plague, I know not what. Who ruled the beasts,  
That victor now is conquered, moans, laments.  
What further wouldst thou ask ?

*Dejanira.* The wretched seek  
To know their misery ; speak, what the fate 791  
That presses on our home ? O household gods !  
Unhappy household gods ! I am indeed  
Now widowed, exiled, overwhelmed by fate !

*Hyllus.* Thou weapest not alone for Hercules, 795  
The world must mourn him with thee, do not deem,  
O mother, that the grief is thine alone ;  
Already all the race lifts up its voice.  
Lo, all the world laments with heavy grief  
The man thou mournest ; thou but sufferest 800  
A sorrow that the whole earth shares with thee,  
Thou mourn'st Alcides first, O wretched one,  
But not alone.

*Dejanira.* Yet tell me, tell, I pray,  
How near to death lies now my Hercules.

*Hyllus.* Death, whom in his own realm he con-  
quered once, 805  
Flies from him, nor dares fate permit the wrong.  
Dread Clotho throws aside the threads, perchance,  
And fears to end the fates of Hercules.  
O fatal day ! O day calamitous !  
Shall great Alcides see no other day ? 810

*Dejanira.* What? Dost thou say that he has gone  
before  
To death, the shadow realm, the dark abode?  
May I not be the first to die? Oh, speak,  
If he not yet has fall'n.

*Hyllus.* Eubœa's land,  
That swells with mighty headlands, on all sides 815  
Is beaten by the sea; the Hellespont  
Smites Cephæus; this side the south wind blows,  
But there Aquilo's snowy storm-winds threat,  
Euripus turns the restless, wandering tides  
That seven times roll up and seven times 820  
Drop back ere Titan in the ocean's flood  
Merges his weary head. Upon the isle,  
High on a cliff which many clouds surround,  
An ancient temple of Cœnæan Jove  
Shines forth. When on the altars he had placed 825  
The votive offering and all the grove  
Was filled with lowing of the gilded bulls,  
He threw aside his tawny lion's skin  
All foul with putrid gore, laid down his club  
And freed his shoulder from the quiver's weight, 830  
Then shining in thy robe, his shaggy locks  
With silver poplar bound, he lit the fire  
Upon the altar. 'Take,' he said, 'this gift,  
O father, let thy sacred fires shine bright  
With plenteous incense, which from Saba's trees 835  
The Arabs, wealthy servants of the sun,  
Collect. The earth,' he said, 'the sky, the sea,  
Are all at peace; all savage beasts subdued,  
And I have come a victor. Lay aside  
Thy thunderbolt.' But even as he prayed, 840  
He groaned, and wondering at himself fell prone.

A horrid clamor filled the air, such noise  
 As when the bull attempts to fly the wound  
 Inflicted by the two-edged ax, and feels  
 The sting of steel, and with his mighty roar 845  
 Fills all the holy place ; or, as Jove's bolt  
 From heaven thunders, so this groaning rolled  
 Skyward and seaward ; Chalcis heard the sound,  
 It woke the echoes of the Cyclades,  
 The crags of Cephereus and all the groves 850  
 Gave back Alcides' voice. I saw him weep ;  
 The people thought him mad as once he was ;  
 His servants fled ; he turned with fiery glance  
 And sought for one alone among them all—  
 Sought Lichas. He with trembling fingers grasped  
 The altars, died of fear, and left small room 856  
 For vengeance. With his hand the hero grasped  
 The quivering corpse. 'By this hand, this,' he cried,  
 'O fates, have I at last been overcome ?  
 Has Lichas conquered Hercules? Behold 860  
 Another conquest : Lichas overwhelmed  
 By Hercules. My deeds grow poor and mean.  
 Be this my latest labor.' 'Mid the stars  
 He flung him, sprinkled with his blood the clouds.  
 So flies the Getic arrow from the bow 865  
 Toward heaven, so the Cretan archer shoots  
 His shaft, but not so far the arrow flies.  
 The head was shattered on the cliffs, the trunk  
 Fell into ocean, there they both abide.  
 'Stay, madness has not seized my mind,' he said, 870  
 'This ill is worse than madness or than wrath,  
 I rage against myself.' He spoke and raged.  
 He rent apart his joints, with cruel hand  
 He tore his giant limbs and wounded them ;

He sought in vain to pluck away the robe. 875  
 In this alone I saw Alcides fail,  
 Yet striving still to tear it off he tore  
 His limbs themselves, the robe had grown a part  
 Of Hercules' dread body, with the flesh  
 The garment mingled, nor could one detect 880  
 The dread disaster's cause, though cause there is.  
 Now hardly able to endure his pain,  
 Wearied he lies and presses with his face  
 The earth, then longs for ocean, his distress  
 The waves soothe not ; he seeks the sounding shore  
 And leaps into the deep, his servants' hands 886  
 Hold back the wandering one. O bitter fate !  
 We were the equal of great Hercules !  
 Now to Eubœa's shore a vessel bears  
 The hero back, a gentle south wind wafts 890  
 Alcides' giant weight ; life leaves his limbs,  
 Night sits upon his eyes.

*Dejanira.*

Why faint, my soul ?

Why art thou so amazed ? The crime is done.  
 Can Jove demand again his son of thee,  
 Or Juno ask her rival ? To the world 895  
 Thou must atone, render then what thou canst.  
 The sword shall smite me. Thus it shall be done.  
 Suits such light punishment such heavy guilt ?  
 O father, with thy thunderbolts destroy  
 Thy sinful child, nor let thy hand be armed 900  
 With common weapons. Send that thunderbolt  
 With which, had not Alcides been thy son,  
 Thou wouldst have burned the Hydra : as a scourge  
 Destroy me, as an evil dreaded more  
 Than angry stepdame. Such a bolt send forth 905  
 As once at wandering Phaethon was hurled.

I ruined, in Alcides, all the world.  
 Why ask a weapon of the gods? Now spare  
 Thy son, O Jove; the wife of Hercules  
 Should be ashamed to beg for death, this hand 910  
 Shall give the gift I ask for. Seize the sword:  
 Yet why a sword? Whatever drags to death  
 Is sword sufficient. From some soaring cliff  
 I'll cast me down. This  $\text{\textcircled{E}}$ ta will I choose,  
 This  $\text{\textcircled{E}}$ ta where first shines the newborn day; 915  
 From this I'll fling myself, the rugged rocks  
 Shall cut me into pieces, every stone  
 Shall take a part of me, my wounded hands  
 Shall hang upon them, all the mountain side  
 Be crimsoned with my blood. A single death 920  
 Is nothing.—Nothing? Can I make it more?  
 Canst thou not choose the weapon, O my soul,  
 On which to fall? Oh, might Alcides' sword  
 Become my couch! 'Twere well to die on this.  
 Is it enough that by my own right hand 925  
 I die? Assemble nations of the earth,  
 Hurl rocks and flaming brands, let no hand fail,  
 So have I found at last my punishment.  
 Already cruel kings bear rule unchecked;  
 Now unrestrained, are savage monsters born; 930  
 Again the accustomed altars seek to take  
 A brother's blood for sacrificial gift.  
 My hand has opened up a path for crime,  
 Has snatched away the punisher of kings,  
 Of tyrants, beasts, and monsters, 'gainst the gods 935  
 I set myself. O wife of thundering Jove,  
 Dost stay thy hand? Why spare thy lightning's shaft,  
 Nor imitate thy brother, sending forth  
 The thunder snatched from Jove? Why slay me not?

From thee great glory, honor infinite, 940  
I snatched, O Juno, in thy rival slain.

*Hyllus.* Why wouldst thou overthrow a tottering  
house?

If crime is here it is of error sprung;  
And he who sins unwittingly scarce sins.

*Dejanira.* Who would remit his fate and spare him-  
self 945

Deserves to err. 'Tis well that I should die.

*Hyllus.* Who longs for death seems guilty.

*Dejanira.* Death alone  
Makes guiltless those deceived.

*Hyllus.* From Titan's beams  
First fleeing—

*Dejanira.* Titan flees, himself, from me, 949

*Hyllus.* Wouldst part with life?

*Dejanira.* Alcides would I seek.

*Hyllus.* He breathes, he yet takes in the vital air.

*Dejanira.* When Hercules was conquered, he was  
dead!

*Hyllus.* Wouldst leave thy son? Thyself cut short  
thy life?

*Dejanira.* She livestoo long whose son must bury her.

*Hyllus.* Follow thy husband.

*Dejanira.* Ah, the faithful wife

Is wont to go before.

*Hyllus.* Unhappy one, 956

If thou condemn thyself, thou seemst indeed

To prove thyself the guilty.

*Dejanira.* He who sins

May not himself annul the punishment.

*Hyllus.* The life of many a one is spared whose sin  
Was done in error, not by his own hand. 961

Who blames his lot ?

*Dejanira.*                   Whoever draws a lot  
Unfavoring.

*Hyllus.* The man, forsooth, whose darts  
Pierced Megara, whose fiercely raging hand  
Sent the Lernæan shaft that slew his sons,                   965  
Though thrice a murderer, yet forgives himself.  
In Cinyphs' stream, beneath the Libyan skies,  
He bathed his hands and washed away his guilt.  
Oh, whither art thou driven, wretched one ?  
Why blame thy hands ?

*Dejanira.*                   The conquered Hercules   970  
Himself condemns them—one should punish crime.

*Hyllus.* If I have known Alcides, he will be  
Again the victor ; treachery, o'erwhelmed,  
Will bow before thy Hercules.

*Dejanira.*                   His joints  
Are wasted by the Hydra's venom'd gore,                   975  
The poison eats my husband's giant limbs.

*Hyllus.* Thou deemst the poison of the strangled  
snake  
Can slay the one who took its evil life ?  
He killed the dragon, though its teeth were fixed  
Within his flesh ; and, though his limbs were wet   980  
With flowing venom, as a victor stood.  
Can Nessus' blood destroy the one who slew  
Dread Nessus' self ?

*Dejanira.*                   In vain wouldst thou detain  
One doomed to die. The sentence has gone forth  
That I must leave the light, enough of life                   985  
Has he who meets his death with Hercules.

*Nurse.* By these white hairs, I ask thee ; by this  
breast

That like a mother's nourished thee, I pray,  
 Put by thy wounded spirit's heavy threats ;  
 Thrust out the fearful thoughts of dreaded death. 990

*Dejanira.* He who persuades the wretched not to die  
 Is cruel ; death is sometimes punishment,  
 But, oft a blessing, has to many brought  
 Forgiveness.

*Nurse.* Yet unhappy one, restrain  
 Thy hand, that he may know the crime to be 995  
 Not thine, but error's.

*Dejanira.* There I'm free indeed !  
 I think the gods infernal will absolve.  
 I am by my own self condemned ; these hands  
 Let Pluto purge. Forgetful, by thy banks,  
 O Lethe, let me stand, a mournful shade, 1000  
 Receive my husband ! Whosoe'er was bold  
 For crime, his sin was less than my mistake :  
 Not Juno's self had dared to snatch from earth  
 Great Hercules. Some worthy penalty  
 Prepare ; let Sisyphus desert his stone 1005  
 And let my shoulders roll its heavy weight.  
 Me let the wandering waters fly, my thirst  
 The faithless waves delude ; I have deserved  
 That thou shouldst roll me round, O flying wheel  
 Whereon the king of Thessaly is racked. 1010  
 Let eager vultures on my entrails feed ;  
 One child of Danaus there lacks—the tale  
 Of fifty I will fill ; O Theban wife,  
 Take me as thy companion, with worse crime  
 Than thine this hand is stained, though thou didst slay  
 Thy children and thy brothers ; take thy child, 1016  
 Mother Althea, take thy child indeed !  
 Yet no such deed was thine ! Ye faithful wives,



Who in the sacred woodland stretches dwell,  
 Shut me from fields Elysian. If one there 1020  
 Has sprinkled with her husband's blood her hands,  
 Unmindful of chaste marriage torch has stood,  
 A bloody child of Belus, with drawn sword,  
 She as her own will know me, praise my deed ;  
 That company of wives I well may join ; 1025  
 But they, too, shun my hands so basely stained.  
 O husband, strong, invincible, my soul  
 Is innocent, my hands alone are stained.  
 O mind too credulous ! O Nessus false  
 And of half beastly guile ! A concubine 1030  
 I sought to ruin, but destroyed myself !  
 Bright Titan, life, that flattering still dost hold  
 The wretched in the light of day, depart !  
 Where Hercules is not the light is vile.  
 I will discharge the penalty for thee, 1035  
 Will give my life. Shall I prolong that life  
 Till at thy hand, O husband, I meet death ?  
 Hast any strength ? Can thy right hand make tense  
 The bowstring for the sending of the shaft ?  
 Or do the weapons fall, thy languid hands 1040  
 No longer draw the bow ? O husband brave,  
 If thou art able still to slay, I wait  
 Thy hand, I wait for death ; as thou didst dash  
 In pieces guiltless Lichas, slay me now,  
 In other cities scatter me, in worlds 1045  
 To thee unknown ; that monstrous things may cease  
 In Arcady, destroy me. Yet from those  
 Thou didst return, O husband !

*Hyllus.* Mother cease.

Excuse thy deed, an error is not crime.

*Dejanira.* If filial piety be truly thine, 1050

O Hyllus, smite thy mother. Wherefore now  
Trembles thy hand? Why turn away thy face?  
This crime were filial piety indeed.

O dastard, dost thou hesitate? This hand  
Snatched from thee Hercules, destroyed the one 1055  
Who gave thee for a grandsire thundering Jove;  
I snatched from thee a glory far more great  
Than e'er I gave thee when I gave thee light.

If crime is new to thee, then learn of me,  
Hew with the sword my throat, let iron pierce 1060  
The womb that bore thee, an intrepid soul  
Thy mother gave thee. Such deed were not crime  
For thee; by my will, though by thy right hand,  
I die. Dost fear, O son of Hercules?

Wilt thou not, like thy father, crush out ill, 1065  
Perform great deeds? Prepare thy good right hand!  
Behold a bosom full of misery

Lies bared: strike, I proclaim thee free from crime:  
The dread Eumenides themselves will spare,  
I hear their scourges singing. Who is that 1070  
Whose viperous locks upon her forehead writhe,  
Who brandishes her sword and shakes her wings?

