

**EURIPIDES'**  
**"IPHIGENEIA IN TAURIS"**

First performed in  
414-412BC

Translated  
by  
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© 2009

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**DRAMATIS PERSONAE:**

**Iphigeneia**

*(Sister of Orestes)*

**Orestes**

*(Brother of Iphigeneia)*

**Pylades**

*(Friend of Orestes)*

**Herdsmen**

**Thoas**

*(King of Tauris)*

**Servant and Messenger**

*(Of Thoas)*

**The Goddess Athena**

*(Appears through a *deus ex machina*)*

**Chorus**

*(of Greek women, Iphigeneia's servants)*

**Two maids to Iphigeneia**

*(silent)*

**Various Guards**

*(silent)*

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*As Dawn slowly breaks we discern more and more clearly the eerie setting of the play.*

*It is the Temple of Artemis in Tauris (modern day Crimea)*

*In front and almost centre stage, an altar, heavily stained by the blood of sacrifices.*

*From the eaves of the Temple hang human bones, skulls, pieces of armour.*

*Stains of spattered blood can also be seen on the columns and walls of the temple.*

*It will be disclosed that the victims sacrificed on that altar are humans.*

*The temple has two doors. Iphigeneia and the temple wardens use the central door. Others the side door.*

*SR leads to the seashore.*

*SL leads to Thoas' palace.*

*FX: The gentle sounds of the sea in the distance.*

*Enter Iphigeneia from the centre door of the temple.*

*She is the priestess of Artemis.*

*FX: Cut sounds of the sea*

Iphigeneia:

The moment Pelops, Tantalus' son, arrived in Pisa on his swift horses, he married the daughter of Oenomaus and with her fathered Atreus who, in turn, fathered Menelaos and Agamemnon. I am Agamemnon's daughter. Iphigeneia. My mother is Klytaimnestra, Tyndareus' daughter. My father sacrificed me to Artemis, for Helen's sake. At least that's what he thought. The slaughter took place in the famous meadows of Aulis, by the tumbling salty tides of the dark sea that Euripus

often whirls with his breezes.

There it was that my father, King Agamemnon, had gathered a fleet of a thousand Greek ships intending to win the crown of a glorious victory for the Greeks over the Trojans and, at the same time, appease his brother, Menelaos, by undoing the insult Paris had brought upon his marriage with Helen. But the winds that bloat the sails of ships did not come and so Agamemnon checked the entrails of the burnt offerings. The priest, Calchas, examined them and declared thus: "Agamemnon, leader of all of Hellas, your ships will not leave this harbour unless you sacrifice to Artemis your daughter, Iphigeneia. You have sworn an oath to Artemis, the goddess who carries a torch on her nocturnal hunts, that you would slaughter for her the most beautiful thing born that year. Your wife, Klytaimnestra, had given birth to a daughter that very year."

**20**

Then the priest said that I, Iphigeneia, Klytaimnestra's daughter, was the most beautiful thing born that year and so, my father had to sacrifice me.

Then they took me from my mother and brought me to their camp at Aulis, under the pretext of marrying me to Achilles. That was one of Odysseus' usual sly tricks. When I got there, they lifted me up above the altar and slaughtered me with a sword.

But Artemis snatched me away the very last minute and in my place, on the altar, she put a deer. She picked me up and sped me through the bright air to have me land here, in Tauris, to live among the Taurians.

**30**

King Thoas rules this place. A barbarian, ruling barbarians. They call him Thoas because his feet are as swift as wings.

She made me her priestess in this temple and, ever since, I have done as custom dictates: I have conducted the sacrifices according to the rites of the Festival which the goddess Artemis loves so much.

Festival in name only, though I'm just too afraid of the goddess to talk about what really does go on during it. Not a word!

There is a law here. A law that says that if a Greek man sets foot on this land, he will be sacrificed to the goddess. My duty is to purify him and to prepare him for the slaughter. The rest of the work—work that can not be talked about—is done inside. Inside the temple.

**42**

Now I'll tell you about the disturbing visions this past night has brought to me.

I want to utter them to the light of the Day. Perhaps this will bring me some sort of remedy.

In that dream, I had escaped from this land and was back in Argos.

It was night and I was asleep in my own old quarters. The quarters assigned for little girls.

Then the earth shook terribly and, afraid, I went outside.

Then I saw the eaves, the roof, the whole palace tumbling down.

**50**

I think that I saw only one, a single column left standing.

Then... then the dream showed the column sprouting blond hair from its top. Then this column began uttering words, with a human voice.

Then I did what I do here. I wailed and sprinkled holy water on the column as if I were preparing it for sacrificed, as if it were a man.

I believe the meaning of this dream is this:

My brother, Orestes, is dead and I believe the dream is telling me that it was him I was sprinkling holy water on, preparing him for the altar!

Now, two things must be considered: First, boys are the columns of a house and second, anyone my holy water touches dies.

I cannot think of anyone else that the dream could be referring to. My uncle Strophios had no sons at the time when my death was supposed to have taken place.

**61**

But now, now, I am waiting for the Greek maids the king has given me, to come and help me pour libations to my missing brother. It's the only thing I can do for him from here.

But why are they so late?

I think I'll go inside the temple of the goddess and wait for them there. This temple is also my home.

*Iphigeneia enters the temple.*

*A few seconds later Orestes and Pylades appear (SR). They examine the place cautiously.*

Orestes:

Be careful, Pylades! Look all around you. Is there anyone on the road?

Pylades:

I am being careful! I'm looking all around us.

Orestes:

Pylades, do you think this temple looks like that of the goddess we're looking for? Do you think it's the one we've sailed from Argos for?

**70**

Pylades:

Yes, this is the one, Orestes. This must be it. Don't you think so?

Orestes:

Look, here is the altar, drenched in Greek blood.

Pylades:

The whole of its top is painted red with the blood.

Orestes:

Look up there! Look at all the prizes hanging up there, under the eaves!

Pylades:

Human skulls! Skulls of men who were sacrificed! Watch out, Orestes!

Examine the place very carefully.

Orestes: *Addressing the Heavens*

O, Phoebus Apollo! What kind of trap have you set up for me with your oracles this time? They have sent me to murder my mother and avenge my father's murder; and after that, they had me hunted down by the Furies whichever way I ran.

**80**

Because of your oracles I had become a wandering exile until I went to your temple and asked you for a way to escape their frenzied anger and that's when you told me to come here. Here, in Tauris where your sister, the goddess Artemis, has her temple and her statue, a statue they say which has fallen here from the sky and which have you ordered me to take away from here, any way I can, including by use of trickery.

**90**

Then, once I completed this dangerous task, you've told me to take the statue to Athens and dedicate it to her people.

That's all you said I should do, Apollo and then, you promised, I would be released from my torment.

So here I am, Apollo. In a foreign and inhospitable land.

*Turning to Pylades*

Pylades, my poor companion in this labour, what do you think we should do now?

The walls of the temple, as you can see are very tall. Do you think we can enter it through the roof?

Surely, they'll see us if we tried.

Do you think we should try to break the bronze padlocks with crow bars? We know nothing about padlocks.

**100**

They'll catch us trying to break them and then they'll kill us.

No Pylades, rather than die, let's get back to the ship with which we came here and let's...

Pylades:

...run away? Unbearable stuff!

Cowardice is a shameful thing, Orestes. It's not in our nature. We can't betray Apollo's command.

Let's just move away from the temple, go into one of those caves, one that's been battered by the black waves, away from the ship, in case someone sees it and tells their king. They'll search the place and catch us.

**110**

Then, when the eye of the gloomy night comes, then, Orestes, we must pluck up our courage and steal the statue the best way we can!

Look there, see? We can climb down through those triglyphs there! There's enough space for us.

Brave deeds, Orestes are accomplished by brave men. The cowards accomplish nothing.

Orestes:

You're right, Pylades. We have not crossed all these oceans so as to turn back just before we accomplish our deed.

You're quite right. I must listen to you. Let us go and hide in some place where they can not find us.

**120**

I won't be the one who has caused the fall of Apollo's command.

Come then, Pylades, courage! Danger does not make young men hesitate.

*Exit Orestes and Pylades, SR.*

*Enter the chorus.*

Chorus: *To the audience*

To all of you whose homes are here, by the twin rocks that clash against each other, in this inhospitable sea, keep reverent silence!

Chorus:

O, Artemis! Dictynna, daughter of Leto!

Chorus:

Goddess of the mountains! Huntress!

**130**

Chorus:

I set my foot upon the court of your temple whose columns are splendid and from whose rafters hang the glittering spoils!

Chorus:

Revered virgin!

Chorus:

We, maids to the holy virgin who holds the keys of your temple, have come, in answer to her call.

Chorus:

We have left the tall towers and the high walls of Greece, a horse-loving land, a land of Europe, a land of marvellous trees, the land of my home.

*Enter Iphigeneia from the temple. She is accompanied by two maids, one carrying a golden cup the other an urn.*

Chorus:

Ah, Iphigeneia, daughter of Agamemnon! Daughter of Atreus' son who took the glorious fleet of one thousand Greek ships to the Trojan towers.

**140**

We are here. What news? What troubles you? Why call us here to the temple?

Iphigeneia:

O, dear, dear friends!

Misery of miseries! Unbearable pain! Lament most hurtful!

No lyre accompanies these wails, my dear friends!

Wails of grief! Wails of death!

I cry, dear friends, in grief of my brother's death!

**150**

I saw a dreadful dream last night. A vision that showed the total destruction of my race.

I am lost! I am destroyed!

My father's race, dear friends, that noble race of the Atreides, is no more!

O, the misery in Argos! How that city suffers!

O, Fate! Fate most bitter!

You've snatched the only brother I had and took him down to the halls of Hades!

**160**

I have brought these libations for him which I will pour upon Earth's broad shoulders:

Milk from the mountain herds...

Wine, Bacchus' blessed offering...

Honey, the work of the golden bees.

Such things soften the pains of the dead.

*To one of her attendants*

Come, give me the golden bowl.

*The attendant obeys and Iphigeneia takes the bowl. Then, to the other attendant:*

And the offerings for Hades.

*The attendant obeys.*

*Iphigeneia holds the urn and the bowl up high as she intones.*

O, child of Agamemnon!

