

EURIPIDES'
"HIPPOLYTUS"
428 BCE
First Prize

Translated by
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Dramatis Personae:

Aphrodite

(also known as Aphrodite)

Hippolytus

Theseus

(King of Athens)

Phaedra

(Wife of Theseus)

Artemis

Nurse

(To Phaedra)

Chorus 1

(Of Women of Troezen)

Chorus 2

(Slaves to Hippolytus)

Messenger

(And slave to Hippolytus)

Various Attendants

(silent)

Before Theseus' palace in Troezen (Northern Peloponnese).

The statues of two goddesses, Aphrodite and Artemis, flank the door of the palace. The statue of Artemis holds a bow and a quiver of arrows.

SL is a couch.

Enter Aphrodite from the side of her statue.

Aphrodite:

I am Aphrodite.

A goddess!

Also called Cypris.

A great goddess among the mortals, as well as throughout the heavens.

Of those mortals who look upon the light of the sun and who live between the very edges of the East, the Black Sea and the farthest ends of the West, the great Pillars of Atlas, of all those of them who respect my power, I, respect them, also.

But those of them who treat me with disrespect, them, I crush and destroy!

It's part of being a god. We, gods, all of us, enjoy being revered by the mortals.

So I say and so I shall prove very shortly!

10

You see, Hippolytus, that child of the Amazon Hippolyta, by the seed of Theseus, who was raised by that pure man, Pittheus, is the only one -the only one in the whole of Troezen, who hates me. He says that I am the worst of all the gods!

Hippolytus, says this! He is the only mortal, the only man, who says this!

The boy will neither marry anyone nor go anywhere near the bed of love!
Instead, he reveres that Artemis, Zeus' daughter, Apollo's sister!

Nods towards the statue of Artemis

He thinks she's by far the greater of all the goddesses and so, the two of them, he and his little virgin deity there, take their great hunting dogs and go roaming about the plush forest together all day, sending all the wild beasts away!

A mortal has no business being in such a close relationship with an immortal!

Far too inappropriate a behaviour for a mortal, I say!

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But the fact is, the relationship itself doesn't bother me, really. I'm not the jealous type. Why should I be bothered about those two?

But the disrespect he shows for me – a goddess! For that I will punish him severely! Today!

Today Hippolytus will pay for all the sins he has ever committed against me and, since I've been preparing this plan for a long time now, it will only take a tiny bit more effort on my part to see it through to its execution.

A while ago, Hippolytus had travelled all the way from Pittheus' house to the precincts of Pandion, to watch, as well as to take part in the celebrations of the great mysteries of the goddesses Demeter and Kore.

Well, his father's noble wife, Phaedra – that is, Hippolytus' step mother- saw him there and, at that very moment, the moment her eyes fell on that boy, her heart missed a beat! She fell in love with Hippolytus, her step son!

Now, you see, that little heart flutter of hers was my own doing!

29

And then, before Phaedra came here, to Trozen, I mean, she had built a temple, next to the rock of Pallas Athena, as a monument to her love, you see, a monument dedicated to me; and because her lover was away, the temple was built so it looked over towards this way, that is, our way. Then she let it known to everyone that she had built that temple in honour of Hippolytus.

Then, Theseus, her husband, that is Hippolytus' father, left Athens to escape the blood guilt he had brought about for treacherously murdering his cousins, the sons of Pallas, that is Aegeas' brother...

So, Theseus then takes his wife Phaedra and sails off from Athens to end up here, in Troezen, for a one-year long exile from his home.

Poor Phaedra!

Indicating inside the palace

So, she is here now, in there, moaning and groaning from the pain inflicted by the pointy pricks of love! She's dying in silence, the poor dear because she won't tell anyone what she is suffering from.

41

But this is not the way this love sickness of hers is going to end.

No. I shall tell Theseus all about it and then the secret will be out.

As for the young man, my enemy, his father -Theseus that is- will have him killed by using one of the three wishes – curses, rather- that his own father, the Lord of the sea, Poseidon, that is, had granted him –Theseus, that is – as a gift. Theseus can ask Poseidon for three things and all three will be delivered. Still, Phaedra will die! She will but with her... honour, still intact!