Why dost thou follow me with flaming torch,  
Megæra? Dost demand the vengeance due  
For Hercules? I give it. Awful one, 1075  
Have hell's dread arbiters judged yet my cause?  
Behold. I see the dreadful prison doors.

What aged one is he who strives to lift  
The giant rock upon his wounded back?  
Behold already does the conquered stone 1080  
Roll back! Whose members tremble on the wheel?

Lo, pallid, dread Tisiphone appears,  
She charges murder; spare thy blows, I pray!

Megæra, spare! Thy Stygian torches stay!  
 The crime was caused by love. But what is this?  
 Earth shakes, the smitten roofs crack, whence these  
 threats? 1086

The whole world falls upon me, everywhere  
 The nations groan, the universe demands  
 Its great defender. O ye cities spare!  
 Ah, whither can I fly? In death alone 1090  
 I find a harbor for my shipwrecked soul.  
 I call to witness shining Phœbus' wheel  
 Of flame, the heavenly ones to witness call:  
 I die and leave great Hercules on earth.

*Hyllus.* Ah me, she flies amazed; the mother's part  
 Is finished, she resolved to die, my part 1096  
 Remains—to snatch her from the shock of death.  
 O pitiable filial piety!  
 If I should stay my mother's death, my crime  
 Is great against my father; yet I sin 1100  
 Against my mother, suffering her death;  
 Crime presses either way, yet she must be  
 Prevented—I must snatch her from this crime.

## SCENE III

*Chorus.*

What Orpheus sang, Calliope's blest son,  
 When 'neath the heights of Thracian Rhodope 1105  
 He struck his lute Pierian, is true:  
 Nothing abides. The rushing waterfall  
 Silenced its thunder at his music's sound,  
 The waters ceased their flow, forgot their haste,  
 And while the rivers thus delayed their course, 1110

The far-off Thracian thought the Hebrus failed.  
 The woodland brought the winged kind, they came  
 Resting within the groves, or if a wing  
 That, roaming, flew through upper air the while,  
 Was wanting, when it heard the song it dropped. 1115  
 Mount Athos tore away its crags and came,  
 Bearing the Centaurs as it moved along,  
 And stood by Rhodope; its snowy crown  
 Was melted by the song; the dryad fled  
 Her oak and hasted to the prophet's side; 1120  
 The wild beasts at thy singing with their dens  
 Drew near; the Afric lion sat beside  
 The fearless flock, nor did the timid does  
 Tremble before the wolves; the serpent came  
 From gloomy den, its poisoned sting forgot. 1125  
 Nay more, he passed the gates of Tænarus  
 Among the silent manes, bearing there  
 His mournful lute, and with his doleful song  
 He overcame the melancholy gods  
 Of Erebus, nor feared the Stygian lake 1130  
 By which the gods make oath; the restless wheel  
 Stood still, its languid whirling forced to cease;  
 The heart of Tityus began to grow  
 The while the vultures listened to the song;  
 Thou also heardst, O oarsman, and thy boat 1135  
 Came oarless over the infernal stream;  
 Then first the aged Phrygian forgot  
 His raging thirst although the waves stood still,  
 Nor did he stretch a hand to reach the fruit.  
 When Orpheus seeking thus the lower world 1140  
 Poured forth his singing and the restless stone  
 Was conquered, following the prophet's song,  
 The Goddesses restored the severed thread

Of fair Eurydice. But Orpheus looked  
 Behind, forgetful or not deeming true 1145  
 Restored Eurydice was following him.  
 He lost the song's reward, she died again  
 Who hardly had been given back to life.  
 Then seeking comfort in his song, he sang  
 These words to Getan folk in mournful strains : 1150  
 Unchanging laws are given by the gods,  
 And he who rules the seasons ordereth  
 Four fleeting changes for the changing year.  
 Dead Hercules compels us to believe  
 The Thracian Seer. The Parcæ tie again 1155  
 The thread of life for none, however much  
 He may desire ; all that has been born  
 Or shall be dies. When to the world shall come  
 The time when law is not, the southern sky  
 Shall bury Libya, and on Afric's sands 1160  
 Shall fallen lie ; the northern sky o'erwhelm  
 Whatever lies beneath the poles, whate'er  
 Cold Boreas smites ; pale Titan blot the day  
 From heaven ; the royal palace of the sky  
 In its own ruin drag the rising sun 1165  
 And setting ; death and chaos overtake  
 The gods ; death find at last within itself  
 Its end. What place will then receive the world ?  
 Shall Tartarus spread wide her doors to take 1169  
 The shattered heavens ? Or is there space enough  
 Between the earth and heaven—perchance too much ?  
 What place can hold such crime ? A single place  
 Will hold the three realms—earth, and sea, and sky.  
 But what great clangor moves the wondering air ?  
 It is the sounding voice of Hercules. 1175

## ACT IV

### SCENE I

*Hercules, Chorus.*

*Hercules.* Bright Titan, turn again thy wearied  
steeds,  
Send night, let perish to the world that day  
Whereon I fell, let black cloud shadow day,  
So thwart my stepdame. Father, now command  
Black chaos to return; their union rent, 1180  
The poles should here and there be torn apart;  
Why spare the stars? O father, thou hast left  
Thy Hercules! Scan well on every side  
The sky, O Jove, lest any Gyas hurl  
Thessalian crags, and Othrys' weight be made 1185  
Too light for great Enceladus. The gates  
Of Hell's black prison now are opened wide  
By haughty Pluto, and his father's chains  
Are broken—to the sky he leads him back.  
That son who stood in place of thy dread torch 1190  
And thunder, as avenger of the world,  
Returns to Styx; and fierce Enceladus  
Shall rise and hurl against the gods the weight  
With which he now is held to earth. My death  
Shall make thy heavenly throne, O father, shake. 1195  
Before the giants make thy heavens their spoil,  
Beneath the ruins of the universe,

O father, bury me in whom thou lovest  
The firmament itself.

*Chorus.* Not empty are thy threats, O son of Jove.

Now on Thessalian Ossa Pelion stands, 1201

And Athos piled on Pindus lifts its groves

Amid the starry ether, Typhoeus thence

Shall overcome the cliffs and raise on high

From out the Tuscan sea Inarime. 1205

Enceladus, by lightning not yet slain

Shall rend his chimneys in the mountain side

And lift aloft great Etna. Even now

The realm of heaven is in thee destroyed.

*Hercules.* I, I, who conquered death and scorned  
the Styx 1210

And came again through stagnant Lethe's midst,

With spoil at sight of which bright Titan shrank

And from his fleeing horses almost fell ;

Yes, I, whose power the gods' three realms have felt,

I die although no sword has pierced my side, 1215

Although Mount Othrys did not bring my death,

Although no giant form with fierce wide jaws

Has overwhelmed me with all Pindus' ridge.

I fell without a foe and worst of all—

O wretched valor!—Hercules' last day 1220

Shall see no monster prostrate! Woe is me,

I lost my life, but not in noble deeds!

O judge of earth, ye gods who oft have seen

My labors, and thou earth, is it your will

To smite your Hercules with death? O shame 1225

Unmatched! O bitter fate! A woman's hand

To be the author of Alcides' death!

If fate unchanging willed my fate should be

By woman's hand, if such base threads run out

My last of life, ah me, why might I not 1230  
 By Juno's hatred fall? By woman's hand  
 I should have fallen, but by one divine.  
 If this had been too much to ask, ye gods,  
 An Amazon brought forth 'neath Scythian skies  
 Might well have vanquished me. What woman's hand  
 Could conquer me, great Juno's foe? Ah, worse 1236  
 Thy shame in this, my stepdame! Wherefore call  
 This day a glad one? What has earth brought forth  
 To satisfy thy wrath? A woman's hate,  
 A mortal's, was more powerful than thine. 1240  
 Till now thou hadst to tolerate the shame  
 Of finding thou wast not Alcides' peer,  
 Now thou art by two mortals overcome,  
 The gods should be ashamed of such revenge!  
 Would the Nemæan lion with my blood 1245  
 Had satisfied his thirst, or I, brought low,  
 Surrounded by the hundred-headed snake,  
 Had trembled; would that I, had been the prey  
 Of Nessus, or that I might wretched sit  
 Forever on an everlasting rock 1250  
 Conquered among the shades. Fate stood amazed,  
 While I dragged forth my latest prey and came  
 From Stygian depths again to light, and broke  
 The chains of Dis: Death fled me everywhere  
 That I might lack in death a glorious fate. 1255  
 O monsters, conquered monsters! Not the dog  
 Of hell, at sight of day, has dragged me back  
 To Styx, not underneath the western sky  
 Has the Iberian Geryon's savage rout  
 O'ercome me, not twin dragons; woe is me, 1260  
 How often have I lost a noble death!  
 What fame shall be my last?



*Chorus.* Dost see how courage, conscious of itself,  
 Shrinks not at Lethe's stream? He does not grieve  
 At death, but feels ashamed before its cause, 1265  
 He fain would end his final day of life  
 Beneath some swelling giant's mighty form,  
 Of mountain-bearing Titan feel the weight,  
 Or owe his death to ravening wild beast.  
 O wretched one, thy hand itself the cause 1270  
 Why no wild beast or savage monster lives;  
 What worthy author of Alcides' death  
 Remains, unless it be thy own right hand?

*Hercules.* Alas, what scorpion within my breast,  
 What cancer from the burning plains turned back  
 And fixed within my bosom, burns my reins? 1276  
 My lungs once full of swelling blood are dry,  
 With burning venom is my heart aflame,  
 Slow fever dries my blood. The pest first eats  
 My skin, thence makes an entrance to my limbs; 1280  
 The poison takes away my sides, it gnaws  
 My joints and ribs, my very marrow wastes;  
 Within my empty bones the venom stays,  
 The bones themselves may not for long endure,  
 Torn from the ruptured joints the mighty mass 1285  
 To ruin falls, my giant body fails,  
 The limbs of Hercules are not enough  
 To satisfy the pest. How great the ill  
 That I own great. O dreadful infamy!  
 Behold, ye cities, see what now remains, 1290  
 See what remains of that great Hercules!  
 O father, dost thou recognize thy son?  
 Did these arms hold to earth the conquered neck  
 Of the dread lion? Did the mighty bow,  
 By this hand strung, bring down Stymphalian birds

From out the very stars? Did I o'ertake 1296  
 With steps of mine the fleet-foot stag that bore  
 The branching gold upon his radiant front?  
 Did Calpe, dashed to pieces by these hands,  
 Let out the sea? By these hands overcome, 1300  
 Lie low so many beasts, so many crimes,  
 So many kings? Sat once the dome of heaven  
 Upon these shoulders? Is this body mine?  
 This neck? Have I against a falling sky  
 Stretched forth these hands? Or was the Stygian  
     dog 1305  
 Dragged by my hand beyond the river Styx?  
 What sepulcher contains my early strength?  
 Why call I Jove my father? Why through him  
 Claim I, unhappy one, my right to heaven?  
 Already is Amphitryon deemed my sire. 1310  
 Whatever venom lurks within my veins,  
 Come forth! Why seek me with a secret wound?  
 Wast thou within the Scythian sea brought forth,  
 Beneath the frozen sky? Was Tethys slow,  
 Or Spanish Calpe on the Moorish shore 1315  
 Thy author? O dread ill, didst thou come forth  
 As serpent lifting up thy crested head?  
 Or something evil, yet unknown to me?  
 Wast thou from blood of the Lernæan snake  
 Produced, or wast thou left upon the earth 1320  
 By Stygian dog? Thou art all ill and none.  
 What face is thine? Grant me at least to know  
 By what I die; whatever evil thing  
 Or savage beast thou art, fight openly.  
 Who makes for thee a place within my bones? 1325  
 Lo, from my mangled flesh my hand draws forth  
 My entrails; deeper yet the way is found

Within the seat of life. O malady,  
 Alcides' peer! Whence come these bitter groans?  
 Whence come these tears I feel upon my cheeks?  
 My eyes unconquerable once, nor wont 1331  
 To show a tear before my enemies,  
 At last have learned to weep. O bitter shame!  
 What day, what land e'er saw Alcides' tears?  
 How many evils have I borne dry-eyed, 1335  
 To thee alone what courage yields which slew  
 So many monsters, thou alone, thou first,  
 Hast made me weep! More hard than frowning rock,  
 Or Chalybean steel, or wandering isles,  
 The stern Symplegades, thy might has crushed 1340  
 My power, has forced my eyes at last to weep.  
 O mighty ruler of the skies, the earth  
 Beholds me weeping, groaning, worst of all,  
 My stepdame sees me. Ah, once more it burns  
 My fibers; lo, the fever glows again. 1345  
 Where now is found for me a thunderbolt?

*Chorus.* What cannot suffering conquer? Once  
 more firm

Than Getic Hæmus, than Parrhasian skies  
 Not milder, to the bitter pain he yields;  
 He bows his wearied head upon his breast, 1350  
 From side to side he moves his ponderous weight,  
 His valor often overcomes his tears.  
 So with however warm a beam he shine;  
 Titan can never melt the arctic snows;  
 The radiance of the ice outshines the torch 1355  
 Of blazing Phœbus.

*Hercules.* Father, turn thy face  
 To my complaint, Alcides ne'er before  
 Asked aid; not when the fruitful Hydra wound

Its fold about my limbs ; between hell's lakes  
Where black night reigns I stood with death, nor  
sought 1360

Thy aid ; dread monsters, tyrants, kings, I slew,  
Nor skyward turned my face. This hand of mine  
Was still my pledge, for me no thunderbolt  
E'er flashed from out Jove's heaven. This day  
compels

A prayer from me ; it is the first, last time 1365  
That he shall hear me pray : one thunderbolt  
I ask, one only, but a giant one.

I might have stormed the heavens, but since I deemed  
Thou wert my father, I have spared the skies.

O father, whether thou art merciful 1370

Or cruel, to thy son stretch forth thy hand,  
Speed now his death and give thyself this fame.

Or if it grieve thee, and thy hand refuse

To do the deed, from the Sicilian peak

Send for the Titans, bearing in their hands 1375

Mount Pindus, or let Ossa with its weight

O'erwhelm me ; burst the doors of Erebus

And let Bellona with drawn sword attack :

Send forth fierce, rushing Mars, against me arm

That terrible swift one ; he is indeed 1380

My brother, yet my stepdame Juno's son.