Orestes, who's now in Earth's dark embrace, down below!

**170**

I have brought you these offerings, offerings for the dead.

Receive them!

I cannot bring a lock of my blond hair to your grave, my brother, or let a tear fall upon it from my eyes.

Because now, now I am far from the land that nourished us both. Far from that land where the people think of me, poor woman, as having been slaughtered and dead.

**179**

Chorus:

And we, my lady, we shall sing with you, wild sounds, laments usually heard in the East. We'll sing laments and odes that please the dead, songs sung by Hades himself.

Chorus:

Sounds that bring dread to the living.

Chorus:

Ah!

Chorus:

Ah!

Chorus:

Ah!

Chorus:

The glorious light of the royal palace has died!

Chorus:

The house of the Atreides is destroyed!

Chorus:

Gone is the spark of the royal line!

Chorus:

Gone is the wealth of the kings of Argos!

Chorus:

Ah!

Chorus:

Ah!

Chorus:

Ruin! Destruction!

**190**

Chorus:

Misery upon misery since the brilliant winged chariot of the Sun God turned from its path to avert its holy sight from the treachery of the golden sheep.

Chorus:

Sorrow upon sorrow! Pain upon pain! Murder upon murder!

Chorus:

And so, the vengeance of all the murdered sons of Tantalus visits all its new sons!

Chorus:

But as for you, dear girl! As for you, Fate works upon you unjustly!

**202**

Iphigeneia:

My Fate was black from birth, dear friends.

Black from the very moment my mother undid her girdle, from that very night I was conceived. Since then the Fates, the goddesses who preside over births, have fastened a hard grip upon my life!

Ah!

I was the first blossom of the house!

Woody by all the nobles of Greece!

Slaughtered on the altar by my own father's arrogance!

**210**

It was for him and for that very slaughter that my poor mother, Leda's daughter, gave birth to me!

She had raised a miserable victim for that unholy sacrifice!

They had carried me down to the sandy shores of Aulis on a bitter horse-drawn carriage, to be a bride, a sad bride, to Achilles, son of Thetis the daughter of Nereus.

Ah!

But now, here I am, a stranger, living in a house surrounded by a hostile sea, with no husband, with no children, with no city and with no friends!

**221**

Exiled from Greece. Forgotten by Greece.

I sing no songs for Hera at Argos.

I weave no more. My shuttle does not sing upon the loom! It does not weave in many colours the pictures of Pallas Athena and the Titans.

Ah!

These days, I bless the rites of the dreadful sacrifices of strangers whose blood colours this altar, the

blood of men who wail with despair, who cry with despair, sounds unaccompanied by the flute.  
Ah!

**230**

But now I will not think of those men but of another.

Now I will weep for one who died in Argos. Orestes, my own brother whom I left behind, a tiny sapling, a baby at my mother's breast, deep inside her arms.

My brother, Orestes, bearer of the scepter of the royal house of Argos.

Chorus: *Indicating behind the wings*

My lady, a herdsman! He's left the seashore to bring you some news.

*Enter Herdsman from SR.*

*They look excited.*

Herdsman:

Iphigeneia, daughter of Agamemnon and Klytaimnestra, I have some surprising news for you!

**240**

Iphigeneia:

Surprising? What could be so surprising about your news?

Herdsman:

Iphigeneia, two young men! They've managed to escape the Clashing Rocks and they've landed here, in our country. They would certainly make a pleasant offering, Iphigeneia, a sacrifice to our goddess, Artemis! Come, Iphigeneia, quickly, prepare the rites for the blessing and their purification!

Iphigeneia:

Can you tell from their appearance which country they are from?

Herdsman:

I can only tell that they are from Greece, nothing more.

Iphigeneia:

What about their names? Did you hear them? Do you know what they're called?

Herdsman:

I heard the name of one of them. One of them had called the other, Pylades.

**250**

Iphigeneia:

What about the other one? Did you hear what his friend was called?

Herdsman:

No, Iphigeneia. We didn't hear his name, so none of us knows.

Iphigeneia:

So, tell me how you came across them, tell me how you caught them.

Herdsman:

We were down at the shore, where the surf of the hostile sea crashes.

Iphigeneia:

The shore? Why would herdsmen go to the sea shore?

Herdsman:

We took our cattle down there, Iphigeneia. We usually wash them with salt water.

Iphigeneia:

I see. Good. Begin your story again, then. I want to know exactly how you've caught them, so tell me that. It's been a long time since Greeks landed here and Artemis' altar is not yet had its fill of Greek blood.

**260**

Herdsman:

Our cattle graze up in the pastures of the forest but we take them down to that part of the shore, where the ocean waters flow through the clashing rocks. Just there, where there is a cave hollowed out by the constant crashing of the great waves. The porphyry fishers use it as a shelter. One of our drovers was down there and he saw these two young men, so he carefully snuck away and rushed to tell us about them.

"Look there," he said. "See those two sitting over there? They are gods!"

**268**

Then, one of us, a devout man, turned in their direction and, raising his hands in prayer, said, "O Lord Palaemon, son of Leukothea, goddess of the sea! You, the protector of ships, or if you are the Dioscouri, or some boys loved by Nereus, the father of the bright chorus of Nereids, be merciful to us!" But then, another one of our companions, a crude man, a fool with no manners or faith, laughed at the first man and his prayers and said that those men there, who were sitting in that cave, were nothing but shipwrecked sailors, hiding in there because they must have heard that we sacrifice strangers on this

island.

Most of us agreed with him and so we decided to obey our laws and catch them so as to have them sacrificed to our goddess.

**281**

However, one of the foreigners got out from behind the rock, got up, shook his head about and began screaming and groaning and shaking his hands like a madman! Then, he called out to his friend: “You see this one too, Pylades? This one here? And there? You see this beast, this Fury from Hades? See how she wants to kill me? To strangle me with her dreadful vipers? Look at them! They’ve turned towards me! And that other one there! And there, another one! Fire and blood drip from her clothes as she flaps her wings. Look! She has my mother in her arms, a huge stone to hurl at me! She will kill me, Pylades? Where can I escape?”

**291**

But we couldn’t see any of what he saw. He must have confused the noises of the cattle-bellows and the barks of the dogs with what the Furies are supposed to sound like.

We thought he was going to die so we sat there holding our breath. Then he pulled out his sword out and, like a lion, charged at our cattle, jabbing them at the ribs and at the sides, as if he thought he was defending himself against the Furies.

**300**

Buds and blossoms of red blood covered the sea.

Seeing what he was doing to our cattle, cutting them down, killing them, we all took some weapon or other and also blew the warning conch to summon what people were nearby. We thought that herdsmen like us could never win in a fight against such strong young strangers. Pretty soon a fair crowd of us gathered around but by then, the foreigner had stopped his fit of madness and fell to the ground, his beard drenched with foam. This gave us an advantage and we all rushed to throw stones at him and to beat him up as hard as we could.

**310**

But the other foreigner, the one he called Pylades, came over to him, wiped the froth from his beard and spread his heavy cloak over him to shield and protect his body. Pylades warded off our stones and blows with his garment and also tried to comfort his friend. And then the stranger on the ground regained his senses and jumped to his feet but he saw how close to them all their enemies were and also sensed that Fate was about to make her move upon them. He groaned at the prospect but we did not stop. We kept hurling stones at them and hitting them as hard as we could.

**320**

That’s when we heard this desperate shout: “Pylades, we will die, so let’s die honorably! Come, draw your sword and follow me!”

At the sight of the two swords drawn against us we ran. We scattered all around and into the woods of the valley. Some of us, though stayed and continued hurling stones at the strangers and when that lot was pushed back by the strangers, the first lot that had fled came rushing back and went on with the pelting.

But something incredible was happening: Of all the stones that were hurled at the strangers, none hit them! None touched our goddess’ victims!

Finally we caught them! Not because of our courage and ability but because we fought hard.

**330**

First we surrounded them and then we knocked the swords out of their hands with our stones. Then they became really exhausted and just sank to their knees.

After that, we took them to our king who, the moment he saw them, sent them over to you, to purify them and prepare them for the sacrifice.

Young lady, these are the sort of victims you should always pray for!

It’s only by sacrificing such strangers that Greece will pay for your murder, for your sacrifice at Aulis.

**340**

Chorus:

What a strange tale you tell of this madman, whoever he is!

Chorus:

A Greek that came here, to this hostile sea!

Iphigeneia:

Right then. You go and bring the foreigners and I’ll see to the holy preparations here.

*Exit the Herdsman*

O, my long-suffering heart!

You were always compassionate and sympathetic, soft towards the fate of strangers and you shed a tear when those strangers who were brought to you for the sacrifice were fellow Greeks.

But this time, this dream I had last night, turned me into a wild beast because now I believe that my Orestes no longer sees the light of the sun.

Whoever you are, you men who have come here, will find me a hard-hearted woman.

**350**

What they say is true, my dear friends. I know it, I feel it in my soul:

Those whose Fate is miserable feel no pity for those whose Fate is even worse!

But Zeus has not yet sent a breeze strong enough for a ship carrying Helen herself to sail through the Clashing Rocks. Helen and Menelaos, the two who brought about my death! These two have not come for me to take my vengeance upon them, to make this place an Aulis like that in Greece, where the Greeks grabbed me like some calf and slit my throat upon an altar. The priest who had performed that sacrifice was none other than my own father!

**361**

Ah!

Ah!

How can I forget? How can I forget that despair?

How can I forget how many times I had stretched my arm out to him, to try and touch his chin, or kneel down and hang from his knees calling out to him, "Father, what a shameful marriage you're sending me off to! Father! Father, at this very moment, this moment that you're killing me, my mother, back home, is singing my wedding songs along with other Argive women. This very moment the whole house is echoing with the sounds of flutes, yet at this very moment, from you, I receive death! While I was on that cart with which you brought me here, you had betrayed me! You had promised me a marriage with Achilles, Peleus' son but, instead, you're now sending me to a blood-stained marriage with Hades!"

**372**

I hid my eyes behind my wedding dress and did not lift my little brother up into my arms and now he's dead. Nor did I kiss my sister in the mouth, obeying the custom of a virgin going off to her wedding. I thought then that I was only going to the house of Peleus.