I'm not at all interested in her misfortune. No, what I am far more interested in is to see that those who treat me with disrespect get adequately punished.

Noise from within (SL) from a group of men who are singing, as they are approaching.

51

Ah! I can see Hippolytus coming this way. End of his hunting venture for the day, it seems. I'd better be off!

A whole hoard of his servants are with him singing songs about his lovely Artemis!

If only he knew how wide the gates of the Underworld are opened and ready for him! If only he knew that today's light is the last light his eyes will enjoy!

Exit Aphrodite.

Enter Hippolytus, carrying a garland, followed by a throng of servants.

He walks over to the statue of Artemis.

Hippolytus:

Come, men, sing with me!

Let's sing about Zeus' daughter, the divine Artemis, the one who cares for us!

61

Servant 1:

Most reverend lady, most gracious lady!
Artemis, daughter of Zeus and Leto!

Servant 2:

The fairest virgin of them all.
You live in a house of gold!
Your father's house in heaven!

Servant 3:

Greetings, Artemis,
Greetings, gracious lady,
The fairest of all the virgins who live on Mount Olympus!

Hippolytus: *offering the garland*

This is for you, dear lady!

I've plaited this garland for you, gracious goddess.

I've gathered its flowers from a virgin meadow, gracious lady.

A meadow where no shepherd thinks it proper to bring his flocks to graze,

A meadow never yet touched by the blade of the iron scythe.

A truly virgin meadow, gracious lady!

A meadow where even the bee makes its way through it in Spring with utmost care!

A meadow which Holy Reverence nourishes its ground with the cool water of the river streams!

A meadow which only those who are chaste, not simply by schooling but by their very nature, may harvest its blooms. For all others, for those who are impure, it is forbidden to pluck its flowers.

Enter Slave from the palace who stands quietly and watches his master and the group of friends.

81

And so gracious lady, from the hands of one who worships you, take this garland for your golden hair.

He places the garland on the statue's head.

Of all the mortals alive, only I am allowed this honour because only I spend my days with you and speak with you. Only I, gracious lady, hear your voice, though never see your face.

How I wish, dear lady that my life will end in the purity that it has begun.

Slave:

My Prince –I'll call you Prince, my Prince because we should really only call the gods "masters" isn't that right, my Prince?

Hippolytus nods in agreement

Well, my Prince, would you, my Prince, listen to a word of good advice from me, my Prince?

Hippolytus:

Of course I would, slave. Not to do so would be the deed of a fool.

90

Slave:

My Prince, you do know the rule that all mortals should follow, don't you, my Prince?

Hippolytus:

No, which rule are you referring to, slave?

Slave:

My Prince, I'm referring to the rule that says that all mortals detest the proud.

Hippolytus:

Ah, of course, I do. All proud mortals are a pain to us all.

Slave:

And, of course, those who are humble are charming, yes, my Prince?

Hippolytus:

They certainly are. And they are quick to help and serve.

Slave:

Do you think, my Prince, that this is also true with the gods?

Hippolytus:

Of course, I do. That is, if we, mortals abide by the laws of the immortals.

Slave:

But then, my Prince, why is it you do not show any reverence to a venerable goddess?

100

Hippolytus:

Which goddess are you talking about?

Watch your mouth now, slave! Careful that your mouth does not utter the wrong words to me!

Slave: *Indicating the statue of Aphrodite*

This goddess, there, my Prince. The one right next to your gate, my Prince!

Aphrodite, sir!

Hippolytus: *Dismissively*

Ah, that one!

Being a pure man, I greet her only from a distance.

Slave:

But, my Prince, this goddess is revered by many mortals. She's very famous among us all, my Prince!

Hippolytus:

Different mortals revere different gods, slave, just as different gods respect different mortals.

Slave:

My Prince, I wish you good fortune and to gain all the wisdom you need.

Hippolytus:

I honour no god who is honoured only at night!