Thou too, Athena, by one parent born

The sister of Alcides, hurl thy spear

Against thy brother ; supplicating hands

I stretch toward thee, my stepdame, hurl at length

A dart, I pray, against me, I would still 1386

By woman's hand be slain ; already calmed,

Already satisfied, why nourish wrath,

Why seek for further vengeance? Suppliant here

Thou seest Hercules ; no savage beast, 1390  
 No land, e'er saw me praying thus to thee.  
 Now that I need indeed a stepdame's wrath,  
 Now, does thy anger cease? Dost put aside  
 Thy hatred? Since I wish for death, thou sparest.  
 O earth, O cities of the earth, does none 1395  
 Yield torch or weapon now for Hercules?  
 Ye rob me of my arms? When I am gone  
 May no land bring forth monsters wild, the world  
 Long never for my hand if evil rise,  
 Or hate be born. Cast at my hapless head 1400  
 Great stones, and end at last my misery.  
 O world ungrateful, dost thou now desert?  
 Hast thou forgot? Thou wouldst have been the  
 prey  
 Of beasts and monsters hadst thou not borne me.  
 Ye nations, now snatch hence the rescuer ; 1405  
 This time is given you to recompense  
 My benefits, death be their great reward.

## SCENE II

*Hercules, Alcmena.*

*Alcmena.* Where shall Alcides' wretched mother  
 go?  
 Where seek her son? If sure my sight, lo, there  
 With throbbing heart he lies and passion-tossed. 1410  
 He groans, 'tis finished. Let me, O my son,  
 For the last time embrace thee, let me take  
 Thy fleeting breath. Receive my last embrace.  
 But where are now thy limbs? where now that neck  
 That bore the firmament with all its stars? 1415

Who is it leaves to thee so small a part  
Of all thy powers ?

*Hercules.* O mother, thou indeed  
Dost look on Hercules, but on his shade.  
O mother, recognize thy son. Why weep,  
With eyes turned from me? Wherefore veil thy  
face? 1420

Dost blush that Hercules is called thy son ?  
*Alcmena.* What land brought forth this new  
calamity ?

What fearful thing has triumphed over thee ?  
Who is the conqueror of great Hercules ?

*Hercules.* Thou seest Alcides slain by woman's  
guile. 1425

*Alcmena.* What guile is great enough to conquer  
him ?

*Hercules.* A woman's anger, mother, is enough,

*Alcmena.* Whence flowed the poison in thy bones  
and joints ?

*Hercules.* Her venom found its way through  
poisoned robe.

*Alcmena.* But where the robe? I see thy naked  
limbs. 1430

*Hercules.* With me it is consumed.

*Alcmena.* Can such things be ?

*Hercules.* Mother, the Hydra and a thousand beasts  
Invade my vitals. What flame like to these  
Divides Sicilian skies or Lemnos' isles,  
Or heaven's burning plain whose fiery zone 1435  
Forbids the day to move? Oh, cast me, friends,  
Into the channel or the river's midst.  
The Ister is not deep enough for me,  
Nor mighty ocean's self could quench my flames ;

All water fails me, every stream dries up. 1440  
 Why didst thou send me back again to Jove,  
 O lord of Erebus? 'Twas right to keep.  
 Give back thy darkness, show to conquered hell  
 Alcides ; nothing will I carry thence,  
 Why be afraid again of Hercules ? 1445  
 Death, fear not, come ; now Hercules can die.

*Alcmena.* Restrain thy tears ; at least control thy  
 woe,

Be still invincible before such ills.  
 As thou art wont, smite death and conquer hell.

*Hercules.* If rugged Caucasus should offer me,  
 Bound by his chains, a feast for eager birds, 1451  
 In Scythia that echoes with their cries,  
 No lamentations would be heard from me ;  
 Or if the wandering Symplegades  
 Returning crush me 'midst their cliffs, I'd wait 1455  
 Unmoved their threatened ruin. Should the weight  
 Of Pindus lie upon me, Hæmus too,  
 And Athos, where the Thracian seas break high,  
 And Mimas smitten by Jove's thunderbolts ;  
 My mother, should this universe itself 1460  
 Fall on me, and above my body blaze  
 The burning wheel of Phœbus' flaming car,  
 Ignoble clamor should not overcome  
 Alcides' courage. Should a thousand beasts  
 Attack and tear me—here Stymphalian birds 1465  
 With clangor wild fly at me from the air,  
 And there the threatening bull with all his force ;  
 All monsters that have been ! Or should the groves  
 Rise everywhere, and cruel Sinis hurl  
 His mighty limbs against me, scattering me, 1470  
 I still were silent ; savage beasts, nor crimes,

Nor aught that I could meet in open fight  
 Could force from me a groan.

*Alcmena.* Perchance, my son,  
 No woman's poison scorches now thy limbs,  
 But all thy heavy tasks, thy labors long, 1475  
 Now make thee tremble with some dread disease.

*Hercules.* Where is the sickness, where? Does  
 any ill

Exist upon the earth with me till now?  
 Let it come hither, hand me now a bow. 1479  
 These naked hands suffice. Come on! Come on!

*Alcmena.* Ah me, his overwhelming pain destroys  
 His senses. Take away his darts, I pray,  
 Snatch hence his murderous arrows, I beseech.  
 His cheeks suffused with fire threat dreadful crime.  
 What place of hiding can I, aged one, 1485  
 Seek out? This rage is madness. Hercules  
 Alone can rule himself. Why, foolish one,  
 Seek flight or hiding? By a hero's hand  
 Alcmena merits death; so let me die,  
 E'er anything ignoble bids me fall, 1490  
 E'er evil hands may triumph over me.  
 But see, by troubles weakened, pain binds up  
 His wearied limbs with sleep, his bosom heaves  
 With heavy sighs. Be merciful, ye gods!  
 If ye refuse me my illustrious son, 1495  
 At least preserve its savior to the world.  
 Drive out his bitter pain, let Hercules  
 Renew his ancient strength.



## SCENE III

*Hercules, Hyllus, Alcmena.*

*Hyllus.* O cruel light ! O day so full of crime !  
 The thunderer's daughter dies, his son lies low, 1500  
 The grandchild only lives. He lost his life,  
 Slain by my mother's hand, by treachery  
 Was she deceived. Alas, what man grown old  
 Through all the changes of the years has known  
 In all his life such sorrows ? One day snatched 1505  
 Both parents from me. But of other ills  
 I will not speak : great Hercules is dead.

*Alcmena.* Be silent, noble son of Hercules,  
 Grandson of sad Alcmena—for perchance  
 Long sleep will overcome Alcides' ills. 1510  
 But see, repose deserts his wearied mind,  
 He is recalled to sickness, I to grief.

*Hercules.* What see I ? Trachin with its rugged  
 cliffs ?  
 Or, placed among the stars, have I at length  
 Escaped mortality ? Who opens heaven ? 1515  
 I see thee, father ; thee behold I too,  
 My stepdame, reconciled. What heavenly sound  
 Strikes on my ear ? Great Juno calls me son.  
 I see bright heaven's shining realm, I see  
 The sun's encircling road with Phœbus' car. 1520  
 But what is this ? Who closes heaven to me ?  
 Who drives me from the stars ? But now I felt  
 The breath of Phœbus' car, almost I stood  
 In heaven itself. 'Tis Trachin that I see,  
 Who brings me back to earth ? I see night's couch,  
 The shadows call me hither. Only now 1526

Mount Æta stood below me ; all the world  
 Was spread beneath. How happily, O pain,  
 Thou wast forgot ! Thou forcest me to speak,  
 Oh, spare me ! take away this voice from me ! 1530  
 This gift, this benefit, thy mother gave,  
 O Hyllus. Would that with my lifted club  
 I might have beaten out her wicked life,  
 As once beside the snowy Caucasus  
 I tamed the Amazon. O Megara, 1535  
 Much loved, wast thou my wife when I was mad ?  
 Give back my bow and club ; my hand is stained,  
 I will with glory wipe away the spot,  
 And Hercules' last toil shall by his wife  
 Be given.

*Hyllus.* Father, curb thy wrathful threats ; 1540  
 'Tis finished, she has suffered, she has paid  
 The penalty thou fain wouldst from her claim.  
 Dead lies my mother, by her own hand dead.

*Hercules.* Thou, trouble, still abidest at my side ;  
 She by the hand of wrathful Hercules 1545  
 Deserved to perish, Lichas is bereft  
 Of fitting comrade ; wrath compels me rage  
 Against her lifeless body. Why should that  
 Escape my vengeance ? Let the wild beasts take  
 Their food.

*Hyllus.* She suffered most, thou wouldst have wished  
 Somewhat to lighten that her load of woe ; 1551  
 Grieving for thee, she died by her own hand.  
 A heavier penalty than thou wouldst ask,  
 She suffered. But thou liest overcome  
 Not by the baseness of thy cruel wife, 1555  
 Not by my mother's treachery ; thy pain  
 Was heaped on thee by Nessus whom thy shaft

Deprived of life ; the robe was dipped in blood  
Of that half beast, half man, and Nessus now  
Demands revenge.

*Hercules.* He has it, 'tis complete. 1560  
My life is finished, this day is my last,  
The prophet oak foretold this fate to me,  
And the Parnassian grot that with its groans  
Shook the Cirrhean temple : 'Thou shalt fall,  
Alcides, conquered by the hand of one 1565  
Whom thou hast conquered ; this shall come to pass  
When earth and sea and hell are overcome.'  
I make no plaint, 'twas right this end be given  
Lest any one should live to boast himself  
Alcides' conqueror. Now comes at length 1570  
A noble death, of great and wide renown,  
And worthy me. This day shall I see feared.  
Let all the woods be cut, let Cœta's groves  
Be dragged together that a mighty pyre  
Receive me ; but before I come to die, 1575  
Thou, Pœan's son, perform for me, dear youth,  
The melancholy office, let the day  
Be set ablaze with the Herculean flames.  
To thee, I make, O Hyllus, my last prayer :  
There is, within, a noble captive maid, 1580  
She bears her kingly lineage in her face,  
The virgin Iole, Eurytis' child ;  
Receive her for thy bride. I, stained with blood,  
Victorious, bore her from her home and land.  
To the unhappy maid I've given naught 1585  
But Hercules, and he is snatched away.  
Jove's grandchild she shall wed, Alcides' son,  
And find a recompense for all her woes.  
Whatever seed she has conceived by me

To thee she shall bring forth. O mother dear, 1590  
 Forbear thy grief, Alcides lives for thee.  
 My courage makes thy rival to be deemed  
 A stepdame ; either certainly is known  
 The night on which Alcides was begot,  
 Or else my father was a mortal man. 1595  
 Yet though, perchance, my lineage be feigned,  
 I have deserved such noble parentage,  
 My glorious deeds brought honor to the skies,  
 My mother to Jove's glory brought me forth.  
 And if my father, though great Jove himself, 1600  
 Rejoices in his fatherhood, restrain  
 Thy tears, O mother, proudest shalt thou be  
 Among Argolic mothers ; no such son  
 Has she who wields the scepter of the skies,  
 Great Juno, wife of thundering Jove, brought forth ;  
 She envied mortal though the heaven was hers, 1606  
 She longed to call great Hercules her son.  
 Now Titan, thou must run alone thy course,  
 I who have been thy comrade everywhere  
 Seek now the manes and Tartarean shades ; 1610  
 Yet to the depths of hell I bear this fame :  
 No evil slew Alcides openly,  
 Alcides conquered openly all ill.

## SCENE IV

*Chorus.*

O radiant Titan, glory of the world,  
 At whose first shining wearied Hecate leaves 1615  
 Her night-dark car, say to the Sabean lands  
 That lie beneath thy dawning, say to Spain

That lies beneath thy setting, say to all  
 That suffer underneath the Greater Bear,  
 Or palpitate beneath the burning wheel : 1620  
 Alcides hastes to everlasting shades  
 And to the kingdom of the sleepless dog  
 Whence he has once returned. Let clouds surround  
 Thy brightness, look upon the mourning lands  
 With pallid face and veil thy head with mists ; 1625  
 When, where, beneath what sky, mayst thou behold  
 Another Hercules? Whose hand shall earth  
 Invoke, if e'er in Lerna should arise  
 A hundred-headed Hydra scattering bane,  
 Or any Erymanthian boar disturb 1630  
 The quiet of Arcadia's ancient race ;  
 Or any child of Thracian Rhodope,  
 More harsh than snowy Helice, make wet  
 With human blood its stables? Who will give  
 Peace to a timorous people if the gods 1635  
 Be angry and command new monsters rise?  
 Like other mortals now he lies whom earth  
 Produced the equal of the Thunderer.  
 Let all the world reëcho sounds of woe;  
 Your bare arms beat, ye women, let your hair 1640  
 Fall loose ; and let the temples of the gods  
 Shut fast their portals, open not their gates  
 But for my fearless stepdame ; to the shores  
 Of Styx and Lethe goest thou, from whence  
 No keel shall bring thee back ; unhappy one, 1645  
 Thyself a shade, thou goest with fleshless arms,  
 Pale face, and drooping shoulders, to the shades  
 From whence thou camest once victorious,  
 When thou hadst conquered death. Nor thee alone  
 Shall that ship bear. Yet not with common shades,

With the twin Cretan kings and Æacus 1651  
Shalt thou be judge of men, smite tyrants down.  
Spare, O ye mighty ones, refrain your hands ;  
'Tis great indeed to keep your swords unstained,  
And while you reign to keep the realm in peace. 1655  
But valor has a place among the stars.  
Wilt thou thy seat to northward find, be placed  
Where Titan carries fervid heat? Wilt shine  
Within the mild west whence thou mayest hear  
Calpe reëcho with the sounding waves? 1660  
Where in the heavens serene wilt thou be set?  
What place will be secure among the stars  
When Hercules has come? O father, grant,  
A seat from the dread lion far removed  
And from the burning cancer, lest the stars 1665  
Should tremble at thy coming and forsake  
Their ancient laws, and Titan be afraid.  
While flowers blossom with the spring's warm days,  
While winter cuts the foliage from the groves,  
Or warmth calls back the foliage to the groves ; 1670  
While with the flying autumn falls the fruit,  
No flight of time shall snatch thee from the world :  
Thou shalt be mate to Phœbus and the stars.  
Sooner shall cornfields flourish in the deep,  
The straits shall sooner whisper with soft waves, 1675  
The constellation of the icy bear  
Shall sooner leave the heavens and enjoy  
Forbidden seas than nations shall forget  
To sing thy praises. Father of the world,  
We wretched ones entreat thee, let no beasts 1680  
Be born, no monsters, nor the troubled world  
Fear cruel leaders, let us not be ruled  
By any court that deems the dignity

Of empire lies in ever-threatening sword.  
If any monster rise again on earth, 1685  
We seek a savior for the orphaned world.  
Ah, hear! heaven thunders, does his father mourn  
Alcides? Is the cry the voice of gods,  
Or timid stepdame? Does great Juno flee  
At sight of Hercules? Or 'neath his load 1690  
Does Atlas tremble? Are the dreaded shades  
Now shaken by the sight of Hercules?  
Or does the hell-hound rend away his chains  
And fly in fear that face? We are deceived,  
Behold with joyous look comes Pœan's son 1695  
Alcides' follower; on his shoulder clangs  
The well-known shafts and quiver.