So many farewells I had put off then because I thought that I'd soon return home.

Orestes! Orestes, my unfortunate brother!

O, the wealth and the grandeur of the house you've left behind! Your father's house!

**380**

But I hate the sly cleverness of this goddess!

She deems unclean anyone who has touched with his hands the blood of someone murdered or a corpse, or a woman who is in labour and forbids them from approaching her altars, yet, she, herself rejoices in the sacrifices of mortals!

How could anyone believe that Leto, Zeus bride, could have given birth to such a foolish creature?

And I don't believe the story about that feast that Tantalus gave to the gods, where, supposedly, the gods had enjoyed eating the flesh of his own son.

No, I think these people here, the Taurians are a murderous lot and they use the goddess as an excuse for their bloody deeds.

I don't believe at all that any of the gods is evil.

*Exit Iphigeneia and her maids into the temple.*

**392**

Chorus:

Dark, most dark the wild union of seas traversed by the winged frenzy...

Chorus:

Through the hostile ocean the waves carried the cow, Io, from Argos...

Chorus:

Leaving Europe behind and adopting Asia as her new home.

Chorus:

Who are they, then? Who is it who has left the lush, cool springs of reedy Eurotas?

**400**

Chorus:

Who are they who have left Dirke's wild streams, to come to this untamed land? To come here, where Zeus' daughter, Artemis, steeps the altars and the temples with their rich colonnades, in the blood of mortals?

Chorus:

Was it insatiable greed for wealth to clog their houses with, that brought these sea farers here?

**410**

Chorus:



They've cut across the ocean's waves with their ships, two banks of oars made of pine on them and linen sails, bloated by the wind.

Chorus:

They've come because the hope for riches always warms the heart and is unquenchable.

Chorus:

A gushing stream of curses for all mortals!

Chorus:

They travel to foreign lands, all with a single purpose in mind.

Chorus:

Some miss the moment, others are lucky.

**421**

Chorus:

But how did they manage to pass through the Clashing Rocks?

Chorus:

And what of the restless shores of Phineus?

Chorus:

Shore by shore they reached the surging waves of Amfitrite.

Chorus:

At those shores, when the wind billows the sails, the fifty daughters of Nereus dance and sing in circles.

**431**

Chorus:

And Zephyr's breezes or the southern gales whistle through the oars resting at the stern.

Chorus:

And so, they've come here, to the shore of the white sand and of the great flocks of birds and where Achilles has built his racing track, here, by this sea, the sea that hates foreigners.

**439**

Chorus:

How I wish that the prayers of my mistress, Artemis were answered and Helen, Leda's darling daughter somehow left Troy and suddenly appeared here!

Chorus:

Here, she would know the feel of the sacrificial water, sprinkled all around her hair...

Chorus:

Sprinkled by the hand of my mistress herself, a sprinkling that brings forth blood and slaughter and justice for all she's done throughout her life.

Chorus:

But the best news to receive would be that someone from Greece has sailed here to rescue me, poor soul from the torment of slavery.

**451**

Chorus:

How I wish, even in a dream, to have visited my parents' home, in my own city!

What joy do dreams bring!

Chorus:

Dreams are a common delight to us all.

Chorus: *Indicating within, SR*

Ah! Look! The two young men! Here they are, their hands tied fast, coming for the sacrifice.

Chorus:

Fresh blood!

Chorus:

New blood for the goddess!

*Enter the herdsman with two armed guards leading Orestes and Pylades, their hands in chains.*

*Whispers of surprise and awe from the chorus.*

**460**

Chorus: *Loudly so that she may be heard by Iphigeneia in the temple*

Silence, my friends! The herdsman was right. The two most precious buds of Greece are approaching the altar.

*Enter Iphigeneia from the temple.*

Chorus: *Praying*

O, revered Artemis!

If these rituals, performed by this city for you, give you any pleasure, then accept these sacrifices!

Chorus:

They are against the holy laws of our own land and deemed abhorrent by all the Greeks.

Iphigeneia: *To the chorus*

Enough, friends!

Let me tend to my first duty which is to make sure that the rites of our goddess are properly observed.

Untie the hands of the foreigners. Foreigners are sacred. It is not proper that they are bound.

*The guards obey.*

**470**

*To the Herdsman and the guards:*

Now you go into the temple and prepare all that is necessary for the sacrifice.

*The Herdsman and the guards obey, entering the temple by the side door.*

*To Orestes and Pylades:*

Ah!

Poor men! I wonder who your mother is and your father.

I wonder who is your sister – if you do have a sister. How could she lose brothers like you two, fine young men and not sink into utter despair?

Ah!

Fate! Who knows what sort of Fate might befall anyone?

All things that come to us from the gods, come to us slithering, like invisible snakes. When they will come to us and where from, no one knows. Disaster strikes in a most mystifying, unexpected way.

Ah!

Unfortunate strangers, where are you from?

It must have taken you a long time to sail all the way to this land but now, now you'll stay away from your home for ever. Your new home will be below the earth.

**482**

Orestes:

Why grieve like this about such things and add more grief upon the grief that we must suffer?

Who are you, woman?

I think it's improper for people who are about to slaughter someone, to try and sweeten that slaughter with pity.

And it's not wise for the one who's about to die and there is no hope of escape, to cry about his imminent death. To do that, would be to turn one pain into two: He'll be thought of as a fool and he'll die anyway!

Such things are best left to Fate.

As for you, don't cry for us. We know very well what sort of sacrifices take place here.

**492**

Iphigeneia:

Which one of you was called by the other, Pylades?

Let me find that out first.

Orestes: *Indicating Pylades*

If this knowledge pleases you, then let me tell you it's this man.

Iphigeneia:

Which Greek city is he from?

Orestes:

What will you gain by knowing that?

Iphigeneia:

Are you from the same mother? Are you brothers?

Orestes:

We are brothers by friendship, not by birth.

Iphigeneia:

And you? What name has your father given you?

**500**

Orestes:

Better if he had given me the name "Unfortunate."

Iphigeneia:

I'm not asking you about that. That is Fate's business

Orestes:

Better die without a name. That way I'll escape ridicule.

Iphigeneia:

Why don't you want to tell me your name? Are you that proud?

Orestes:

Because you'll only be sacrificing my body then and not my name.

Iphigeneia:

Will you also not tell me your city?

Orestes:

I'm about to die. What good will it do you to know such things?

Iphigeneia:

But what stops you from granting me this favour?

Orestes:

Then, I am proud to say that my city is famous Argo.

Iphigeneia:

O, gods! Is that true, stranger? Are you truly from Argos?

**510**

Orestes:

From prosperous Mycenae, in fact.

Iphigeneia:

But what made you leave that place? Or, did you fall upon some misfortune?

Orestes:

I am an exile, yes. Of my own will... and yet not.

Iphigeneia:

Will you tell me something I want to know, I wonder.

Orestes:

So far as my misfortune will allow me to do so.

Iphigeneia:

And yet, your arrival here from Argos has made me very happy.

Orestes:

It might have you made happy but it did no such thing to me.

Iphigeneia:

Tell me then. Everyone knows about Troy, do you?

Orestes:

I wish I didn't. Not even from my dreams.

Iphigeneia:

They say that city was destroyed by the war.

**520**

Orestes:

They have informed you well. That's how it is.

Iphigeneia:

Then, has Helen returned to Menelaos' palace?

Orestes:

She has and by doing so she brought disaster to some one I know.

Iphigeneia:

So, where is she now? And as for disasters, she has caused me one, as well.

Orestes:

She lives in Sparta, with her first husband.

Iphigeneia:

O, hateful woman! Hated not only by me but by all the Greeks!

Orestes:

I, too have enjoyed something out of her marriage.

Iphigeneia:

They say all the Greeks have returned home. Is that true?

Orestes:

Heavens! Bit by bit you are telling me the whole story!

Iphigeneia:

I want to know that whole story before you die.

**530**

Orestes:

Well then, if you want to know it so badly, go ahead: ask me your questions and I'll answer them.

Iphigeneia:

There was a seer. His name was Calchas. Has he returned from Troy?

Orestes:  
No. The Myceneans were saying that he died there.  
Iphigeneia:  
O, Artemis, my goddess! Thank you. What of Laertes' son, Odysseus?  
Orestes:  
They say he's still alive but he hasn't reached home yet.  
Iphigeneia:  
I hope he, too, dies and never makes it home!  
Orestes:  
You shouldn't curse the man. Nothing is going well for him.  
Iphigeneia:  
What of the Nereid's son, Achilles? Is he still alive?  
Orestes:  
No. He's dead, so that marriage of his, at Aulis, came to nothing.  
Iphigeneia:  
Those who know him, know very well just how treacherous the man was.

**540**

Orestes:  
Who are you? How pertinent are your questions!  
Iphigeneia:  
I am from those parts and in those parts I died when I was but a child.  
Orestes:  
You're quite right, then, lady, to long for news from there.  
Iphigeneia:  
What of the General? That great General who, they all say, is doing very well for himself.  
Orestes:  
Which General do you mean? Because the General I know is not among the prosperous.  
Iphigeneia:  
I mean that man who was a king. Agamemnon, son of Atreus.  
Orestes: *shocked, turns away.*  
I... I know nothing about him. Change the subject.  
Iphigeneia:  
O, no! In Heaven's name! Tell me, friend. Please tell me about him! It will give me joy!  
Orestes:  
The poor man...died. And with his death he took someone else's life.  
Iphigeneia:  
Ah!  
He died? But how?  
Ah!  
What dreadful misery for me!

**550**

Orestes:  
Why are you grieving like this? Was he a relative of yours?  
Iphigeneia:  
I grieve for the happiness he once enjoyed!  
Orestes:  
His death was horrible. He was slaughtered by his wife.  
Iphigeneia:  
Endless the tears for the murderess, endless the tears for the murdered.  
Orestes:  
Enough! Stop! Ask me no more questions!  
Iphigeneia:  
One last question: His wife, is she still alive?  
Orestes:  
No. She is not. Her own son killed her with his own hands!  
Iphigeneia:  
Ah!  
What a troubled house! But why did he do this?  
Orestes:  
As punishment for his father's murder.

Iphigeneia:

An evil, justly done!