Slave:

Ah, my son! We must honour all the gods!

Hippolytus: *Turning his back to the slave*

My friends, go inside and prepare the meal!

A full table after a good hunting session is an absolute joy!

110

And rub down my horses, as well, so that after the meal I can harness them to the cart and give them a proper exercise.

Turning to the slave again

As for your Aphrodite, well, tell her that I bid her a long farewell!

Friends and Hippolytus exit into the palace.

Slave: *Shakes his head with disbelief at the words and attitude of his master*

No, we old folks should not act like the young folks do. At least not when they have thoughts like that!

Turning to the statue of Aphrodite

No, my gracious lady, Aphrodite, I shall pray to you, to your statue, with words that are appropriate for a slave, a slave, just like me.

And, gracious lady, do please forgive the young whose excessive pride make them say silly things.

Pretend, my lady, not to hear their foolish words! I'm sure that gods are much wiser than mortals!

Exit slave into the palace.

Enter the chorus of Troezen women.

121

Chorus:

There is a rock, at the very edge of the earth, they say, out of which the clear waters of the river Oceanus flow and fall from all around its precipices to form lots of fountains. People dip their urns into those fountains. That's where my friend was the other day. She washes her brightly coloured clothes in the waters of that river and then she spreads them over the warm backs of the rocks, under the sun. It was there that I first heard the news about our queen.

131

Chorus:

Ah, our queen!

They say, she just lies sick in bed, indoors, all day, her beautiful head of blond hair, covered by finely woven veils.

Chorus:

I heard that for three days now her divine lips haven't touched even one of the holy and life-nourishing fruit of the goddess Demeter.

Chorus:

It's her wish to put an end to some secret thing she's suffering from, by cutting short her life.

Chorus:

Poor girl!

Has some god or other took possession of your mind, dear girl?

Pan, or Hekate, perhaps?

Chorus:

Perhaps the reverend Chorybantēs?

Chorus:

Or Cybele, the mountain mother?

Chorus:

Could it be that you're being tormented by guilt for sinning against Dictyna, the goddess of the wild beasts? Maybe you have forgotten to offer her the sacrificial bread. Because, she, too wanders about near those salt-water eddies that swirl about on the dry land, down by the shore.

151

Chorus:

Perhaps it's your Lord and husband, my dear lady, the King of the Athenians!

Chorus:

Perhaps some other woman has turned his mind, dear lady.

Chorus:

Perhaps she took him into her house and turned him against your embraces!

Chorus:

Maybe some sailor from Crete, sailed into our welcoming harbour and brought some dreadful news to our queen –

Chorus:

So dreadful that her soul, weighed heavily with grief drove her to her bed!

161

Chorus:

No friends!

No! This is the very nature of women!

It is unbalanced.

There's the awful pain of childbirth and then the pain of dizzy spells in the brain – and there is no harmony between these two.

Chorus:

Ha!

I had that scream of terror dart through my womb once!

But then I prayed to Artemis, the goddess who averts that pain, the goddess of the bow and arrow and she came! Praise be to the heavens, this, most welcome visitor came to me!

From the palace enter the nurse and Phaedra, who is supported by her servants. They help her walk over to the couch where she lies down.

170

Chorus:

Ah, look! Her old nurse is bringing our queen outside!

Chorus:

Look how sad and heavy her face looks!

Chorus:

It's getting worse!

Chorus:

I wish I knew what it is that's hurting her so much!

Chorus:

Look how withered her body looks!

Chorus:

Look how pale her face looks!

Nurse:

Oh, the horrible things, the shocking diseases that mortals can suffer from!

Tell me what I should do for you, my dear lady and tell what I should I not!

Here we are then.

The daylight, my lady. The clear sky. Your couch is here, too, outside the house.

180

All day, you talked about coming out here but I know, in no time at all, you'll be sick of all this and you'll want to go back inside again. Nothing can give you any pleasure, my lady. Nothing. Nothing you have pleases you, only what you have not.

Ah!