## ACT V

### SCENE I

*Philoctetes, Nurse, Chorus.*

*Nurse.* Tell, youth, I pray, the fate of Hercules,  
Say with what mien Alcides met his death.

*Philoctetes.* With such a mien as no one e'er met  
life. 1700

*Chorus.* So gladly did he mount his funeral pyre?

*Philoctetes.* He showed that flames are naught, what  
is there left

On earth which Hercules has not o'ercome?

Lo, all is conquered.

*Chorus.* 'Midst the flames what place  
For mighty deeds?

*Philoctetes.* One evil in the world 1705  
He had not yet o'ercome, but he has ruled  
The fire, this also to the savage beasts  
He adds, among the tasks of Hercules  
Shall fire be placed.

*Chorus.* I pray thee, now unfold  
The way in which the flames were overcome. 1710

*Philoctetes.* Each sorrowing hand cut Cæta's forests  
down,  
The beech-tree lost its wealth of shade, and lay  
Hewn from its base; one strong hand felled the pine  
Whose top reached heaven, and called it from the  
clouds,



Falling it moved the rocks and with it bore 1715  
 The lesser trees. An oak with spreading top,  
 Like that which whispers in Chaonia,  
 Shut out the sun and stretched on either side  
 Its boughs ; the great tree, pierced by many wounds,  
 Cried out and broke the wedges, the dulled steel 1720  
 Recoiled, the ax was injured, nor was found  
 Inflexible enough ; but, stirred at length,  
 The oak bore ruin with it in its fall,  
 And everywhere the place admits the sun.  
 The birds are driven from their resting-place 1725  
 And eddying through the sunlight where the grove  
 Has fallen, querulous, on wearied wing  
 They seek their homes. Already every tree  
 Resounds, the sacred oak-trees even feel  
 The hand that holds the dreaded ax, the grove 1730  
 Is no avail to save the holy place.  
 The forest forms a mound, alternate beams  
 Raise to the skies a pyre all too small  
 For Hercules. The pine and hardy oak  
 And shorter ilex carry up the flames, 1735  
 And poplars wont to ornament the brow  
 Of Hercules fill up the funeral pyre.  
 As roars a mighty lion lying sick  
 In Afric forests, he is borne along ;  
 Who will believe him carried to the flames ? 1740  
 His glance was seeking for the stars, not fires.  
 As Cēta's soil he pressed and with his glance  
 Scanned all the pyre, mounting upon the beams  
 He broke them. For his bow he asked, then said :  
 'Take this, O son of Pœas, take the gift 1745  
 Of Hercules ; the Hydra felt these shafts,  
 By these were slain the foul Stymphalian birds,

And every evil that from far I slew.  
O youth, be happily victorious,  
Nor ever send without avail these shafts 1750  
Against a foe. Or, shouldst thou wish to bring  
The birds from out the clouds, let birds descend,  
Let slaughter always follow thy sure shaft,  
Nor ever let this bow thy right hand fail ;  
Well has it learned to free the shaft and give 1755  
A sure direction to the arrow's flight,  
Sent from the string the dart shall never fail  
To find the way. I pray thee, bring the fire,  
And light for me the funeral torch. This club,  
He said, ' which never hand but mine shall bear, 1760  
Shall burn with me ; this mighty weapon go  
With Hercules. This too thou mightest have,'  
He said, ' if thou couldst wield it ; it may aid  
Its master's funeral pyre.' And then he asked  
That with him might be burned the shaggy spoil 1765  
Of the Nemæan lion ; with the spoil  
The pyre was hid. The throng about him groaned,  
And sorrow filled the eyes of all with tears.  
His mother, raging with her grief, laid bare  
Her ample bosom, even to the womb, 1770  
And smote with heavy blows her naked breasts,  
And, moving with her cries the gods themselves  
And Jove, with woman's shrieks the place she filled.  
' O mother, thou mak'st base Alcides' death,  
Restrain thy tears, and let thy woman's grief 1775  
Turn inward. Why shall Juno know one day  
Of joy because thou weepst ? She is glad  
To see her rival's tears. Thy feeble heart  
Control, O mother, it is sin that thou  
Shouldst tear the womb and breast that nourished me.'

Then roaring mightily, as when he led 1781  
 The dreaded hell-hound through Argolic streets,  
 What time he came again from conquered Dis  
 And trembling death, a victor over hell,  
 Upon his funeral pyre he laid him down. 1785  
 What conqueror at his triumph ever stood  
 So joyous in his car? What tyrant prince  
 With such a glance e'er gave the nations laws?  
 How calmly did he bear his fate! Our tears  
 Were dried, our sorrow, smitten, fell away; 1790  
 None raised lament for him who was to die.  
 'Twere shame to weep. Although sex bade her mourn,  
 Alcmena stood with cheeks unwet with tears,  
 A mother almost equal to her son.

*Chorus.* And did he, on the point of death, lift up  
 To heaven no invocation to the gods, 1796  
 Nor look toward Jove in prayer?

*Philoctetes.* Secure he lay  
 And, scanning heaven with his eyes, he sought  
 The part from whence his father should look down.  
 Then stretching forth his hand he said; 'That one  
 For whom the night was joined to night, and day 1801  
 Deferred, is father to me. Whencesoe'er,  
 O father, thou dost look upon thy son,  
 Since either mete of Phœbus, and the race  
 Of Scythians, and every burning strand 1805  
 Where glows the day now praise me; since the earth  
 Has peace, no lands cry out, and none pollute  
 The altars, since no evil thing remains,  
 I pray thee, take this spirit to the stars.  
 Not death, nor hell, nor mournful realm of Dis 1810  
 Could fright me; but to be a shade and pass  
 To those divinities that I o'ercame,

O father, makes me blush. Divide the clouds,  
 Lay wide the day that eyes of gods may see  
 Alcides burning. Thou canst close to him 1815  
 The stars and heaven : vainly would one seek  
 To force thy will, O father, but if grief  
 May lift one prayer, then ope the Stygian lake  
 And give me back to death ; but prove me first  
 Thy son, let this day make it evident 1820  
 That I am worthy of the stars. All deeds  
 Till now are poor, this day shall bring to light  
 Alcides, or reject him.' Having said,  
 He asked for fire. 'Up, friend of Hercules,'  
 He said, 'be swift, snatch the Ætæan torch. 1825  
 Why trembles thy right hand ? What, timorous one,  
 Dost shrink before the dreaded infamy ?  
 Give back the quiver, coward, slow, and weak !  
 That hand bend bow of mine ? Why pales thy cheek ?  
 With face and courage such as thou dost see 1830  
 Alcides wear, apply the torch ; base one,  
 Consider him who is about to die.  
 Lo, now my father calls, he opens heaven.  
 I come !' His face was changed ; with trembling hand  
 I placed the glowing torch, the flames fled back, 1835  
 The torches shrank away and shunned his limbs,  
 But Hercules pursued the flying flames.  
 Thou wouldst have thought that Athos, Caucasus,  
 Or Pindus was ablaze ; no groan was heard,  
 But loudly roared the flames. O iron heart ! 1840  
 Huge Typhon placed upon that funeral pyre  
 Had groaned, and fierce Enceladus himself  
 Who tore from earth and on his shoulders bore  
 Mount Ossa. But from out the hot flames' midst  
 He rose half burned and mangled, gazed unawed. 1845

' Now, mother, thou dost show thyself indeed  
 Alcides' parent,' said he, ' thus to stand  
 Beside his pyre ; 'tis meet to mourn him thus.'  
 Amid the smoke and threatening flame he stood  
 Unmoved and steadfast, shrinking not, but bright,  
 And spoke encouraging and warning words. 1851  
 To every ministrant he gave new strength,  
 You would have thought himself informed the blaze.  
 The people stood amazed and hardly deemed  
 The flames were flames indeed, so calm his front, 1855  
 Such majesty was his. He did not seek  
 To speed his burning, but when he believed  
 Sufficient fortitude in death was shown,  
 Into the hottest blaze he dragged the beams  
 That seemed the least afire, and where the flame 1860  
 Was brightest there the fearless hero stood.  
 He veiled his face with flames, his heavy beard  
 Was bright with fire, the threatening blaze leaped up  
 And shone about his head ; Alcmena groaned  
 And tore her loosened hair. 1865

## SCENE II

*Philoctetes, Alcmena, Chorus.*

*Alcmena.* Ye gods, stand now in awe of death! So few  
 Alcides' ashes, to this little dust  
 Has shrunk that giant! Ah, how great a one  
 Has fallen, Titan, into nothingness!  
 Ah me, this aged bosom shall receive 1870  
 Alcides, here his tomb. Lo, Hercules  
 Scarce fills his urn, how light for me the weight  
 Of him who lightly bore the vault of heaven.

O son, to that far realm and Tartarus  
 Once hast thou journeyed and returned from thence ;  
 Wilt thou perchance again from Styx return ? 1876  
 Not that again with spoil thou mayst return,  
 And Theseus owe again the light to thee,  
 But yet, perchance, alone ? Can all the world  
 Placed o'er thy shades suffice to hold thee down ? 1880  
 Or Cerberus be able to constrain ?  
 Wilt thou smite down the gates of Tænarus ?  
 Within what portals shall thy mother pass ?  
 Which way shall death be found ? Thou goest now  
 To Hades, never more to come again. 1885  
 Why waste the day in tears ? Why, wretched life,  
 Dost thou still bide with me ? Why wish for light ?  
 Can I bear Jove another Hercules ?  
 Or will Alcmena by another son  
 Like him be mother called ? O happy, thou, 1890  
 My Theban husband, thou didst enter in  
 The realm of Tartarus while still thy son  
 Was flourishing ; perchance the gods of hell  
 Fear'd when thou camest, since, though not indeed  
 Alcides' father, thou wast known as such. 1895  
 What country can I seek in this my age—  
 I, whom harsh tyrants hate (if any such  
 Still live) ? Me miserable ! If a son  
 Laments a father, let him seek revenge  
 On me. Let all attack me ; if a child 1900  
 Of wild Busiris or Antæus lives  
 And terrifies the tropic zone, I stand  
 A ready prey ; if any seek revenge  
 For cruel Diomedes' Thracian herd,  
 Upon my members let the dread flock feed. 1905  
 Perchance an angered Juno seeks revenge.

All cause for wrath is gone, secure at last,  
 She shall be free from conquered Hercules.  
 Her rival yet remains. I cannot pay  
 The penalty she seeks. My mighty son 1910  
 Has made his mother terrible. What place  
 Is left? What land, what kingdom, or what zone  
 In all the universe will dare defend,  
 Or to what hiding can a mother go  
 Who is through thee so famed? Shall I seek out  
 My land and fallen home? Eurystheus rules 1916  
 In Argos. Shall I seek the Theban realm?  
 Ismenus' stream? The couch where chosen once  
 I once saw Jove? Oh, happy had I felt  
 Jove's bolt! Oh, would Alcides had been torn 1920  
 Untimely from my womb! Now comes the hour  
 To see my son Jove's son through glory gained.  
 Would that this too were given: to know what fate  
 Might snatch me hence. O son, what nation lives  
 That thinks on thee? ungrateful every race! 1925  
 Shall I seek Cleon? The Arcadian realm?  
 The lands ennobled by thy glorious deeds?  
 There fell the serpent, there the savage birds,  
 There fell the cruel king, there was o'ercome  
 By thee the lion which, since thou art dead, 1930  
 Now dwells in heaven. If earth had gratitude,  
 All would defend Alcmena for thy sake.  
 Shall I repair to Thrace and Hebrus' shores?  
 Those lands were also by thy merits saved,  
 The stables and the realm were overcome, 1935  
 The cruel king is prostrate, peace is there.  
 What land indeed enjoys not peace through thee?  
 Where shall I, old, unhappy, seek a tomb?  
 All worlds contended for thy funeral pyre,

What people, or what temple, or what race 1940

Seek now the ashes of great Hercules?

Who asks, who wishes this, Alcmena's load?

What sepulcher, O son, suffices thee?

What tomb? This whole round world to which thy  
fame

Shall give thee title! Why afraid, my soul? 1945

Thou hast Alcides' ashes, hast his bones.

Thy aid, thy all-sufficing aid, shall be

His ashes, and his death make kings afraid.

*Philoctetes.* O mother of illustrious Hercules,  
Although thy sorrow for thy son is due, 1950

Restrain thy tears; he must not be bewailed,

Nor deeply mourned, whose valor banished death;

His valor is eternal and forbids

That Hercules be mourned.

*Alcmena.* My savior lost,  
Shall I, his mother, cease to mourn for him? 1955

*Philoctetes.* Thou dost not mourn alone, the earth  
and sea,

And every place where purple day looks down

On either ocean from her shining car

Mourns too.

*Alcmena.* O wretched mother! In one son  
How many have I lost! I lacked a realm, 1960

Yet might have given one. I had no prayer,

I only of all mothers earth brought forth;

I asked the gods for nothing while my son

Still lived. What was there that Alcides' zeal

Could not bestow? What god could aught deny?

In that hand lay fulfilment of each wish; 1966

Whatever Jove refused Alcides gave.

What mortal mother e'er bore such a child?