**560**

Orestes:

True, "justly done" but the gods will not allow him to rejoice in it.

Iphigeneia:

Any other of Agamemnon's children still living?

Orestes:

He has only one daughter left, Elektra.

Iphigeneia:

What of that daughter of his that was slaughtered? Are they saying anything about her?

Orestes:

No, no one speaks of her. Only that she was sacrificed.

Iphigeneia:

Unfortunate the girl and unfortunate her father who had to kill her.

Orestes:

An unjust death. She was killed for the sake of a horrible woman.

Iphigeneia:

What of the son of this murdered king? Is he still alive?

Orestes:

Yes, he is still alive but he has a wretched life. He is nowhere, yet he is everywhere!

Iphigeneia:

Oh, dreams! What nonsense you were! You were false. Meaningless, worthless!

**570**

Orestes:

The gods, too, whom the prophets call wise, are like those fleeting dreams: False!

Both worlds, the divine as well as the mortal, are equally chaotic.

And this is the thing that saddens this man: Even though he's a wise man, he still believed in the prophesies and so, he was destroyed.

Those who know him, know how that happened.

Chorus:

And what about us?

Chorus:

Are our parents alive or dead?

Chorus:

Who can tell us?

Iphigeneia:

Hear me friends.

A thought have just entered my mind.

And you, too, strangers. This will profit you as well as me, which is the best way to go about such things, by pleasing everyone involved with the one action.

**581**

Tell me: If I were to spare your life, would you undertake to deliver news, as well as a letter to my friends in Argos?

The letter has been written by a prisoner who felt sorry for me and who didn't believe that my hand is a murderous hand and that it is the law of the goddess that does the murdering, because she thinks murder is justice.

So far, there's been no one who could take the letter back to Argos, no one who has overcome all the difficulties of getting there and deliver the letter to someone in my family.

**591**

But you, you seem to have come from a noble family and you also know all those in Mycenae I love.

Well then, save your life! Your reward for the small deed of delivering a letter will not be small, it will be your life!

As for your friend though, since the city requires it, let him remain here and be sacrificed to the goddess.

Orestes:

You speak well, my friend but you're wrong about one thing: This man's sacrifice would be too heavy a burden for me to bear.

In this journey, it is I who has loaded the ship with all the misfortunes.

**600**

This man has sailed with me to share the pain of my ordeals, so it isn't right that I should escape those ordeals by bringing about his destruction.

Rather, let us do it this way: Give him your letter. He'll go back to Argos and do as you wish. If there's any need for anyone to kill someone, then let that someone be me. It's a shameful thing for a man to save his life by throwing his friends into destruction. This man is so dear a friend to me that I wish him to look upon the sun's light for no less a time than me.

**609**

Iphigeneia:

O, what a noble heart! You must obviously come from a noble family indeed, to be so loyal a friend to your friends! How I wish that my one remaining brother were like you!

Because, strangers, I, too have a brother—a brother that I have but cannot see!

So be it then. If that's what you want, then let him go and you stay and be sacrificed.

It seems that you have some strong reason why you wish this.

Orestes:

Who'll perform the dreadful deed of sacrificing me?

Iphigeneia:

Me. That's the service I perform for the goddess.

Orestes:

Unenviable stuff this, young lady. Horrible.

**620**

Iphigeneia:

Yes, but it's a service forced upon me and I must perform it.

Orestes:

You, a woman? Will you use a sword on a man, yourself? Kill him and sacrifice him?

Iphigeneia:

No, I will only wet your hair with the purifying water.

Orestes:

Am I allowed to know who will be my slayer?

Iphigeneia:

There are people inside the temple who take care of such things.

Orestes:

And when I die, what sort of tomb will receive me?

Iphigeneia:

First you will be received by the sacred flame and then by the wide hollow of the rock.

Orestes:

How I wish my sister could drape the funeral cape around my corpse!

Iphigeneia:

A futile hope, poor man, whoever you might be.

Your sister is far from this barbaric land.

**630**

But since you happened to be an Argive, I will perform for you as many of the things you ask for, as I can. I will pile a great many rich gifts upon your tomb, sprinkle golden oil upon your body to quell the fire and, over your pyre, I will pour the golden flower nectar gathered by the mountain bees.

But let me now go and bring you the letter and don't think that I am responsible for all the things that you are about to suffer.

*Enter the guards from the temple.*

You, guards, guard them but do not tie their hands.

*To herself:*

Perhaps this letter will reach someone in Argos, to the dearest man I know. A hope beyond all hope! It will inform the man that the person he thought is dead, still lives. It will be news that he will delight in.

*Exit Iphigeneia into the temple.*

**643**

Chorus:

We mourn for you, stranger!

Chorus:

The purifying water will soon be sprinkled in your hair, claiming your blood!

Orestes:

Such things are not to mourn for, ladies but I bid you farewell.

Chorus: *To Pylades*

But as for you, young man. Fate favours you. We rejoice with you, since you will soon step upon your own land.

**650**

Pylades:

Rejoice? How can a man rejoice when he loses his friend?

Chorus: *To Pylades*

Ah! What a grim journey awaits you!

Chorus: *To Orestes*

Ah! What a grim death awaits you!

Chorus:

Ah! Which of you has the grimmest Fate?

Chorus:

My mind is torn between you. For whom should my heart cry more?

Orestes: *An idea strikes him suddenly.*

Great Heavens, Pylades! Are you thinking what I am thinking?

Pylades:

I... I don't know. What do you mean?

**659**

Orestes:

Who is that young woman?

She knows so much about Greece! Her questions about our pains in Troy, about the return of the Achaeans, about Calchas the seer who examines birds, and about Achilles' fame! And did you notice how hurt she was when she heard about poor Agamemnon and his wife... all those questions about his children!

I think this woman is from there. She's an Argive by birth. A foreigner here, herself!

Why else would she send a letter there?

Her questions, too, Pylades. The way she asked them, in such detail, as if her fate depended upon that of Argos. If Argos goes well, she's happy.

**668**

Pylades:

You took the words right out of my mouth, Orestes but, still, everyone knows the story of those two suffering kings, at least, everyone who travels.

But there's something else I just thought of. Something that's bothering me.

Orestes:

Yes? What is it? Tell me and we might be able to sort it out together.

Pylades:

The shame, Orestes! The shame of me being alive after you've been killed! That shame would be unbearable for me.

We have sailed here together. Let us die together, or else, I can see quite clearly just how I will be received back, in Argos and in the valleys of the Phockians: a coward and a disgrace! Those with evil souls abound, Orestes. They will be saying that I have abandoned you here and sailed home safely, alone.

**680**

Worse still, they will say that I had taken advantage of the dire fortune your family is in and, being married to your sister, Elektra, who would inherit your fortune, plotted your murder so that I could steal the kingdom's throne.

These thoughts worry me a great deal, Orestes.

I am worried and I feel ashamed.

Orestes, I will not be convinced otherwise: I should die with you, be sacrificed with you and have my corpse burned on the same pyre with you! We've been friends for a very long time.

I hate slanderous tongues!

Orestes:

Talk sense, my friend!

My own misery is for me to endure. I can bear that one but I can't bear another on top of it as well.

**690**

What you have just called shame and dishonour will also apply to me if I cause your death, the death of a close friend who has helped me with my troubles. In any case, since the gods have decided to deliver me such unbearable misfortune, leaving this earth wouldn't be such a bad thing for me.

You, however, you are blessed with a pure family, one that is not cursed, or polluted, like mine. As

well, if you escape this death and do marry Elektra, my sister, whom I offered you as a wife, you will have children with her and so my name will live on and so, my father's house will not be left bereft of descendants and become extinct.

So, Pylades, save your life and go and look after my father's kingdom!

**700**

But once you arrive in Greece, in horse-loving Argos, I ask you that you swear that you will do this for me: make a small tomb and put upon it my name and tell my sister to make offerings to that tomb: of her tears and of a lock of her hair.

Also, announce to the Argives that I was sacrificed by an Argive woman. Tell them it was an Argive woman who first sprinkled the purifying water on my head.

And one more thing I ask of you, Pylades: Don't desert my sister when you see that her home, my home, too, has been abandoned and her family gone.

Now, farewell to you, the most loved of all my friends. As children, we played together and then, later, we went hunting together. You have shouldered much of the pain of my miserable life.

**711**

I was Apollo's plaything. The god is a prophet but he's also a liar. With lies and deceit, he dragged me as far away from Greece as it's possible, so as to hide his shame over that old prophesy of his and I, I foolishly trusted his word and went and murdered my own mother, so now, poor wretch, now I too am about to die!

Pylades:

My poor friend, you will have your tomb and I will never desert your sister. If it so happens that you will die, then I will love you even more.

Still, even though you are close to death, the god's oracle has not yet been realized. You are still alive and it is possible, very possible that utter despair can bring about great changes.

*Enter Iphigeneia from the temple, carrying a letter*

**723**

Orestes:

Enough, Pylades. Apollo's words are of no help to me.

Here comes the woman from the temple.

Iphigeneia: *To the guards*

Guards, go now inside and help those who take care of the sacrifice.

*The guards enter the temple through the side door*

*To Orestes and Pylades*

My friends, here's my letter. It is written in many folds but I need to add yet one more thing. No man stays the same once he has escaped danger and finds himself on solid and safe ground.

**730**

That's why my heart trembles at the thought that this man, who is about to go to Argos, once he has left this place and is far from here, will forget all about my letter.

Orestes:

Well, then, what would you like us to do about that? What's making you hesitate like this?

Iphigeneia:

I need him to swear to me that he will take this letter to Argos and hand it to the friends I want it delivered.

Orestes:

What about you? Will you swear an oath in exchange?

Iphigeneia:

Swear an oath? What would you like me to do, or to avoid doing? Tell me.

Orestes:

Swear that you will help him escape the barbarians alive.

**740**

Iphigeneia:

Quite right. How else will he be able to deliver the letter?

Orestes:

But will the King agree to these things?

Iphigeneia:

Yes, I will convince him to do so. Then, I, personally will see him aboard his ship.

Orestes: *To Pylades*

Go ahead, my friend, swear the oath.

*To Iphigeneia*

Dictate to him the words of the most austere oath.