It's better to be sick yourself than to be looking after someone else who's sick. The first is a single task but the second, the second makes for double work. The work of the hand follows the work of the heart. But then again, the whole of a mortal is nothing but trouble. Trouble and work and no rest from either!

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But then again, whatever else there is, whatever good there is outside of life, it's all covered by a great cloud of darkness. And so we cling onto this one. Onto this life. We stick to this life because it's this life that shines on this earth. What experience do we have of the other? What do we know of the things

that are beneath it?

We listen to too many stories! Blindly get carried away with them!

Fables of fancy!

Phaedra:

Help me, friends! Help me stay upright. Help me keep my head up.

Come, come! Hold my hands, friends!

200

Ah!

This scarf is heavy on my head, take it off, please! Let my hair fall loose on my shoulders!

Nurse:

Come, my child! Courage!

Stop shifting your body about like that!

You could cope with your pain much easier, my child if you behaved like the noble lady you are. With silence and with a strong heart.

Mortals must endure pain.

Phaedra:

Oh, how I wish!

How I wish I could drink some pure water from the cool springs!

How I wish I could lie and rest under the poplar trees of a lush meadow!

212

Nurse:

Dear child!

What are you saying?

Stop talking like this in front of all these people. What silly things your tongue rattles off!

Phaedra: *Tries to get up*

Come, take me to the mountains!

I want to go to the mountains! To the woods. The pine forests.

Take me to where the hunting dogs chase the spotted deer!

Gods!

Oh, Gods!

I want to watch the dogs hunt the deer.

I want to cheer them on!

And I want to hold a Thessalian spear in my hand, up here, next to my golden hair and hold it high and then hurl it at them!

223

Nurse:

Heavens, my child!

Why in heavens' name would you want to do such things?

What is this sudden love for hunting? And mountain springs?

Goodness! We have a lovely cool spring right here, just around the walls of the palace. You can take all the water you want from there!

Phaedra:

Oh, dear Artemis!

My goddess!

Goddess of the salty lakes!

Goddess of the race tracks that echo with the hooves of horses!

How I wish I were there now, on your plains, breaking Enetians colts!

232

Nurse:

Again!

Again these mad words, my child!

Such madness, child!

One minute you want to race off to the mountains to go hunting and the next you want to run off to the sandy racetracks chasing after horses!

We need a mighty seer to work out what god pulls at the reins of your mind, my child, what god has driven your senses away from their right track!

241

Phaedra:

Ah!

Such misery!

What have I done? What could it be that I have done?
Where has my mind gone?
I have gone mad!
Some god has taken my mind away.
Ah!
Such misery!
Nurse, put the scarf over my head again! I am so ashamed of the things I've said.
Quick, nurse, cover my head. My face is flooded with tears!
Oh, I am so ashamed!
Sanity is a source of pain but madness is a sickness!
Best die sensing nothing!

250

Nurse: *Rolls the scarf back over Phaedra's face and head.*

Here you are, child. I cover your head!

Now when will death cover my body?

This long life of mine has taught me many things. One is that when friends fill each other's cup with love, they should do so carefully. Moderately.

Give love, by all means but not drain the very marrow of your soul of it.

The ribbons of love in your heart should be loosely bound so that you can either undo them completely or tighten them at will. To suffer the pain of two loves in the one soul, like I am doing now, is heavy suffering, indeed. I fear I suffer too much for this child.

260

They say a life that's lived too sternly is a life that brought more distress than joy, worse to your health. That's why I'd rather praise moderation than extreme austerity.

The wise folks will agree with me there.

Chorus:

Old lady, faithful nurse to our Queen, what is it that's brought our dear Phaedra into such a dreadful state?

Chorus:

Please tell us, dear nurse, what's wrong with the poor girl?

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Nurse:

I don't know. She won't tell me what's wrong with her.

Chorus:

Not even how this illness started?

Nurse:

No, she won't answer that question or any other question I ask her.

Chorus:

Ah, but look at her!

Look how weak her body looks!

Nurse:

Of course her body is weak! She hasn't touch any food for three days now!