One mother was transformed to stone who stood  
 Cut off from all her offspring and bewailed 1970  
 Twice seven children. To how great a band  
 My son was equal ! Until now there lacked  
 A great example of sad motherhood :  
 Alcmena gives it. Mothers, mourn no more,  
 Although persistent grief till now compelled 1975  
 Your tears ; though heavy sorrow turn to stone,  
 Give place to my misfortunes. Up, sad hand,  
 Smite now the aged breast ! Canst thou enough,  
 Thou humbled, aged woman, mourn his loss  
 Whom all the world laments ? Yet beat thy breast,  
 Although thy arms are weary. Though the gods 1981  
 Be jealous of thy mourning, call the race  
 To mourn with thee.  
 Go smite your bosoms for Alcmena's son  
 And Jove's ; for his conception one day died 1985  
 And Eos was delayed for two long nights.  
 One greater than the light itself has died.  
 All nations, smite your breasts ; your tyrants harsh  
 He forced to penetrate the Stygian realm  
 And put aside the dripping sword ; mourn now 1990  
 His merits, let the whole world cry aloud.  
 Blue Crete, dear land of Thundering Jove, lament  
 Alcides, let thy hundred people mourn.  
 Curetes, Corybantes, in your hands  
 Clash now Idæan weapons, it is right 1995  
 To mourn him thus ; now beat your breasts indeed,  
 For Hercules is dead ; he is not less,  
 O Crete, than is thy Thunderer himself.  
 Weep ye Alcides' death, Arcadian race,  
 A race ere Dian's birth. Reëcho blows, 2000  
 Parrhasian and Nemæan mountain tops,

Let Menala give back the heavy sound.  
 The bristles scattered on your field demand  
 Groans for the great Alcides, and the birds  
 Whose feathers veiled the day, whom his shaft slew.  
 Argolic peoples weep ; Cleonæ, weep— 2006  
 There once my son's right hand the lion slew  
 That terrified your city. Beat your breasts,  
 Bistonian matrons, let cold Hebrus' stream  
 Give back the sound, lament for Hercules ; 2010  
 Your children are no longer born to feed  
 The bloody stables, on your flesh no more  
 Shall feast the savage herd. Weep, all ye lands  
 From fierce Antæus freed, the region snatched  
 From cruel Geryon. Beat with me your breasts, 2015  
 Ye wretched nations, let the blows be heard  
 By either Tethys. Weep Alcides' death,  
 O company divine of heaven's swift vault ;  
 My Hercules upon his shoulders bore  
 Your sky, O gods, when from his load set free 2020  
 The giant Atlas, who was wont to bear  
 Olympus and its shining stars, had rest.  
 Where now, O Jove, thy lofty seat, where now  
 Thy promised dwelling in the skies ? Alas !  
 Alcides as a mortal died ; alas, 2025  
 As mortal is consumed. How oft he spared  
 Thy fires, how oft he spared thy thunderbolt !  
 Ah, deem me Semele and hurl at me  
 Thy torch ! Hast thou, O son, already found  
 The fields Elysian whither nature calls 2030  
 The nations ? Or does black Styx close the way,  
 Because of captured Cerberus, and fate  
 Detain thee at the outer gate of Dis ?  
 What tumult now possesses all the shades ?

Flees now the boatman with receding skiff? 2035  
 Through all the wondering realm of death flees now  
 Thessalia's Centaur? Does the Hydra fear  
 And hide its serpents underneath the waves?  
 Do all thy labors fear thee, O my son?  
 Ah, no; I am deceived, am mad, I rave; 2040  
 Nor shades nor manes fear thee, thy left arm  
 No longer bears th' Argolic lion's spoil,  
 The fearful pelt with all its tawny mane,  
 Nor do the wild beast's teeth entrench thy brows;  
 Thy quiver is another's and thy shafts 2045  
 A weaker hand lets fly; unarmed thou goest,  
 O son, through Hades, never to return.

## SCENE III

*Hercules, Philoctetes, Alcmena, Chorus.*

*Hercules.* I hold a seat within the heavenly realm,  
 Why with thy mourning dost thou bid me feel  
 Once more the pang of death? I pray thee, spare!  
 Already had my valor made a way 2051  
 Up to the stars, yes, to the very gods.

*Alcmena.* Whence, whence the sound that strikes  
 our startled ear?  
 Whence comes the sound forbids my tears? I know  
 That Chaos is o'ercome. Dost thou return, 2055  
 O son, again from Styx? Not once alone  
 Is cruel death subdued? Hast thou again  
 Been conqueror over death, and Charon's boat,  
 And hell's sad pools? Does languid Acheron  
 Afford a passage and permit return 2060  
 To thee alone? Nor even after death

The fates constrain thee? Or does Pluto close  
 For thee the way, and tremble for his throne?  
 I surely saw thee on the blazing woods,  
 When raged the giant flames against the sky, 2065  
 Why does the far abode no longer hold  
 Thy shade? Why do the manes feel dread fear?  
 Art thou a shade too terrible for Dis?

*Hercules.* The fear of dark Cocytus held me not,  
 The dread boat has not borne my shade across; 2070  
 Forbear thy mourning, mother; once indeed  
 I saw the land of death, whate'er of man  
 I may have had was purged away by fire,  
 The part my father gave is borne to heaven;  
 Thy part was given to the flames. Weep not 2075  
 As one who weeps a deedless son, 'tis meet  
 To mourn th' unworthy; valor starward tends,  
 But fear toward death. O mother, from the stars  
 Alcides speaks. To thee the cruel king,  
 Eurystheus, soon shall pay due penalty; 2080  
 Borne in thy car thou shalt lift up proud head.  
 'Tis meet that I should seek celestial climes,  
 Alcides once again has conquered hell.

*Alcmena.* Stay, but a moment stay! He's passed  
 from sight,  
 He has departed, he is starward borne. 2085  
 Am I deceived, or do I dream I saw  
 My son? My sad heart is incredulous.  
 Thou art a god, the heavens evermore  
 Shall hold thee; in thy triumph I believe.  
 The Theban realm I'll seek and there will sing 2090  
 The glory of the new divinity.

*Chorus.* Never shall glorious valor be borne down  
 To Stygian shades, the brave forever live,

Nor shall the cruel fates through Lethe's stream  
E'er drag them ; but when comes the final hour 2095  
Of life's last day, then glory shall lay wide  
The pathway to the gods. Be present still,  
Thou mighty victor over savage beasts,  
Thou who hast given peace to all the world ;  
Now from whatever place, behold our land, 2100  
And if a monster with new face should shake  
The world with terror, with thy three-forked bolts  
Break him in pieces, hurl thy lightning shafts  
More boldly than thy father Jove himself.

OCTAVIA

*DRAMATIS PERSONÆ*

NERO.

SENECA.

PREFECT OF THE PALACE.

OCTAVIA.

POPPÆA.

GHOST OF AGRIPPINA.

NURSE OF OCTAVIA.

NURSE OF POPPÆA.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS OF ROMAN WOMEN.

SCENE: *Nero's Palace.*

# OCTAVIA

## ACT I

### SCENE I

*Octavia.*

✓ NOW bright Aurora, shining in the heavens,  
Has put the stars to flight ; with radiant beams  
The sun is rising, giving back to earth  
Clear day. Sore burdened by thy many griefs,  
Return again to thy accustomed plaints, 5  
Let them exceed the watery Halcyon's tears  
And sad Pandion's winged children's cries,  
Thy fortunes are than theirs more hard to bear.  
O mother, primal cause of all my woe,  
Ever for thee thy daughter must lament ; 10  
Hear her sad cries, if in the land of shades  
Thou yet mayst hear. Would Clotho's aged hand  
Had cut my thread of life ere I had seen  
With bitter grief thy wounds, had seen thy face  
Defiled with loathsome blood. O light of day, 15  
Ever to me calamitous, since then  
Thou art, O light, more hated than the dark.  
I must obey a cruel stepdame's laws,  
Her hostile will, her glances full of hate.  
That baleful fury to my marriage-bed 20  
Bore Stygian torches, blotted out thy life ;



My father, whom the whole round world obeyed,  
 Even beyond the ocean, before whom  
 The Britains, to our leaders else unknown,  
 Fled. Father, woe is me, thou liest now 25  
 O'erwhelmed by thy wife's craft. Thy house, thy  
 child,  
 Are slaves—a tyrant's captives.

## SCENE II

*Octavia, Nurse.*

*Nurse.* Whoe'er thou art who by the novelty  
 And outward splendor of the treacherous court  
 Art captive led, in admiration lost, 30  
 Behold great Claudius' house and lineage  
 Wrecked by one blow of skulking Fortune's hand.  
 The world was subject to his rule, the sea  
 Obeyed him long and, though unwillingly,  
 Floated his vessels. Lo, the man who first 35  
 Subdued the Britains, covered unknown straits  
 With countless fleets, and moved 'mid barbarous tribes  
 And over cruel waters all unharmed ;  
 He by his wife's crime fell, she by her son's,  
 Whose brother now lies dead by poison killed. 40  
 Deeply the wretched wife and sister mourns,  
 Nor can she hide her hate though urged by fear  
 Of that harsh man—with equal hate they glow.  
 Her husband (such the chaste have ever shunned)  
 Burns with an impious flame. In vain I strive 45  
 With love and loyalty to soothe her grief,  
 My counsel is by boundless woe made naught,  
 Nor can her generous spirit be controlled,

It only serves to give her grief new strength.  
 Alas, how base a crime my fear foresees, 50  
 May god avert it!

*Octavia.* Oh, my bitter fate,  
 Equalled by none! Would that I might endure  
 Thy woes, Electra; thou mightst weep the fall  
 Of thy dead father, and mightst see the crime  
 Punished by thy avenging brother's hand, 55  
 A brother whom thy love had snatched from harm,  
 Thy faithfulness concealed. But fear forbids  
 That I should mourn my parents snatched away  
 By cruel fate, forbids that I should weep  
 A brother's death—in him my only hope 60  
 Was found, brief solace of my crowding woes.  
 Now am I left the shadow of a name  
 Once great, spared but for sorrow!

*Nurse.* Hark, the voice  
 Of my sad nursling strikes upon my ears.  
 What, do thy slow feet cease to bear thee on 65  
 Into the bridal chamber, aged one?

*Octavia.* O nurse, behold my tears, my grief's sure  
 sign.

*Nurse.* Poor child, what day will free thee from  
 thy care?

*Octavia.* The day that sends me to the Stygian  
 shades.

*Nurse.* Far be the omen.

*Octavia.* Not thy prayers control 70  
 My lot, but fate.

*Nurse.* A milder god will give  
 A happier time. With soft compliance win  
 Thy husband's love.

*Octavia.* Ah, sooner could I tame

The savage lion or the tiger fierce,  
 Than that wild tyrant's cruel heart, he hates 75  
 Those sprung of noble blood, he scorns alike  
 The gods and men. He knows not how to wield  
 The fortune his illustrious father gave  
 By means of basest crime. And though he blush,  
 Ungrateful, from his cursed mother's hands 80  
 To take the empire, though he has repaid  
 The gift with death, yet shall the woman bear  
 Her title ever, even after death.

*Nurse.* Restrain the words that speak thy spirit's  
 rage,

And let thy voice be silenced by thy fear. 85

*Octavia.* Whatever may be borne I will endure.  
 Nothing but bitter death can end my woes.  
 A mother slain, a father basely killed,  
 Reft of my brother, sunk in misery,  
 Bowed down by sorrow, by my husband's hate 90  
 Oppressed, the servant of my slaves, no more  
 Can I enjoy the light. With throbbing heart  
 It is not death I fear but worse than death.  
 Be but my death unmingled with reproach  
 I would be glad to die ; 'tis worse than death 95  
 To look upon the tyrant's swelling pride,  
 His face so terrible to wretched me,  
 To feel the hated kisses of my foe.  
 Since the great sorrow of my brother's death,  
 Murdered so basely, scarce can I endure 100  
 The author of that murder, him who holds  
 My brother's kingdom and enjoys the crown.  
 How oft my brother's spirit comes to me  
 When, worn with weeping, slumber seals my eyes  
 And holds my weary limbs : with fury's torch 105

He armed weak hands, and in his brother's face  
 He waved it ; then again in fear he fled  
 Into my chamber, by the foe pursued,  
 And, clinging to me, through my side received 109  
 The sword. Then shuddering terror broke my sleep,  
 And fear and grief and misery returned.  
 Besides all this that haughty concubine,  
 Made glorious with the plunder of our house,  
 For whom the son placed on the Stygian boat  
 His mother—shipwrecked, from the ocean saved, 115  
 He, harsher than the billows, with the sword  
 Slew her—what hope of safety can be mine  
 After such crime ? That hostile victress stands  
 And threatens my marriage-bed, with hate of me  
 She burns, and for adultery's recompense 120  
 Asks that the husband give his true wife's head.  
 O father, come from Hades bringing help  
 To thy poor child who calls to thee for aid ;  
 Or through the riven earth lay bare the Styx  
 And swiftly bear me thither.

*Nurse.* All in vain 125  
 Thou callest on thy father's ghost for aid.  
 In vain, O wretched one ! Among the dead  
 No more for any child of his he cares,  
 Who could prefer a child of alien blood  
 To his own son, who took his brother's child 130  
 To wife—an impious marriage whence has sprung  
 Full many a crime, murder, and treachery,  
 Desire of rule, and thirst for noble blood.  
 The son-in-law was slain, a sacrifice  
 In honor of the father's marriage-bed, 135  
 Lest by thy marriage he should grow too strong.  
 O monstrous sin ! Falsely accused of crime,

And to a woman made a sacrifice,  
 Silanus' blood pollutes the household gods.  
 The enemy has entered, woe is me, 140  
 The captured home! The stepdame's wiles have made  
 The emperor's son his son-in-law as well ;  
 A youth of base soul, capable of crime,  
 For whom his mother lit the marriage torch,  
 And, though thou wert unwilling, yet through fear 145  
 Made thee his wife. By such success made bold,  
 She dared, victorious one, to lay her hand  
 Upon the sacred scepter of the world.  
 Who can relate the many forms of crime,  
 Base hopes, and flattering wiles whereby she sought,  
 Climbing through evil deeds, to gain the throne ? 151  
 Then holy love withdrew with fearful feet,  
 The dread Erinnyes with destroying step  
 Entered the empty courts, with Stygian torch  
 Defiled the sacred altars of the home, 155  
 Trampled the laws of nature and of god ;  
 Wife for her husband mixed the poisonous draft,  
 And fell ere long a victim to her son.  
 Thou also liest dead, unhappy boy,  
 Ever by me to be lamented sore, 160  
 Star of the world, prop of a noble house,  
 Britannicus! Ah, me, thou art become  
 But ashes and a shadow 'mong the shades ;  
 Even the cruel stepdame wept for thee  
 When on the funeral pyre thy form was laid 165  
 For burning, and the mournful flame destroyed  
 Thy face and form so like the winged god's.