Iphigeneia:  
You must say, "I will deliver this letter to your people."

Pylades:  
I will deliver this letter to your people.

Iphigeneia:  
And I will see you safely beyond the Black Rocks.

Pylades:  
Which of the gods do you invoke?

Iphigeneia:  
Artemis. She it is I serve in this temple.

Pylades:  
And I invoke the Lord of the Heavens, almighty Zeus.

**750**

Iphigeneia:  
What if you break your oath and betray me?

Pylades:  
Then may I never make it back to my country. What about you? What should happen to you if you don't save me?

Iphigeneia:  
May I never step foot on Argos alive.

Pylades:  
Now listen to something we have left out so far.

Iphigeneia:  
There is always time to correct things.

Pylades:  
I will need you to allow me this exception in my oath: If something happens to my ship and along with other things, this letter is also lost but I manage to escape alive, then, in that case, the oath should not hold.

**759**

Iphigeneia:  
Well, know this, then. One can escape many disasters if one is prepared, so what I'll do is to tell you all that is written in that letter so that you can repeat them to my friends. That will secure its delivery. If you save the letter, then it will speak for itself, if however it's lost in the sea but you survive, then your own survival guarantees the survival of its message.

Pylades:  
Your ideas about the oath as well as about me are sound. Now tell me the person you want me to deliver this letter to in Argos and what else should I tell him.

Iphigeneia:  
Tell Orestes, Agamemnon's son this: "The girl Iphigeneia whom they slaughtered in Aulis and who they think is dead, is alive and says the following..."

Orestes:  
What? Where is she? Has she died and come back from the dead?

Iphigeneia:  
She is the one before you. Now don't interrupt me. "Come, brother and take me back to Argos lest I die in a country of barbarians. Come and rescue me from the human sacrifices performed for the goddess during which I must sprinkle sacred water upon the heads of strangers..."

Orestes:  
Pylades, my friend, what can I say? Where are we?

Iphigeneia:  
"... or else this shall become a curse upon your house, Orestes!"  
Now let me repeat the name so that you won't mistake it –

Orestes:  
O, gods!

**780**

Iphigeneia:  
Why call upon the gods while I'm talking?

Orestes:  
Oh, nothing. Please continue. My mind went elsewhere for a minute.

*To Pylades*

Even if I ask no questions, I will hear incredible things.

Iphigeneia: *Continues with the dictation of the letter*

Tell him also that Artemis saved me by replacing me with a stag, which my father slaughtered, thinking that his sword stabbed me. Then the goddess brought me here, in this land.

These are the things I want him to know. They're in the letter as well.

Pylades: *Takes the letter for Iphigeneia*

Lady, you have bound me in easy oaths and because you have also sworn a great oath, yourself, I shall not waste any time in delivering your letter.

*To Orestes, handing him the letter*

Here you are, Orestes. This letter is from your sister, this lady here.

**793**

Orestes: *Takes the letter*

I accept this letter but I shall leave the written words for later so that I may enjoy this moment fully.

O, my beloved sister! I am stunned. These hands! These hands are yet to believe this but I will embrace you with them! Let me feel the full joy of these unbelievable words I've just heard!

Chorus:

Stranger stop! Don't touch the sacred robes of the priestess! Do not pollute the servant of the goddess!

**800**

Orestes:

My sister!

Child of Agamemnon, just like me! Don't turn your head away from me. I am the brother you could never have hoped to see again.

Iphigeneia:

Me? Your sister?

Enough of this! My brother is famous throughout Argos, as well as Nauplia!

Orestes:

My darling sister! Your brother is not in Argos now!

Iphigeneia:

Are you, like me, the child of the Spartan daughter of Tyndareus?

Orestes:

Yes. I am the son of Pelops' grandchild of Agamemnon!

Iphigeneia:

But – the things you say!

Can you give me any proof at all?

Orestes:

But of course! Ask me any questions you like about our family.

**810**

Iphigeneia:

No, you talk and I will listen.

Orestes:

Well, let me begin by telling you all that I've heard from Elektra.

Have you heard of the great quarrel between Atreus and Thyestes?

Iphigeneia:

About the golden lamb? Yes, I've heard about it.

Orestes:

And do you remember how you weaved all these stories on those fine cloths?

Iphigeneia:

O, my dear friend! How closely you approached my heart!

Orestes:

And do you remember weaving the story about the sun and how he changes his path?

Iphigeneia:

Yes, I weaved that on a very fine piece of tapestry.

Orestes:

And what about when mother bathed you in preparation of your marriage in Aulis?

Iphigeneia:

Yes, I remember that bath. The marriage itself has not brought enough good memories to overpower that one.

**820**

Orestes:

Now then, what else? Ah! Do you remember when you had sent your mother a lock of your hair?

Iphigeneia:

Yes. I did that when I found out I was going to die in Aulis and I wouldn't be going back to Argos to be buried. I sent it for my tomb; to be placed there instead of my body. In remembrance.

Orestes:

And now, as further proof, let me tell you what I saw with my own eyes.

Sister, do you remember Pelops' ancient spear, the one hidden in the girls' quarters? The spear with which he won as his bride, the virgin Hippodamia from Pisa by killing her father, Oenomaus?

Iphigeneia: *Rushes to embrace him*

My dear brother! The dearest man in my life!

You have sailed here, so far from your land, Argos!

Let me hold you!

**830**

Orestes:

And let me hold you, too, my dear sister. You, who people say are dead!

Tears stream down my face! I grieve and I rejoice, just like you!

Iphigeneia:

Oh! You were a tiny baby, a tiny, tiny baby when I left you in the arms of your nurse.

The tiniest little being in the palace!

Oh! My heart! You are more joyful than words can express!

What can my lips say?

All this was beyond hope. Beyond miracles, beyond words!

**841**

Orestes:

May this joy of ours be everlasting!

Iphigeneia: *To the Chorus*

O, what an unbelievable joy I've just received, my dear friends!

Now, I'm afraid that he will suddenly take wings and escape from my hands to fly to Heaven!

*To Orestes*

O, hearth of my home! A home built by the Cyclopes!

My dear home, Mycenae!

I owe you thanks for giving life to this man. For raising him, for resurrecting him!

This man, my brother, the saving light of my house.

**850**

Orestes:

Fate has given us a great family, my sister but a life full of misery.

Iphigeneia:

And I, poor creature, know it well! I felt that dreadful misery when our father, with a dark heart, put a sword to my throat.

Orestes:

I wasn't there then, my sister but it's as if I am there now.

Iphigeneia:

No wedding song accompanied me to Achilles' wedding bed, my brother! That wedding has never happened and by my altar were only tears and groans of pain!

Ah! Those horrible purifying waters!

**862**

Orestes:

I, too cried bitter tears when I found out that our father had the heart to do such a thing.

Iphigeneia:

My fate had declared that I'd be an orphan and from then on, one disaster followed another, as if some god pursued us.

Orestes:

Imagine, Iphigeneia! You could have sacrificed your own brother!

**869**

Iphigeneia:

Ah, my brother!

What a dreadful, dreadful thing I was about to do! Shocking! Horrible!

You own sister almost slaughtered you!

You were saved only by a short moment!

But now? What will we do now? How will all this end?

O, what Fate will come to help me here?

How can I send you away from here, far away from this land of death, to Argos, our country?

**880**

How can I do this before the sword spills your blood?

*To herself*

Come, my heart! Come, this is your task. It is up to you to find a way.

*To Orestes*

Should I send you off by ship through the sea or by foot, over land?

No, by land you'll be in grave danger from all the barbarian tribes and the unknown roads. But then again, by ship, the path through the Clashing Rocks is narrow and the journey long.

Ah, poor heart! Poor soul!

What god, what mortal or what anything between the two will come to show us the way out of this dreadful, impassable dilemma? Who'll release us from these horrors? Us two, the remnants of the house of Atreus?

**900**

Chorus:

Now I have seen a wonder beyond words!

Chorus:

I will be telling this story as one who has seen it with his own eyes and not heard about it with his ears!

Pylades:

Orestes, it's human nature for people who love each other and meet after a long time to embrace but, my friend, we should now control all this emotion and think of how we can see our way out of this barbarian land. We need to find a way to save ourselves and see the brilliant face of escape!

Let's act wisely. Let's not miss the opportunity to escape by getting distracted by other joys from the path that Fate has shown us.

**909**

Orestes:

Sound advice, my friend. Fortune, I believe is on our side in this because the gods give aid more readily to those willing to act.

Iphigeneia:

Let no one stop me nor distract me from what I want to find out now.

The question about Elektra concerns me deeply. How is life treating her?

I love you two more than anything else in my life.

Orestes:

Elektra is married to this man and is enjoying a happy life.

Iphigeneia:

But... where does he come from? Who is his father?

Orestes:

Strophius, the Phockian.

Iphigeneia:

Then, is not also Anaxibia's son, Atreus' grandson, a relative of ours?

Orestes:

Yes, Iphigeneia, he is our cousin and my most trusted friend.

**920**

Iphigeneia:

He had not been born yet when my father sacrificed me.

Orestes:

That's right, Strophius didn't have any children until later.

Iphigeneia:

Greetings, dear husband of my sister.

Orestes:

And not only a relative but my saviour, as well!

Iphigeneia:

But, my brother, how could you do such a horrible thing to our mother?

Orestes:

Let's not talk about that. I did it to avenge our father's death.

Iphigeneia:

But why did she kill our father?

Orestes:

Don't think about your mother's deeds. It will do you no good hearing about them.

Iphigeneia:

All right. I'll be silent about it. Now, do the people of Argos think of you as their ruler?

Orestes:

The ruler is Menelaos, our uncle. I am in exile.

**930**

Iphigeneia:

But I can't believe that our uncle would usurp an ailing palace by sending you into exile!

Orestes:

No, it wasn't him.

No, it was my fear for the Furies that has turned me into an exile.

Iphigeneia:

I understand. The goddesses drove you away because of what you did to our mother.

Orestes:

That's right. They had forced their blood-dripping bridle into my mouth.

Iphigeneia:

So that is the frenzied fit the guards were talking about. That's what you went through down at the shore.

Orestes:

This was not the first time people saw me in this miserable condition.

Iphigeneia:

But what made you come here, in the first place?

Orestes:

Apollo's orders brought me here.

Iphigeneia:

Orders? What sort of orders? Can they be uttered aloud or must we be silent about them?

**939**

Orestes:

I will tell you. That's where all my troubles began.

When mother's unutterable story had ended with my hands in blood, the Furies pursued me everywhere. I rushed here and there, in utter frenzy, until Apollo sent me to Athens where I was tried in a court overseen by these goddesses who have no name.

Zeus had a court established there, due to a murder committed by Ares and the need to have the pollution removed from his hands. When I first got to Athens I could find no host willing to help me. Everyone was afraid thinking that I was cursed by the gods. Eventually though, out of pity, some people softened their hearts and offered me a roof but, even though I was in the same house with them, I had to eat at a separate table and they'd never respond to my words.

**951**

Each one of them had his own separate jug and drank his wine but I had nothing.

Still, I didn't argue with them. I simply suffered my pains silently, pretending not to notice anything. I sighed deeply with the regret of killing my own mother.

Now I've discovered that my pains have become a customary ritual in Athens. It's called "The celebration of the jugs" and they hold it during the Flower Festival.

**961**

At my trial on the hill of Ares, I was made to stand on one platform and the eldest of the Furies stood on another platform and she accused me of murdering my mother. But then Apollo gave evidence and that evidence saved me. Then the goddess Athena raised her hand and counted the votes. These came to an equal number of guilty and innocent which meant I won and so I got up and left the murder trial. Those of the Furies who accepted the trial's outcome, were allowed to mark out a spot for their temple, there, near the court itself.

**970**

The others, though, the ones who didn't accept the court's decision, continued to chase me relentlessly until, once again I came to the sacred grounds of Apollo.

I lay flat onto the ground, in front of his temple and, ate nothing, and I swore to Apollo there and then that unless he saved my life, the life he had destroyed, I would end it at that very moment!

Apollo answered me then by making a speech from his golden tripod. He told me to come here, take the statue that has fallen from the sky and set it up in Athens.

So, Iphigeneia, I need you to help me save myself, as Apollo has ordered.

**980**

If we take this statue of the goddess, I will be rid of these fits of madness and also take you with me on my ship with its many oars and bring you once again to Mycenae where you can settle down.

Come, my dearest sister, my loving sister, save your father's house and save me!  
Unless I get that statue of the goddess I will be destroyed and with me the house of Pelops.

Chorus:

A huge and dreadful anger from the gods has scorched the seed of Tantalus and drags his family through misery!

**989**

Iphigeneia:

I have always longed to return to Argos and see you again, my brother. Even before you arrived here. Now I want what you want: to help you escape your pains and to raise, once again, our ailing house. I hold no anger at the man who has killed me.

I want these things and it is possible to achieve them.

If I rescue you, then my hands will not be polluted by the shedding of your blood and, at the same time, I will have also rescued our house.

But I am afraid, Orestes. Afraid that the goddess and the king will discover that the statue is missing from its pedestal. They will kill me then. There will be no escaping that. What excuse could I give them?

**999**

But, if both of these things happen at the same time, if you take me, as well as the statue with you to your great ship, this adventure will come to a good end.

Otherwise, you might be able to end your troubles and get home all right but I will certainly be murdered. Still, I will not hesitate to save your life even if it means I will lose mine.

A house suffers much more by the loss of a male than by that of a female.

Orestes:

Iphigeneia, I will not become the murderer of both, our mother and of you. The spilling of mother's blood is enough. We both have a single aim and we will share it equally, in life as well as in death.

**1010**

Either I will take you home with me when I manage to escape or I will stay here and die with you.

But listen to what I just thought: Why would Apollo ask me to take the statue back to Athens if that was against Artemis' will? And why would he want to send me here to see you but then be sacrificed by you?

None of this makes sense to me, so I'm now convinced that we will make it safely home.

Iphigeneia:

Well then, how will we achieve our goal and escape death?

That's where we stumble upon in this matter. We certainly don't lack the will.

**1020**

Orestes:

Can we kill the king?

Iphigeneia:

Us? Foreigners kill the local king? An impossible thought!

Orestes:

Still, if it means our escape, it'll be worth the effort.

Iphigeneia:

I admire your courage, brother but I could do no such thing.

Orestes:

What if you hid me in this temple?

Iphigeneia:

Do you think our escape can be better achieved in the dark?

Orestes:

Yes, sister. Thieves need the dark. Honest folk need the light.

Iphigeneia:

The temple's guards are in there. They will notice us.

Orestes:

Damn! So we are lost then! How can we possibly escape?

Iphigeneia:

I think I've just come up with an idea!

**1030**

Orestes:

What sort of an idea? Tell me.

Iphigeneia:

I will turn your woes into a clever trick.

Orestes:

Women are unbeatable when it comes to clever tricks!

Iphigeneia:

I will tell them that you have come here, from Argos, after you have murdered of your mother...

Orestes:

Yes, yes, use my woes if they will help.

Iphigeneia:

...and then I will tell them that it is against the sacred laws to sacrifice a murderer...

Orestes:

But why? What reason will you give against sacrificing me? Though I think I know.

Iphigeneia:

A murderer is impure, unclean. I can only sacrifice pure victims.

Orestes:

And how will this help with the stealing of the statue?

Iphigeneia:

I shall ask for permission to purify you first. With sea water.

**1040**

Orestes:

But the statue is still in the temple.

Iphigeneia:

I will tell them that you've touched it and so I'll need to wash that, too.

Orestes:

Where will we go? To which part of the shore?

Iphigeneia:

We'll go to where your ship is anchored with the flaxen ropes.

Orestes:

Are you going to carry the statue in your arms or will someone else do it?

Iphigeneia:

I will carry it myself. No one else is allowed to touch it.

Orestes:

But how will you bring Pylades into this?

Iphigeneia:

I will tell them he too, is polluted and for the same reason as you.

Orestes:

Will you let the king know what you're doing?

Iphigeneia:

I will talk with him. Inform him and convince him. This can not be done without his knowledge, so you two take care that all else goes smoothly.

**1050**

Orestes:

In that case, my ship with its well-built oars, is ready for us...

There is just one more thing, though. You must make sure these women keep our plan a secret. Talk to them, convince them of that. You're a woman and women can touch hearts. After that, all the rest might go well for us.

Iphigeneia: *To the chorus*

My dear friends, I turn my eyes towards you.

My hopes and my Fate rest with you. Whether I succeed in this effort or I die by it; whether or not I lose my country, my beloved brother and my beloved sister, it all rests with you.

**1060**

Let the first words of my plea be these:

We, women, are wise, we support and trust each other and we defend our common interests with all our might. Keep these events a secret and help us with our escape.

A disciplined tongue is a noble thing.

You see before you three close friends united with one Fate: Either to return home or to die. If I succeed, then I will make sure you get your share of my luck. You, too will return home, back to Greece.

**1070**

So, my dear friends, I beg you. I swear by your right hand –

And yours, and yours, too!

And by your sweet cheeks!

By your knees!

By whatever you hold dear, back home: a mother, a father, children, those of you who have them.

What do you all say, then? Speak! Who among you says, yes, who says, no?

If you do not agree with us then I am lost. As well as my poor brother.

Chorus:

Courage my Lady! Think only about saving yourself. As Zeus is my witness, we will stay silent.

Iphigeneia:

For your good words, dear friends, I wish you all the best and may you always have joy in your life.

*Turning to Pylades and Orestes*

You two must now go into the temple.

**1080**

Soon the country's king will come to see if the sacrifices have been performed.

*The two men obey while she prays to Artemis. They enter through the main door.*

O, reverent goddess!

In the meadows of Aulis you have saved my life from my father's murderous hand.

Now I beg you to also save the lives of these two men, or else it will be your fault that the mortals will no longer trust Apollo's prophesies.

So, then, I ask you kindly to leave this land of the barbarians and go to Athens. It is not proper for you to have your temple here when you could have it built in a city blessed by the gods.

*Exit Iphigeneia into the temple.*

**1089**

Chorus:

O, Halcyon, my sad bird!

You sing a moving melody by the crags of the shore,

A melody of your black fate.

A voice easy to understand for those who know your grief,

The grief you endure for the loss of your lover.

I, alone, a bird with no wings, can match your grief and your sad melody.

Chorus:

I long for the Greek festivals!

Chorus:

I long for Artemis, protector of birth, who dwells on the hill of Kythos!

Chorus:

I long for Kythos, where the date trees with their gentle tresses grow!

Chorus:

And where the lush laurel, the sacred child of the green olive, sweet companions of Leto during the hour of her birth flourish.

Chorus:

I long for the lake whose waters swirl gently and where a melodious swan waits upon the muses.

**1110**

Chorus:

And I remember the tears! The rivers of tears that drenched my cheeks when the towers of my city were taken and I was brought here on a ship with oars and spears!

Chorus:

Gold changed hands for me and I was brought to this barbaric land to serve Agamemnon's daughter, the priestess of Artemis, the deer-slaying goddess.

Chorus:

And to care for the altars upon which no sheep is ever sacrificed.

Chorus:

I envy the man who's never tasted good fortune! He can endure misery if he's had it as a constant companion throughout his life but changes in fortune beget despair.

Chorus:

A ship with fifty oars, my reverent lady, will take you back home to Argos!

Chorus:

Pan's pipe of reeds, bound by wax, will give the rhythm to the ship's oars. Pan the god of the mountains.

**1130**

Chorus:

And Apollo, with his loud lyre, his lyre of seven strings will sing along and guide the ship into the safety of glittering Athens. Apollo, the god of prophesy.



Chorus:

And the oars of the sea-cutting ship will turn wave into white foam and the sail cloth will spread across the wind, over the bows and onto the peak of the prow.

Chorus:

But you will abandon me here, my lady!

Chorus:

How I wish I could fly!

Chorus:

Follow the paths of the Heavens above where the sun spreads his sweet light...

Chorus:

Where he urges the fleetfooted steeds of his chariot.

**1140**

Chorus:

Then, by beating the wings on my back, I could go and stop above our own home.

Chorus:

If I could only stop high above the place where the chorus dances...

Chorus:

...there where, as a young girl, worthy of a handsome groom, I would dance with my girlfriends, all of the same age, my mother swelling with pride nearby.