*Octavia.* Let him slay also me, lest by my hand  
 He fall.

*Nurse.* Thou wert not gifted with such strength

By nature.

*Octavia.* Anguish, wrath, and grief, and pain, 170  
Will give the wretched strength in time of need.

*Nurse.* Nay, conquer by submission that hard man.

*Octavia.* That he may give me back a brother  
slain ?

*Nursè.* That, helpless as thou art, thou mayst  
restore

Thy father's tottering palace through thy sons. 175

*Octavia.* The royal house must look for other sons.  
The dread fates drag me to my brother's side.

*Nurse.* The nation's love should make thy spirit  
strong.

*Octavia.* It comforts me, but cannot ease my pain.

*Nurse.* The people's power is great.

*Octavia.* The king's is more. 180

*Nurse.* He will with favor look upon his wife.

*Octavia.* His concubine forbids.

*Nurse.* She is, forsooth,

Hated of all.

*Octavia.* Yet to her husband dear.

*Nurse.* She is not yet his wife.

*Octavia.* She soon will be—

A mother too.

*Nurse.* A young man's passion burns 185

Fiercely at first, but soon it languishes ;  
Not long will he be swayed by sinful love,  
Which is as changing smoke to constant flame.  
Ever abides the love for a chaste wife.

He who first dared to violate thy bed, 190

The slave who long possessed thy husband's heart,  
Already fears—

*Octavia.* One placed above herself.

*Nurse.* Subject she is and humbled, and she builds  
Memorials that testify her fear.

Her will winged Cupid ; false and fickle god, 195

Also forsake ; though she be beautiful

And proud of power, her joy will be but brief.

Such griefs the queen of heaven herself has borne :

The father of the gods and king of heaven

Took every form, the plumage of the swan 200

He wore, the horns of the Sidonian bull,

In golden showers he fell ; now in the sky

Shines Leda's constellation, Bacchus dwells

In high Olympus, in his father's home

Alcides, now become a god, enjoys 205

Hebe, nor longer Juno's anger fears,

He is her son-in-law who was her foe.

The wise obedience, jealousy suppressed,

Of the high-hearted wife has overcome ;

Juno alone, secure, all-powerful, 210

In the celestial marriage chamber holds

The Thunderer, nor by mortal beauty won

Does Jupiter desert the heavenly halls.

Thou also, earthly Juno, sister, wife

Of great Augustus, hide thy heavy grief. 215

*Octavia.* Sooner the raging seas shall mate with  
stars,

The flood with fire, the sky with Tartarus,

Sweet light with darkness, day with dewy night,

Than mine with my sin-burdened husband's soul.

Ever I think upon my brother's death. 220

Would that the ruler of the skies would come

And smite that impious tyrant's hated head

With flames, he often with his thunderbolt

Makes the earth tremble, terrifies our souls

With sacred fires, prodigies unknown. 225  
 I saw a glittering meteor in the sky,  
 A comet showed in heaven its dreaded torch,  
 There where forever slow Boötes drives  
 In the cold north his wagon through the night.  
 With the fierce leader's breath the very air 230  
 Is heavy. Slaughter new the star forebodes  
 To all the nations that this vile king rules.  
 Typhoeus whom the parent earth brought forth,  
 Angered by Jupiter, was not so fierce ;  
 This pest is worse, the foe of gods and men ; 235  
 He from their temples drives th' immortal gods,  
 The citizens he exiles from their land,  
 He took his brother's life, his mother's blood  
 He drank, he sees the light, enjoys his life,  
 Still draws his poisonous breath ! Ah, why so oft, 240  
 Mighty creator, throwest thou in vain  
 Thy dart from royal hand that knows not fear ?  
 Why sparest thou to slay so foul an one ?  
 Would that Domitian's son, the tyrant harsh,  
 Who with his loathsome yoke weighs down the earth,  
 Who stains the name Augustus with his crimes, 246  
 The bastard Nero, might at last endure  
 The penalty of all his evil deeds.

*Nurse.* I own him all unmeet to wed with thee,  
 But to the fates and to thy fortunes bow, 250  
 O foster child, nor, I beseech thee, stir  
 Thy passionate husband's rage. Some god, perhaps,  
 Will come avenging, happier days will rise.

*Octavia.* Long since the bitter anger of the gods  
 Pursued our house. First wrathful Venus filled 255  
 My wretched mother's heart with sinful love,  
 Married already, madly she embraced



A new, incestuous union ; of her child,  
 Her husband, and the holy marriage vows  
 Unmindful, serpent-girdled, with loose hair,                    260  
 The avenging goddess visited that couch,  
 Snatched from the hellish marriage-bed the torch,  
 And quenched its light in blood. With passion's heat  
 The cruel emperor's bosom was inflamed  
 To hideous murders. With the sword he slew                    265  
 My wretched mother ! Me, alas, he whelmed  
 In everlasting mourning by her loss,  
 His wife and son he dragged away to death,  
 And faithlessly betrayed our tottering house.  
     *Nurse.* Do not renew thy filial laments,                    270  
 Nor trouble with thy tears thy mother's soul,  
 She suffered grievously for all her sin.

## SCENE III

*Chorus of Roman Women.*

What tale is this we hear ? Would it were false,  
 And might lose credit, told in vain, though oft.  
 May no new wife to our chief's chamber pass,                    275  
 And may his bride, the child of Claudius, keep  
 Her place within his home, and bear him sons,  
 Pledges of peace which an untroubled world  
 May long enjoy ; may Rome forever know  
 Her ancient glory. Juno was and is                    280  
 Her brother's wife, why from her father's court  
 Should Cæsar's wife and sister be expelled ?  
 Does not her loyalty, her father crowned  
 A god by death, her chaste virginity,  
 Her purity, avail her anything ?                    285  
 We, too, would be forgetful of our prince

After his death, should we desert his child  
 Because we were afraid of Cæsar's wrath.  
 Right Roman valor had our ancestors,  
 Theirs was the very race and blood of Mars, 290  
 They from the city drove the tyrant kings,  
 And well avenged thy fate, unhappy maid,  
 Child of Lucretius, by thine own hand slain  
 Because by tyrant's lust thou hadst been stained.  
 Tullia and her husband Tarquin paid 295  
 The penalty for sins unspeakable—  
 Over her murdered husband's form she drove  
 Her cruel chariot, and the furious child  
 Refused her murdered father's corpse a grave.  
 This age has also seen a son's base crime, 300  
 When in the Tuscan seas, on that dread ship,  
 The emperor drowned his mother treacherously ;  
 At his command the sailors swiftly left  
 The quiet harbor, with the sounding oars  
 The strait reëchoed, and the ship moves on 305  
 Into deep waters ; there with parted keel  
 Sinking, it swallowed through its yawning side  
 The ocean. Great the cry that to the stars  
 Is borne, and mingled with it is the sound  
 Of mourning, women beating on their breasts. 310  
 Grim death was there, each sought from death to flee ;  
 Some, naked, clung to the wrecked vessel's planks,  
 And strove to float ; some swimming sought the shore,  
 The fates drowned many in the ocean's depths.  
 Augusta rent her clothes and tore her hair, 315  
 Her face with tears of bitter grief was marred.  
 When there was left no hope of being saved,  
 Glowing with anger, conquered by her woes,  
 ' Is this,' she said, ' thy recompense to me,

My son, for all I gave thee? I confess, 320  
 Full worthy am I of this sinking keel,  
 I brought thee forth, I gave thee light, ah fool!  
 I gave an empire and the Cæsar's name!  
 O husband, lift thine eyes from Acheron  
 And feed upon my punishment, behold, 325  
 I who brought death to thee and to thy sons  
 Graveless am borne to thee as I deserve,  
 Drowned in the waters of the raging sea.  
 While she yet spoke the water smote her face,  
 She sank into the sea, then on the wave 330  
 She rose again. She strove against the sea,  
 Impelled by fear, but wearied sank at last.  
 Faith that scorned death remained in silent hearts,  
 Many there were who, weakened by the floods,  
 Yet dared to bring their drowning mistress aid; 335  
 As with weak arms she swam they called to her,  
 Lifted her in their arms; but what availed  
 That thou wert rescued from the cruel sea?  
 By thy son's sword thou wert about to die.  
 Scarcely will future ages, slow of faith, 340  
 Credit such crime. The monster, conscienceless,  
 Rages to see his mother still alive,  
 Saved from the sea; and he repeats his crime.  
 He speeds her to her death, he cannot brook  
 Delay, at his command a soldier hastes, 345  
 Who pierces with his sword his mistress' heart.  
 Unhappy mother, in her death she prays  
 That in her womb the murderer sheathe his sword.  
 'This, this,' she cried, 'must with the sword be pierced;  
 This which has borne a monster such as he.' 350  
 Then with a dying groan she rendered up  
 Through the deep wound her sorrow-burdened soul.

## ACT II

### SCENE I

*Seneca.*

I was content, why hast thou flattered me,  
O potent Fortune, with thy treacherous smiles ?  
Why hast thou carried me to such a height, 355  
That lifted to the palace I might fall  
The farther, look upon the greater crimes ?  
Ah, happier was I when I dwelt afar  
From envy's stings, among the rugged cliffs  
Of Corsica, where my free spirit knew 360  
Leisure for study. Ah, how sweet it was  
To look upon the sky, th' alternate change  
Of day and night, the circuit of the earth,  
The moon, the wandering stars that circle her,  
And the far-shining glory of the sky, 365  
Which when it has grown old shall fall again  
Into the night of chaos—that last day  
Has come, which 'neath the ruin of the skies  
Shall bury this vile race. A brighter sun,  
Newborn, shall bring to life another race, 370  
Like that the young world knew, when Saturn ruled  
In the high heavens. Then great among the gods  
The virgin goddess Justice, with fair Faith,  
Sent from the skies, ruled on the tranquil earth  
The race of man. The nations knew not war, 375  
Nor the harsh trumpet's sound, nor clash of arms,

They were not wont about their towns to raise  
 Protecting ramparts, every path was free,  
 All things were used in common, the glad earth  
 Bared willingly for man her fruitful breast, 380  
 A happy mother, in her foster-sons'  
 Untainted love secure. Another race  
 Less peaceful rose, a third in new arts skilled,  
 But law-abiding ; then a restless one  
 That dared to hunt the wild beasts in the chase, 385  
 To catch in nets the fish in stormy seas,  
 Or with the fowler's rod beguile the birds,  
 Or to the yoke subject the savage bull  
 And hold him with the halter, they first turned  
 The free earth with the plough ; she, wounded, hid  
 Deeper within her sacred breast her fruits ; 391  
 But even to the heart of Mother Earth  
 A more degenerate generation pressed,  
 Brought gold and iron thence, and by-and-by  
 Armed their fierce hands with weapons ; cities rose,  
 Their own they kept from danger with the sword. 395  
 The virgin goddess Justice was despised  
 And fled from earth, from men of cruel ways,  
 From hands by blood polluted, to the skies.  
 Longing for war and avarice for gold 400  
 Grew through the world, and luxury arose,  
 Greatest of ills, a flattering, noisome thing,  
 To which through man's delusion time gave strength.  
 The garnered vices of so many years  
 Abound in us, we live in a base age 405  
 When crime is regnant, when wild lawlessness  
 Reigns and imperious passion owns the sway  
 Of shameless lust ; the victress luxury  
 Plundered long since the riches of the world

That she might in a moment squander them. 410  
 But see, where Nero comes with hasty steps,  
 What will he do ?

## SCENE II

*Seneca, Nero, Prefect of the Palace.*

*Nero.* Go, do my bidding; send a man to slay  
 Plautus and Sulla, let him bring their heads.

*Prefect.* There shall be no delay, I go at once. 415

*Seneca.* It is not right to causelessly destroy  
 Thy kindred.

*Nero.* He whose heart is free from fear  
 May easily be just.

*Seneca.* Yet clemency  
 Is a most potent remedy for fear.

*Nero.* A leader's highest virtue is to slay 420  
 His foe.

*Seneca.* The father of his country finds  
 A greater in the service of the state.

*Nero.* 'Tis meet for boys to govern weak old age.

*Seneca.* 'Tis rather needful ardent youth be ruled.

*Nero.* I'm old enough, I think, to rule myself. 425

*Seneca.* I pray the gods approve whate'er thou  
 dost.

*Nero.* I were a fool to reverence the gods,  
 Myself am made a god.

*Seneca.* Fear thou the more  
 Because thy power is great.

*Nero.* My fortune gives  
 To me in all things freedom absolute. 430

*Seneca.* Fortune's a fickle goddess, trust her not.

*Nero.* Unskilled are they who know not their own  
power.

*Seneca.* He who does right is worthy to be feared,  
Not he who does whate'er his will may prompt.

*Nero.* The people scorn the feeble.

*Seneca.* They destroy 435  
One whom they hate.

*Nero.* The sword protects the prince.

*Seneca.* Good faith protects him better.

*Nero.* They must fear.

*Seneca.* Man finds oppressive what is forced on  
him.

*Nero.* They shall obey my will.

*Seneca.* Rule justly then.

*Nero.* Myself shall be the judge.

*Seneca.* The people's voice 440  
Must ratify thy will.

*Nero.* The sword thou scornest  
Shall force them to it.

*Seneca.* God forbid that crime.

*Nero.* And shall I longer suffer them to seek  
My death, that I, despised and unavenged,  
May suddenly be slain? Removed far hence, 445  
Sulla and Plautus have not been subdued  
By exile, with persistent rage they arm  
Their agents for my murder ; still they find,  
Though absent, many followers in the town,  
This nourishes the exile's hopes. The sword 450  
Shall overthrow suspected enemies.

My hated wife shall die, with her shall go  
The brother whom she loves, the proud shall fall.

*Seneca.* To shine among the great is beautiful,  
To keep one's hands from blood, be slow to wrath, 455

Give the world rest, his generation peace,  
 This is the height of virtue, by this path  
 May heaven be attained ; this is the way  
 The first Augustus, father of the land,  
 Gained 'mid the stars a place and as a god 460  
 Is worshipped now in temples. Yet for long  
 Fate tossed him here and there by land and sea,  
 Through all war's changing fortunes, till he slew  
 His father's foes. The goddess suffered thee  
 To take his scepter without shedding blood, 465  
 Subjected land and ocean to thy nod ;  
 Envy was conquered and to loyalty  
 Gave place ; the senate's favor and the knights'  
 Was thine, by senators' and people's will  
 Thou wert elected arbiter of peace, 470  
 Judge of the human race ; thou rulest now  
 The world in sacred majesty, art called,  
 In turn, the father of the fatherland.  
 Rome asks that thou deserve the name she gives,  
 And to thy care commends her citizens. 475

*Nero.* I thank the gods, Rome and her senate do  
 My bidding, and reluctant lips are forced  
 By fear of me to utter humble prayers.  
 Were it not madness that those citizens  
 Who swell with pride in their illustrious race, 480  
 Who are a menace to the king and state,  
 Should live, when with a word I might command  
 That those whom I suspect be put to death ?  
 A Brutus armed himself to slay the prince  
 To whom he owed his safety ; Cæsar's self, 485  
 In war invincible, the nation's lord,  
 By highest honors equal made with Jove,  
 Died by the murderous hand of citizens.



Then Rome, so often rent with civil war,  
 Saw her sons' blood poured forth abundantly. 490  
 How many nobles, youths, or aged men,  
 Driven about the world in fear of death,  
 Fleeing from home and the triumvir's sword,  
 Their names inscribed upon the fatal list  
 That to grim death delivered them, were slain 495  
 By great Augustus, who deserved the skies  
 For good and glorious deeds? The senators  
 In sorrow saw the heads of many slain  
 Exposed upon the rostrum, nor might weep  
 Their dead, nor groan to see the forum stained 500  
 With foul corruption, noble blood distilled  
 From putrid faces. Nor was this the end  
 Of blood and slaughter, Philippi long feared  
 In misery wild beasts and birds of prey,  
 Sicilian waters swallowed up her fleet 505  
 And oft-revolting citizens, the world  
 Was shaken by the mighty leader's strength.  
 Conquered in war, shortly about to die,  
 He sought the Nile in ships prepared for flight,  
 A Roman leader's blood again was drunk 510  
 By Egypt the incestuous, now he dwells  
 Among the dead. Then impious civil war,  
 Long waged, at last was ended and at length  
 The wearied victor might lay by his sword  
 Blunted by savage warfare. He maintained 515  
 His throne by fear and in the loyalty  
 And weapons of his soldiers was secure.  
 He by the duteous action of his son  
 Was made a god, was revered after death,  
 Was honored in the temples. Other stars 520  
 Remain for us if with relentless sword

We first destroy whate'er would do us harm,  
And found our house on children worthy us.

*Seneca.* A woman of celestial lineage,  
The ornament of honored Claudius' race, 525  
Chosen, like Juno, for her brother's wife,  
With godlike sons will fill thy palace halls.

*Nero.* The mother's incest takes away my faith  
In true-born sons. Her heart was never mine.

*Seneca.* Love does not show its radiance in youth,  
Then it conceals its flame in modesty. 531

*Nero.* Indeed, I vainly long believed this true ;  
Although her hate of me was evident  
In her unfriendly mien and countenance,  
I judged at last the smart must be avenged. 535  
I found a woman meet to be my wife  
By birth and beauty, to whose loveliness  
Venus, Jove's wife, the war-fierce goddess, bowed.

*Seneca.* The probity and honor of a wife,  
Her modesty and gentleness should charm 540  
Her husband ; graces of the mind and soul  
Alone abide forever, beauty's flower  
A single day destroys.

*Nero.* Ah, every grace  
God has united in a single form,  
And fate has caused her to be born for me. 545

*Seneca.* Oh, banish from thy heart the god of love,  
And put not foolishly thy trust in him.

*Nero.* Him whom the wielder of the thunderbolt  
May not compel, the tyrant of the skies,  
Who penetrates the seas and Pluto's realm, 550  
And draws the gods from heaven ?

*Seneca.* Man's error paints  
The cruel god of love as winged, and arms

His hand with bow and arrow, gives a torch,  
 Believes him Venus' son and Vulcan's seed.  
 Love is but passion's force within the soul, 555  
 A pleasing heat, 'tis born of youth and fed  
 By ease and luxury when fortune smiles.  
 Cease thou to feed and cherish it, it fails,  
 Loses its strength and dies.

*Nero.* This I believe  
 The greatest source of life, from this springs joy ; 560  
 The human race will never be extinct,  
 'Tis ever generated by sweet love,  
 Love soothes the hearts of savage beasts. The god  
 Shall bear for me the marriage torch, his fire  
 Shall join Poppæa to me as my wife. 565

*Seneca.* This marriage scarcely will the people  
 brook,  
 And holy Justice scarce will sanction it.

*Nero.* Am I alone forbid what all may do?

*Seneca.* More is demanded of the powerful. 569

*Nero.* Whether my passion or the people's will  
 Shall yield, I yet will prove.

*Seneca.* Nay, mildly please  
 Thy citizens.

*Nero.* A state is governed ill  
 When by the mob its ruler can be ruled.

*Seneca.* When with the prince its prayers have no  
 avail,  
 Surely the state has reason to complain. 575

*Nero.* May one compel when prayers are no avail?

*Seneca.* 'Tis cruel to refuse.

*Nero.* 'Tis criminal  
 To force a prince.

*Seneca.* Let himself grant their wish.

*Nero.* But rumor would report him overcome.

*Seneca.* Rumor is but a vain and empty thing. 580

*Nero.* Perhaps, but it brands many.

*Seneca.* Yet it fears

The throne.

*Nero.* Yet none the less reproaches it.

*Seneca.* 'Tis easily suppressed. Let thy wife's  
youth,

Her modesty and truth, her father's gifts,  
Prevail upon thee.

*Nero.* Cease to harass me, 585

Thou urgest me too much, I well may do  
What Seneca condemns. The people's will  
Already long ago I put aside,

She carries in her womb my pledge of love,  
Why not to-morrow take her for my bride? 590

## ACT III

### SCENE I

#### *The Ghost of Agrippina.*

Through the rent earth from Tartarus I come,  
In my right hand I bear a Stygian torch  
For that vile bridal, with such gloomy fires  
As an avenging mother's hand prepares  
For the sad altars, shall Poppæa wed 595  
My son. The memory of that murder dwells,  
Even among the shades, within my heart.  
Still it is unavenged, the dread reward  
For all my favors was the rotten keel, 599  
That night on which I mourned the vessel's wreck  
My payment for a throne! I would have wept  
The murder of my friends, my base son's crimes—  
There was not time for tears, but crime on crime  
He heaped, and smitten by the sword, made foul  
By many wounds, my troubled life went out 605  
Upon the sacred altars of the home ;  
Saved from the deep, my blood was not enough  
To quench the hatred of my son, he wars,  
The cruel tyrant, 'gainst the very name  
Of mother, seeks to overthrow my fame. 610  
All the inscriptions and the statues raised  
In honor of his mother he destroys  
Through all the world, the world my hapless love  
Gave, for my own destruction, to a boy

To rule. In death my murdered husband's soul 615  
Pursues me, presses in my hated face  
The torch, he threatens, he attacks, imputes  
His fate to me and murder to his son,  
Demands the author of his violent death.  
Ah, spare, revenge is thine! I do not ask 620  
For long; th' avenging goddess has prepared  
Death worthy of the tyrant, coward flight,  
Lashes, and penalties that shall surpass  
The thirst of Tantalus, the heavy toil  
Of Sisyphus, the bird of Tityus, 625  
The flying wheel that tears Ixion's limbs.  
What though he build his costly palaces  
Of marble, overlays them with pure gold?  
Though cohorts watch the armored chieftain's gates,  
Though the world be impoverished to send 630  
Its wealth to him, though suppliant Parthians kneel  
And kiss his cruel hand, though kingdoms give  
Their riches, yet the day shall surely come  
When for his crimes he will be called to give  
His guilty soul; when, banished and forlorn, 635  
In need of all things, he shall give his foes  
His life-blood. What availed my prayers and toils?  
Whither has thine own madness and the fates  
Borne thee, my son, that even thy mother's wrath,  
Though by thy crime she died, should faint and fail  
Before such evils? Would the beasts of prey 641  
Had torn my vitals ere I brought thee forth  
A little child into the light of day  
And nourished thee; still innocent and mine,  
Sinless and passionless thou then hadst died 645  
Clinging to me; thou hadst obtained a place  
Of everlasting peace among the shades,

Among thy father's fathers, mighty men,  
 Who now must feel perpetual grief and shame  
 Because of thee, base one. I too must mourn, 650  
 Who bore so vile a son. I who have brought,  
 As stepdame, wife, and mother, to my own  
 Naught but misfortune—wherefore should I cease  
 To hide my head in gloomy Tartarus?

## SCENE II

*Octavia, Chorus.*

*Octavia.* Oh, spare your tears upon this festal day,  
 Let not such love and kindness toward us 656  
 Arouse the bitter anger of the king,  
 Let me not be a cause of woe to you.  
 Not for the first time do I feel the wounds,  
 More grievous have I borne. This day shall bring  
 The end of all my cares, mayhap my death. 661  
 I will not see my cruel husband's face,  
 The hated marriage chamber of a slave  
 I will not enter, I will be henceforth  
 The sister of Augustus, not his wife. 665  
 Let bitter pain and haunting fear of death  
 Depart. Ah, fool! Remembering his crimes,  
 Canst thou still hope for this? Too long preserved,  
 A victim to this bridal thou shalt fall.  
 But why perplexed and with wet cheeks look back  
 So often on thy home? Haste from its roof, 671  
 Forsake the blood-stained palace of the king.

*Chorus.* The day long feared, long talked of, breaks  
 at last,  
 When driven forth by Nero, Claudius' child

Forsakes her marriage chamber, even now 675  
Victorious Poppæa there abides.  
Our love falls off, our wrath is crushed by fear  
And fruitless ; where is now the Roman power  
Which oft subdued great kings and gave just laws  
To an unconquered land ? With honors crowned,  
The worthy citizens made peace and war, 681  
Ruled barbarous nations, and imprisoned kings.  
Lo, on all sides, before our saddened eyes  
The image of Poppæa stands supreme,  
With Nero's joined. Oh, cast it to the ground 685  
With violent hands, too like herself it is ;  
And drag her from the chamber of the king,  
Seek with destroying flame and cruel spears  
The prince's palace.



## ACT IV

### SCENE I

*Poppæa, Nurse.*

*Nurse.* O foster child, why fleest thou in fear 690  
Thy husband's marriage chamber? Wherefore seek  
With troubled look a solitary place?  
Why wet thy cheeks with tears? The day long sought  
With prayers and sacrifice now shines for us;  
Thou to thy Cæsar, whom thy beauty won, 695  
Hast been united by the marriage bond.  
Venus, Love's mother, mightiest of the gods,  
Whom Seneca despised, has given him,  
Captived, to thee. Dwelling within the court  
How lovely wast thou on the princely couch. 700  
The senate saw, amazed, thy loveliness,  
When thou didst offer incense to the gods  
And sprinkle on their altars holy wine;  
Veiled wert thou with the filmy wedding veil,  
Flame colored. Close beside thee walked the king,  
Triumphant 'mid the people's favoring shouts, 706  
In his proud face and carriage shone his joy.  
So Peleas once took Thetis for his bride,  
When from the foamy waters of the sea  
She sprang; 'tis said the heavenly deities 710  
And every ocean god with one consent  
Honored their bridal. What has changed thy face  
So suddenly? Why is it now so pale?

Tell me what mean these tears.

*Poppæa.* Ah, nurse, my mind  
 Is darkened, troubled, and my senses fail 715  
 From fear of last night's visions terrible.  
 For when the happy day had left the sky  
 To darkness and the stars, I fell asleep  
 Encompassed by my Nero's loving arms ;  
 But not for long might I enjoy sweet sleep. 720  
 It seemed as though a mourning company  
 Came to my marriage chamber ; with loose hair  
 Rome's mothers, weeping, beat upon their breasts,  
 With dreadful oft-repeated trumpet notes ;  
 The mother of my husband, with harsh threats, 725  
 Waved wildly in my face a blood-red torch ;  
 When forced, by urgent fear, I followed her,  
 Earth yawned and suddenly a mighty gulf  
 Was opened for me whither I was plunged  
 Headlong, and there in wonder I beheld 730  
 My marriage-bed, in which I lay me down  
 Sore wearied. With a throng of followers, then,  
 I saw my former husband and my son  
 Coming. Crispinus, parted from me long,  
 Hastened to kiss me, take me in his arms, 735  
 When Nero madly rushed into my home  
 And buried in that breast the cruel sword.  
 At length my terror roused me from my sleep,  
 A fearful trembling shook my very bones, 739  
 My heart throbbed, and my voice was choked by fear ;  
 Thy love and loyalty have strengthened me.  
 Alas, what threat these spirits of the dead ?  
 Why have I seen my husband's blood poured forth ?  
*Nurse.* Whatever trouble stirs the waking soul,  
 A swift, mysterious power of the mind 745

Recalls in sleep. What need to wonder then,  
 That circled by the arms of thy new mate  
 Thou sawest in a dream thy marriage-bed,  
 Thy husband? Did it trouble thee to see  
 Loose hair, breasts beaten on a festal day? 750  
 Within her father's and her brother's house  
 They mourn Octavia's divorce; that torch  
 Which thou didst follow, which the empress' hand  
 Upheld, was omen of the noble name  
 That hatred gained for thee; thy rest in hell 755  
 Promised thy marriage bond should be for ay,  
 That in his breast thy emperor plunged the sword  
 Presages that he will not stir up wars,  
 But sheath his sword in peace. Be calm again,  
 Be glad, I pray thee, put aside thy fear, 760  
 Go to thy marriage chamber.