Chorus:

And whenever I got up to compete in beauty, in luxury, in the softness of hair, I'd hide my cheeks with my plaits and with my fine veil.

*Enter King Thoas with attendants*

**1151**

Thoas:

Where is the Greek priestess of this temple?

Has she performed the purifications for the sacrifice of the strangers yet?

Has the holy fire in the inner chamber consumed their body yet?

*Enter Iphigeneia carrying the statue of Artemis.*

Chorus:

Here she is, my king. She can answer all your questions herself.

Thoas:

Iphigeneia, daughter of Agamemnon, what on earth are you doing? Why are you carrying the statue of the goddess in your arms? Why did you remove it from its sacred spot?

Iphigeneia:

Stop where you are, my Lord. Don't step too close to the temple!

**1160**

Thoas:

Why, Iphigeneia? What's happened in the temple?

Iphigeneia: *She spits as if to avert evil spirits*

There, I spat to satisfy the holy orders.

Thoas:

Iphigeneia, you are preparing me for something nasty. Tell me clearly, what is it?

Iphigeneia:

King Thoas, the victims you've brought to me were unclean.

Thoas:

Is that something you, yourself understood or did someone who knows about such matters told you so?

Iphigeneia:

The statue of the goddess had turned its back to us.

Thoas:

What? Of its own accord or did some earthquake move it?

Iphigeneia:

Of its own accord... and it also shut its eyes.

Thoas:

But why? Was it the fact that the victims were unclean?

Iphigeneia:

Yes, that's it absolutely. They have committed unspeakable evil.

**1170**

Thoas:

Have they killed one of our barbarians in the beach? Is that it?

Iphigeneia:

They have arrived here after having spilled the blood of their own folk.

Thoas:

Is that so? Tell me about it! Whose blood is it they spilled?

Iphigeneia:

They've conspired and then, with their own swords killed their mother.

Thoas:

O, dear Apollo! This is something that even we, barbarians would never do!

Iphigeneia:

They've been exiled from the whole of Greece.

Thoas:

So, is this why you're taking the statue outside?

Iphigeneia:

I'm taking it outside beneath the pure sky so as to reverse the pollution caused by the unholy murder.

Thoas:

How did you learn about the murder that the foreigners had committed?

Iphigeneia:

When the statue turned I questioned them.

**1180**

Thoas:

Greece has raised you well, Iphigeneia. You are indeed a wise woman! You've done well!

Iphigeneia:

They've thrown a sweet lure into my heart.

Thoas:

Did they give you some good news from your people in Argos?

Iphigeneia:

Yes, in fact they've told me that my only brother, Orestes, is doing well.

Thoas:

No doubt they've told you that to make you happy so you could spare their lives.

Iphigeneia:

They've also told me that my father is alive and is also doing well.

Thoas:

But you, of course, followed the will of the goddess.

Iphigeneia:

Yes. Hellas has destroyed me. I hate that country.

Thoas:

Well, then, Iphigeneia, what are we to do about the foreigners?

Iphigeneia:

What we must do is to pay due respect to our own customs.

**1190**

Thoas:

Well then, where are your sword and your purifying water?

Iphigeneia:

No, first I must wash them and purify them in clear water.

Thoas:

You mean pure water from a spring, or from the sea?

Iphigeneia:

The sea. It washes all mortal evil.

Thoas:

Yes, that way the goddess will enjoy the sacrifice all the more.

Iphigeneia:

For me, too, it will be better.

Thoas:

But the waves wash right up against the temple. Will not that do?

Iphigeneia:

No. I need a deserted place. I need to do other things as well.

Thoas:

Go ahead. Go where you need to go. I'd hate to witness secret mysteries.

Iphigeneia:

I need to also purify the statue of the goddess.

**1200**

Thoas:

Of course, if it's been defiled by the hand of murderers...

Iphigeneia:

I wouldn't have taken it down from its pedestal if it hadn't.

Thoas:

Your piety and thoughtfulness, Iphigeneia, is most honourable and that's why the whole city admires you.

Iphigeneia:

Well then, listen to what I need done.

Thoas:

Just name it.

Iphigeneia:

Firstly, tie up the strangers.

Thoas:

But where could they possibly go to escape your hand?

Iphigeneia:

Consider no Greek trustworthy!

Thoas: *To his attendants*

Servants, go and tie the strangers up!

Iphigeneia:

Then bring them here.

Thoas:

It shall be done.

Iphigeneia:

Cover their heads with capes.

Thoas:

You mean, so that they won't pollute the air and the sun's rays?

Iphigeneia:

Yes, and my lord, send some of your servants with me.

Thoas:

These men will follow you.

Iphigeneia:

And send someone to the city to tell them that...

Thoas:

Tell them what, Iphigeneia?

**1210**

Iphigeneia:

Tell everyone to stay indoors.

Thoas:

You means, so as not to meet with the tainted murderers?

Iphigeneia:

Yes, because the tainted must be avoided.

Thoas: *To an attendant*

You! Go and make that announcement through the city.

*Exit attendant*

Iphigeneia:

Tell them that no one should come out to see us.

Thoas:

You care so well for our city, Iphigeneia!

Iphigeneia:

For the city and for all of the people I love the most.

Thoas:

You mean me?

Iphigeneia:

But you stay here, by the temple of the goddess.

Thoas:

And do what?

Iphigeneia:

Make the temple pure with the torch.

Thoas:  
And have it ready for you when you come back?

Iphigeneia:  
When the foreigners come out...

Thoas:  
What do I have to do then?

Iphigeneia:  
You must cover your eyes with your cape.

Thoas:  
Cover them so that I won't see the tainted men.

Iphigeneia:  
But if it looks like I'm late coming back...

Thoas:  
How will I know that?

**1220**

Iphigeneia:  
... don't be too surprised.

Thoas:  
By all means, take your time and perform well everything the goddess needs.

Iphigeneia:  
May this purification be accomplished as I wish it.

Thoas:  
Indeed!

*From the Temple enter Orestes and Pylades, their heads covered and pushed along by guards. Other attendants follow bringing young lambs for sacrifice, torches, ropes and other sacrificial implements and utensils.*

*Thoas steps back and hides his face.*

Iphigeneia:  
Ah! Here they are! The foreigners have come out of the temple and I can see the servants, carrying the goddess' adornments.

And the newborn lambs are here. I shall wash away the taint of the blood committed by the murder with their blood.

Ah, and the torches, too and everything else I've asked for; everything I need in order to perform the purification of the foreigners and of the statue of our goddess.

Let all the citizens of Tauris stay away from this impurity!

Whether you are a guardian of the temple, keeping your hands pure for the gods, or if you are betrothed, or yet if you are a woman weighed down with pregnancy, I say, run away now! All of you! Run away, lest the pollution fall upon you!

**1230**

*Praying*

Daughter of Zeus and Leto, virgin goddess!

Let me wash away the impurity of the murder done by these two men!

Let me perform the sacrifice there where it is proper!

Then you will dwell in a pure temple and we, too, will enjoy good fortune.

I will not utter my other thoughts, reverent goddess but you and the other gods, who are wise, will read them.

*Exit Iphigeneia, Orestes, Pylades and the attendants, SR;*

*Thoas goes into the temple.*

Chorus:

On the fertile plains of Delos, Leto gave birth to two great children: Apollo with the golden tresses and with his skill with the lyre and proud Artemis, who delighted in her unerring bow and arrows.

**1240**

Chorus:

Leto wasted no time to leave her birthing place, there on the cliff by the sea, and brought her son to the peak of Parnassus with its rushing brooks and its frenzied celebrations of Dionysus.

Chorus:

There, in the shade of the broad-leafed laurel, lay a monstrous snake with gleaming dark skin, with eyes the colour of wine and with scales of every colour, guarding Earth's ancient temple.

**1248**

Chorus:

And though you were still a baby, Apollo and though you were still bouncing about in your mother's lap, you still managed to kill that monster and become the new keeper of the sacred temple.

Chorus:

And so, your throne now is the golden tripod, a throne that knows no lies!

From the depths of the sacred sanctuary, you send the prophetic words of the gods to all the mortals.

Chorus:

You are the neighbour to the Castalian waters.

Chorus:

Your temple is the centre of the earth.

**1260**

Chorus:

But then, when Apollo had driven Earth's daughter, Themis, away from of this most sacred Pythian throne, at Delphi, Earth brought forth ghostly dreams that came out in the dark night.

Chorus:

Dreams that revealed to many mortals in their sleep, things that have happened and things that Fate decreed would happen.

Chorus:

And so it was that Earth, angered on behalf of her daughter, took away Apollo's prophetic honours.

**1270**

Chorus:

And so it was that Lord Apollo sped away on his quick feet to Olympus to wrap his young arms around Zeus' throne and beg him to restore his Pythian temple to him, take it back from the anger of the goddess Earth.

Chorus:

Zeus laughed when he saw how his young child had already wanted to rule the realm of worship and of its endless stream of gold. With a shake of his long locks, Zeus put an end to all the ghostly dreams and tore out the shadowy faith the mortals had in them.

**1280**

Chorus:

Apollo is given back the office of prophecy and the people thronged around his throne, with their faith in his oracles restored.

*Enter Messenger SL.*

*He is heavily bruised about the face, bleeding from small wounds about his arms and legs and his clothes are torn. He ignores the chorus and rushes up to the door of the temple which he pounds hard with his fists.*

Messenger:

Guards! Guards of the temple! Attendants of the altar! Open these locked doors!

Where can I find King Thoas? Tell the king to come out!

Chorus:

If I may speak without being spoken to, may I ask what is wrong?

**1289**

Messenger:

Those two young men! They've escaped! Helped by Agamemnon's daughter!

They've left the country and they took with them the holy statue of our goddess.

They've taken it down into the hold of their ship!

Chorus:

Incredible!

Chorus:

Incredible!

Chorus:

But, if you're after the king –

Chorus:

He's gone. He's not here!

Chorus:

He left the temple in some hurry.

Messenger:

Gone? Gone where? I must find him and tell him what's happened.

Chorus:

I don't know where he's gone!

Chorus:

Go and look for him!

Chorus:

Go! Find him and tell him the news!