*Poppæa.* I will seek  
 The shrines and holy altars, offer there  
 The blood of victims slain unto the gods,  
 That all the ills that night and slumber threat  
 May be averted, and the things I dread 765  
 Be turned against my foe. Do thou adore  
 With pious prayers the gods, and offer up  
 Thy supplications for me, that my joy  
 May be abiding.

## SCENE II

*Chorus.*

If prating rumor's tales may be believed 770  
 Of all the amorous intrigues of Jove,  
 How, feathered like the swan, in his embrace

He held fair Leda, or, like fierce bull formed,  
 Bore on his back Europa through the waves,  
 He would desert the star where now he rules 775  
 To seek thy arms, Poppæa, whom indeed  
 He might prefer to Leda or to thee  
 Danae, who in wonder saw him once  
 Come in a golden rain. Let Sparta boast  
 Her daughter's beauty, Phrygia's shepherd joy 780  
 In his reward—she is more fair of face  
 Than child of Tyndarus who caused grim war  
 And whelmed the Phrygian kingdom in the dust.  
 But who is this who comes with troubled steps.  
 What message does his heaving bosom bear? 785

## SCENE III

*Messenger, Chorus.*

*Messenger.* The guard who watches at the emperor's  
gates

Must now defend his courts, the populace  
 Is roused against him. See, the prefects bring  
 In haste their cohorts to defend the town.  
 The people's fury, causelessly conceived, 790  
 Is not displaced by fear, but grows in strength.

*Chorus.* What is the fury that disturbs their minds?

*Messenger.* Filled with affection for Octavia,  
And by great wrongs enraged, the crowd rush on.

*Chorus.* What have they dared to do and to what  
end? 795

*Messenger.* They would give back again to Claudius'  
child  
Her father's palace and the right she holds

As wedded to her brother, her due share  
Of royal power.

*Chorus.* These Poppæa holds.

*Messenger.* This too great love has set their hearts  
on fire 800

And drawn them headlong into maddest deeds.  
The images of marble and of brass  
That have Poppæa's face lie overthrown  
And broken by the mob's fierce hands and swords.  
They drag the broken parts about with ropes, 805  
And trample in the mire the shattered limbs.  
Wild words and deeds are mingled, which my fear  
Forbids my lips to speak. Now they prepare  
To gird with flames the palace of the king,  
Unless he yield to them his new made wife, 810  
Restore to Claudius' child her former home.  
That he himself may know of this revolt,  
I have not tarried, but fulfilled in haste  
The Prefect's bidding.

*Chorus.* Wherefore have you stirred  
In vain this cruel war? Invincible 815  
Are Cupid's darts. He will o'erwhelm your fires  
With the same flame wherewith he oft has quenched  
The thunderbolts and carried Jove himself  
A captive from the sky. You with your blood  
Will pay the penalty, not patient he, 820  
Nor easy to be ruled, when once rage-filled.  
At his command Achilles smote the lyre,  
He quelled the Greeks, he quelled Atrides, too,  
And threw the realm of Priam in the dust,  
Laid cities low; for what the ruthless god 825  
With his wild might may do, my spirit fails.

## ACT V

### SCENE I

*Nero.*

Too slow my soldiers' hands, too mild my wrath,  
In view of crime like this. The people's blood  
Should have put out the fires they light for me,  
And Rome which bore such sons been made to reek  
With slaughter of her citizens. Ah well, 831  
The punishment of death is all too small,  
Their lawless deeds deserve worse punishment ;  
But she for whom the angry citizens  
Arose against me, my suspected wife 835  
And sister, shall for their offence give up  
Her life, shall quench my anger with her blood.  
The city shall be wasted by my fires,  
The guilty citizens shall be harassed  
By flames, and ruin, and hard poverty, 840  
Hunger, and bitter grief. The senseless mob,  
Corrupted by the blessings of my reign,  
Run riot, nor, ungrateful, comprehend  
My clemency ; they cannot be at peace,  
But, restless, rash, and overconfident, 845  
They rush to their own ruin. By hard means  
They must be ruled, and by a heavy yoke  
Subdued, that they may never dare like deeds,  
Nor to my wife's fair face dare lift their eyes.  
By heavy vengeance humbled, they shall learn 850

Through fear to give obedience to my nod.  
 But he whose singular integrity  
 And well-known loyalty have made him chief  
 Of all my army comes.

## SCENE II

*Nero, Prefect.*

*Prefect.* I come to say the fury of the mob 855  
 Is checked by slaughter of the few who long  
 Resisted foolishly.

*Nero.* Is this enough?  
 Hast thou, a soldier, thus obeyed thy chief?  
 They have been checked? Is this the penalty  
 They owe me?

*Prefect.* By the sword the leaders fell. 860

*Nero.* Why are the rabble spared who dared  
 attack

My home with fiery brands, who dared prescribe  
 A law unto their king, who from our couch  
 Dragged forth my lovely wife and with vile hands  
 And threatening words abused her? Shall not they  
 Endure just punishment?

*Prefect.* Shall wrath prescribe 866  
 The penalty thy citizens shall pay?

*Nero.* It shall prescribe a penalty whose fame  
 Shall never perish in the years to come.

*Prefect.* Neither thy anger nor our fear should rule.

*Nero.* She shall atone who first aroused our  
 wrath. 871

*Prefect.* Whom does thy vengeance seek? Spare  
 not my hands.

*Nero.* The murder of my sister, her vile life.

*Prefect.* Such rigor with cold horror chills my soul.

*Nero.* Art loth to do my will?

*Prefect.* Why doubt my truth? 875

*Nero.* Because thou didst not slay mine enemy.

*Prefect.* And can a woman be thine enemy?

*Nero.* When she is capable of crimes like hers.

*Prefect.* What proves her guilt?

*Nero.* The madness of the mob.

*Prefect.* Who shall restrain them?

*Nero.* She who stirred them up. 880

*Prefect.* Scarce any one, I think.

*Nero.* A woman can,

To whom was giv'n a spirit prone to ill,  
A bosom filled with wiles for harming us.

*Prefect.* She has no power.

*Nero.* That not impregnable

She be, that wavering strength be crushed by fear, 885

By punishment that even now too late

Falls upon one too long at liberty,

To harm us, leave thy counsels and thy prayers,

Go do our bidding. Let her in a ship

Be carried to some distant shore to die,

890

That I at last may banish anxious fear.

### SCENE III

#### *Chorus.*

How dangerous is popular applause,

How terrible! With favoring breath it fills

The vessel's sails and carries it along,

Then in the deep and raging seas grows faint

895

And leaves it. The sad mother wept her sons,



The Gracchi, of distinguished family born,  
 Illustrious for piety and truth  
 And eloquence, brave hearted, to the laws  
 Attentive, whom the people's too great love 900  
 Destroyed. Such violent death was, too, thy fate,  
 O Drusus, not thy honors nor thy home  
 Protected thee—how many instances  
 Our present grief forbids us to recall!  
 The citizens may see her dragged to death 905  
 And torture, weeping, sad, to whom they sought  
 To give again her royal dwelling-place,  
 Her fortune in her brother's marriage-bed.  
 Well may the poor, beneath an humble roof,  
 Be happy, for the tempest often shakes 910  
 And Fortune oft o'erthrows proud palaces.

## SCENE IV

*Octavia, Chorus.*

*Octavia.* Where do you drag me? If I still may live,  
 Broken and humbled by my many ills,  
 What exile does the tyrant or his queen  
 Command? If he would crown my woes with death 915  
 Why does he harshly grudge that I should die  
 In my own land? Alas, there is no hope  
 Of safety, for I see my brother's ship,  
 Lo, in this vessel I shall be borne hence,  
 I, once his wife, now driven from his bed, 920  
 His wretched sister. No divinity  
 Protects the good from harm, there are no gods,  
 The sad Erinnyes rule the universe.  
 Who worthily may weep my misery?  
 With what lament can the sad nightingale 925

Answer my tears? Ah, would the fates might give  
 Her wings to wretched me! Then borne aloft  
 Upon bird pinions, I would flee afar  
 From sorrow, from the company of men,  
 From slaughter; in a solitary wood, 930  
 Sitting alone upon a slender twig,  
 I could pour forth my sorrowful lament  
 With querulous voice.

*Chorus.* Mankind is ruled by fate,  
 And none may trust that his will be unchanged;  
 We need to fear each day that brings to us 935  
 Its varying fortunes. Strengthen then thy soul  
 With memory of the many instances  
 Thy house has seen. Ah, why should Fortune be  
 More harsh to thee? Thee first I must recall,  
 Child of Agrippa, by thy marriage made 940  
 The daughter of Augustus, Cæsar's wife;  
 Thy name shone glorious over all the world,  
 Oft from thy fruitful womb thou broughtest forth  
 Pledges of peace, but soon thou sufferedst  
 Exile, the lash and chains, bereavement, grief, 945  
 And death at length with torture long endured.  
 Livia, wife of Drusus, in her sons  
 And husband fortunate, fell into crime,  
 She met her punishment.  
 Julia was followed by her mother's fate, 950  
 And though no crime was hers, was slain at last.  
 What power wielded not thy mother once?  
 She ruled within the palace of the king,  
 Was rich in sons and to her husband dear,  
 Yet, humbled by her handmaid, she was slain 955  
 By the fierce warrior's sword. What throne in  
 heaven

Might Nero's noble mother not expect?  
 Yet she by sailors rude was first abused,  
 Then, wounded by the sword, she fell at length  
 A victim to her cruel son.

*Octavia.* Behold,  
 Me also does the cruel tyrant send  
 To the dead spirits and the land of shades.  
 Why vainly linger in my misery?  
 Ye to whom fortune gave the power to slay,  
 Speed now my death. I call upon the gods—  
 Ah, fool, what wouldst thou? Cease to make  
     prayers  
 To gods who hate thee. Tartarus, I call  
 Thee as my witness, and the goddesses  
 Of Erebus, avengers of all crimes,  
 And thee, my father . . . . .  
 I do not dread this death. Prepare the ship,  
 Spread to the winds the sails, the lonely shores  
 Of Pandataria shall the pilot seek.

## SCENE V

*Chorus.*

Ye gentle zephyrs and soft breathing airs  
 That once from harsh Diana's altars bore  
 Iphigenia, hidden in a cloud,  
 Her also bear from such keen suffering,  
 To Hecate's temple carry her, I pray;  
 Milder is Aulis and the barbarous land  
 Of Taurus than this city, to the gods  
 The blood of strangers there is sacrificed,  
 In her own children's blood Rome takes delight.

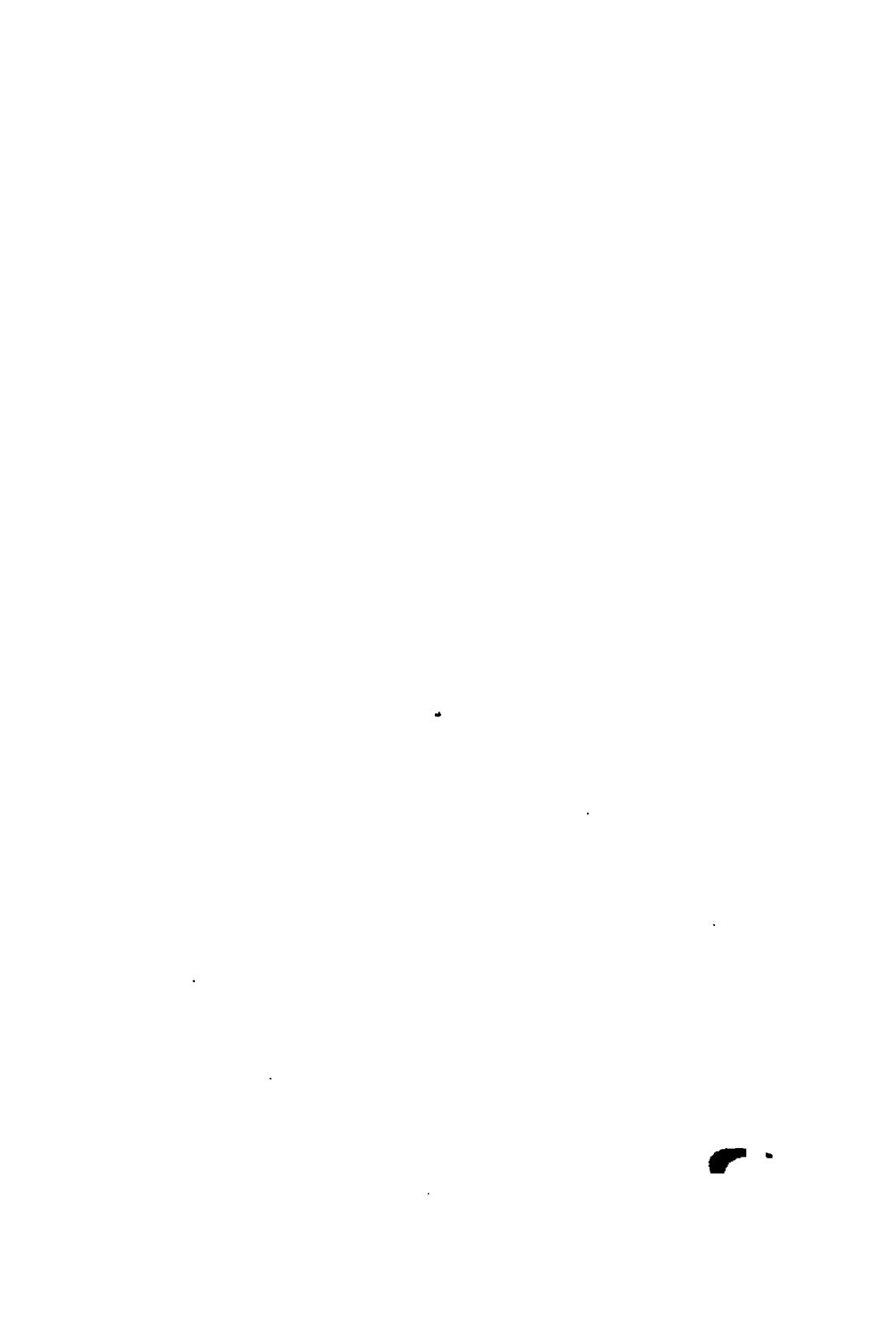
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