Messenger: *Suspects a plot.*

Ha! I can see just how treacherous women are!

You lot! You too, are in on this conspiracy!

**1300**

Chorus:

You must be mad!

Chorus:

How could we possibly be involved in the escape of those strangers?

Chorus:

Why don't you run over to the Palace?

Chorus:

Run! As fast as you can!

Messenger: *He takes hold of the big door knocker and bangs it violently.*

Not until this door knocker responds.

*Bangs hard at the door even more violently.*

Ey, you, inside this temple! I'm calling you!

Undo the bars of this door and open it now!

Call out the king! I'm just outside the door and I'm carrying a huge load of dreadful news!

Thoas: *(Within)*

Who's making all this awful noise here, banging at the door like this? This is the temple of the goddess!

*The door opens and Thoas and his retinue come out.*

Messenger:

Ah! My lord, you're in there!

Proof that these women just lied to me. They told me you had left and they wanted me to go away as well.

**1311**

Thoas:

Why would they say that? What could they gain by telling you a lie like that?

Messenger:

My lord, I'll talk to you about them later but first you must hear what urgent matters concern you.

Iphigeneia, my lord, the young woman who presides over these altars, has left the country! She has left with those young men carrying the statue of our goddess in her arms. All this talk about purification was a trick!

Thoas:

What are you saying, man? What wind blew her in that direction?

Messenger:

It will shock you to know this my lord: She wanted to save Orestes!

Thoas:

Orestes? Tyndareus' grandson?

**1320**

Messenger:

The very man. The man our goddess wanted to sacrifice upon these very altars!

Thoas:

That's awful! There's no other word for it, is there?

Messenger:

Don't get distracted by such things now, my lord.

Listen to me carefully and then figure out a way of catching these foreigners.

Thoas:

Quite right, yes, go on, then. They have a long journey ahead of them if they are to escape. My army won't let them do that.

**1329**

Messenger:

When we, the guards you've sent with the ropes for the foreigners, got to the seashore, near where Orestes had hidden his ship, Iphigeneia, with a silent motion, ordered us to stand quite a distance back. She said she was about to light the sacred flame for the sacrifice and for the sacred purification

ceremony. She took the ropes herself and walked behind the strangers, something which looked suspicious to us, my lord but then again we, your servants, did not want to disobey your orders either, so we stayed behind.

Anyhow, after a while, to make us think that she was actually performing the rites, she gave out a loud scream and began singing barbarian religious hymns, as if she was a priestess in the process of purifying tainted blood.

#### **1340**

Then, after we sat quietly there for quite a while, we began to suspect that perhaps the strangers had managed to escape from their shackles, perhaps they had killed the girl and then perhaps they ran away but, we were still afraid of seeing anything that might be forbidden so we did nothing. Just sat there silently until, finally we all decided to go where they were, in spite of the fact that we were forbidden to do so.

Suddenly we saw before us a Greek ship, ready to sail off, its oars raised up at the tholepins and worked hard by fifty sailors. Those oars, my lord, looked like giant wings!

#### **1350**

The two young men who had escaped were now standing, free of any bonds, near the stern of the ship. Some of the sailors were holding steady the prow with poles, while others were securing the anchor onto the bulwarks. Some others were rushing about trying to lower a ladder into the sea, to help the foreign girl climb aboard.

At the sight of this treachery, we all lost our fears about the holy rituals and rushed down at them. We grabbed the girl, seized the hawsers and began to dismantle all the steering oars from the handsome craft.

Then we started shouting at them: "What gives you the right to come here and steal our statues and our priestesses? Who are you? Whose son are you that would give you the right to steal this woman away from us?"

#### **1360**

To this the man answered, "You better know this: I am her brother, Orestes, Agamemnon's son and now I am taking my long-lost sister back home."

But still, we held firm onto the girl, trying to force her to come back with us, back to you, my lord.

That's how I got these bruises on my face. Neither we nor they had any swords so we fought with our fists. The two young strangers beat us hard with their fists and kicked us about our bodies, our ribs our kidneys – they beat us hard, my lord, until our bodies became paralyzed with pain.

We all ran away to the cliffs, some of us bleeding from the head and others from the eyes. From up there, we fought them much more cautiously, by throwing stones at them but then archers on the ship made us retreat even further back.

#### **1379**

Then, suddenly, a huge wave washed the ship further onto the beach and the woman was too afraid to step into the water. Orestes then came down to her, lifted her onto his left shoulder and walked into the water himself, all the way to the ladder, climbed it and placed upon the handsome ship's deck both, his sister as well as the statue that fell from the sky, the statue of Zeus' daughter, Artemis.

Then we heard a voice calling out aboard the ship:

"Sailors of Greece! Take up your oars and turn the sea's waves into white froth! We have it all now. Everything we came for, everything we were looking for when we sailed our way through the Clashing Rocks and into these hostile waters!"

#### **1390**

At that, the men let out a huge roar of relief and hit the salty waters with their oars.

And while the ship was inside the harbour it sailed well, towards the wide open ocean but the moment it got outside the harbour, a huge tempest crashed upon it, shaking it about. Then a sudden wind rose up and pushed the sails back against the stern. The men battled furiously against the wave but the tempest brought the ship back onto the shore.

At this, Iphigeneia stood up and began praying:

#### **1399**

"Oh Leto's daughter! Goddess!

I am your priestess. Forgive my theft and please take me away from this barbarian land and bring me safely back to Hellas! You, too have a brother whom you love, so you must know that I also love mine!"

In answer to Iphigeneia's prayers, all the men sang a hymn to Apollo and then bared their arms and at the command of the boatswain beat the water in perfect rhythm. Still, the ship came further and further back, towards us, onto the rocks.

Seeing this, one of our men jumped into the water and another tried to get a hawser looped onto the

ship. I was told to rush back here and tell you, my lord, what is happening down there.

**1411**

So, come on, take shackles and ropes and go down there. If the tempest doesn't subside the Greeks will have no hope of saving their lives!

The lord of the sea, the revered Poseidon himself will help you. He watches over Troy and hates all of Pelops' descendants so he'll make sure that Agamemnon's son and daughter will fall into your hands. Iphigeneia has obviously forgotten how Artemis had saved her life from the sacrifice at Aulis and she has now betrayed her.

**1420**

Chorus:

How unfortunate you are, Iphigeneia!

You and your brother will be destroyed if you fall into the hands of your masters!

Thoas: *To the audience*

Come! All you citizens of this barbarian land! All of you!

Go quickly, harness your horses and gallop down to the shore! Go and pick up the wreckage of the Greek ship!

Go! Let the goddess help you hunt down and capture those impious strangers!

Some of you drag down to the sea some swift ships. We'll surround them by sea and by land, catch them and hurl them down the rocky cliffs. Impale their bodies on stakes.

**1430**

*To the chorus*

As for you! You were part of this conspiracy!

I will address the matter of your punishment later. I cannot stop now because I have more pressing business to attend to.

*He begins to leave but the goddess Athena stops him as she comes onto the stage by a deus ex machina.*

Athena:

Such haste, King Thoas! Where are you off too in such a rush?

Listen to the words of the goddess Athena:

Stop this hunt! Stop this invasion of your army!

Orestes has come here under Apollo's prophetic instructions, so as to escape the wrath of the Furies and to take back to Argos his sister and to bring the holy statue to my own home and thus bring some relief from the dreadful misery he's been suffering.

**1443**

And let me add these words to you:

You think you will capture and kill Orestes with the help of the tempest but Poseidon has already answered my call and has calmed the sea's waters so that Orestes' ship might sail through.

And to you, now Orestes:

Hear me Orestes and hear my commands. You might be far from here but you can hear well the voice of a goddess.

Take the homeward path with your sister and with the statue.

When you reach Athens, the city built by gods, look for a place near its border with Attica, next to the cliff of Karystus, a sacred place which my people call Halae.

**1451**

You must build a temple there and inside that temple you must place the god-sent statue. You must name this temple the Taurian Temple and it will stand as a reminder of this land and of the troubles you have suffered, being pursued all over Greece by the Furies. In that temple, mortals will go to sing hymns in honour of the goddess Artemis from Tauris.

And you must establish this custom:

At the time of the feast, let the priest hold a sword at the neck of a man and draw blood. This will atone for your sacrifice, the rites of piety will be done and, as well, the goddess will receive her due honour.

As for you, Iphigeneia:

You must serve this goddess as her temple warden in the sacred valleys of Brauron. There, you will be buried when you die and people will, in your honour, place upon your tomb the finely woven garments that women who have died at childbirth leave behind.

*Turning to the chorus*

And now, about these Greek women:

Their hearts are pure and so I order that they be escorted from this country and on to theirs.

**1469**

As well, since I have saved Orestes in the court on the Hill of Ares by bringing the vote to a tie, I want the following to be the custom here, also: He who receives an equal number of votes, wins his case at



court.

And now, Orestes, son of Agamemnon, take your sister, Iphigeneia with you and leave this land.  
You, Thoas, end your anger!

Thoas:

My Lady, Athena! Only a fool would hear the words of a god and not obey them!

I have no anger for Orestes, nor for his sister who left here with the statue. How can a mortal come to a good end by going against the will of the almighty gods?

**1480**

No, let them go to your land with the statue of the goddess and may they be established there with all happiness.

As for these women, here, I will do as you have commanded me. I will send them back to their blessed land, Greece.

I shall withdraw all the preparations I've made against the foreigners; stop the spears and the oars from attacking them, since this is your will.

Athena:

I commend you for your wisdom!

Both gods and mortals must obey Necessity.

Winds! Blow hard now and take Agamemnon's son to Athens. I will go with him to make sure that my sister's holy statue is safe.

*To the chorus*

Blessed people, go and find your happiness! You will arrive home safely!

*Exit Athena*

**1492**

Chorus:

Reverend goddess Athena!

Chorus:

Revered by gods and mortals alike, we will obey your words.

Chorus:

Sweet and unexpected are the words that have reached our ears!

Chorus:

O great and reverend lady, Victory!

Chorus:

Always be my guide!

Chorus:

Never cease to crown my head with garlands!

*Exit all*

**END OF  
EURIPIDES'**

**"IPHIGENEIA IN TAURIS"**