Chorus:

Why has she done that? Has she gone mad or is she trying to kill herself?

Nurse:

Kill herself. She wants to die –by starving herself!

Chorus:

But does her husband know what she's up to? Does he agree with it?

Nurse:

No, he knows nothing. She says nothing to him. Denies she's ill.

280

Chorus:

But can he not work it out?

Chorus:

All he's got to do is look at her face!

Nurse:

How could he do that? He's always running off abroad!

Chorus:

Why don't you force her to tell you what's wrong with her?

Chorus:

Force her to tell you what's driven her out of her senses.

Nurse:

Ladies, I've tried everything and got nowhere with her.

But I won't stop trying. And now that you're all here, you can see for yourselves how I behave towards my lady in her hour of pain.

Come dear girl!

Come, let's forget all the things we said to each other before!

Now, dear child, let's make a deal.

290

You try and loosen that painful look of your face –there, undo those wrinkles of pain from your forehead and I, this time, I will try and behave better; listen much more sympathetically to everything you want to tell me and... and I'll use more soothing words to you.

And then, if you're suffering from those... those unmentionable ills we, women suffer from, well, there are women here who can comfort you. But if it can be uttered in the presence of men, then tell us so we can bring in a physician.

Speak, darling, speak!

Come on, don't stay silent. Speak, my child!

Come, child, either argue with me or agree with me but don't just stay silent.

300

Say something, child!

Turning to the chorus

You see, girls?

I can make no progress at all with her. None! I am wasting my time!

Ah! I can't get anywhere with the girl!

She was not moved by gentle words before and she is not moved now.

Back to Phaedra

But you can be certain of this, child: Be as stubborn as the ocean, if you want but by being so stubborn, you will die and by dying, you will be betraying your sons! Yes, my queen, your sons because they will no longer have any claim to your father's inheritance! To his palace, my queen! They will have no claim to it at all!

By the Amazonian goddess, my lady! By the horse-loving Artemis, who bore the master of your own sons, my lady. A bastard son, child, a bastard who thinks himself a noble. You know very well who I mean, my child. You know I mean Hippolytus!

Phaedra:

Oh!

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Nurse:

What, does that thought bother you?

Phaedra:

Nurse, you are killing me!

I beg you, Nurse! I beg you, in Heaven's name, never speak of him again, Nurse!

Nurse:

Ah, ha! You are, after all, sane!

But sane or not, you're still not willing to help your own sons, my child!

Save your sons by staying alive, my Queen!

Phaedra:

My sons!

I love my sons. It is not my sons who torture me!

Nurse:

What then?

Suddenly a horrible thought crosses her mind

Your hands, my Queen. Your hands are clean of blood?

Phaedra:

Yes, Nurse. My hands are clean of blood!

But my mind, my mind, Nurse, is unclean!

Nurse:

Your mind, child?

How so? Can some enemy have hurled some calamitous curse at you?

Phaedra:
No, Nurse. Not an enemy but a friend, Nurse.
A friend is destroying me. Against his wishes, against mine.

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Nurse:
What? A friend?
Has Theseus committed a grave sin against you, my lady?
Phaedra:
Ah no!
May I never sin against that man!
Nurse:
Not Theseus?
But then, child, what is this terror that overwhelms you so much that you want to die?

Phaedra:
Oh, dear Nurse!
Nurse, do let me sin! It is not against you, I sin my Nurse!
Nurse:
No, you're not sinning against me, willingly, child but you'll still be the end of me!
In a sudden move, the Nurse kneels beside Phaedra and grasps her hand and knee.

Phaedra:
What are you doing, Nurse? Ah, my arm!
Nurse:
Your arm and your knees, child! And I'll never let go of them!
Phaedra:
Ah, poor woman! You want to know the truth but the truth will be the end of you!

Nurse:
It would be worse for me to lose you, child!
Phaedra:
Lose me?
My death, dear Nurse, will bring death to you but honour to me!

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Nurse:
Honour? Well then, why hide it from me, child? Have I not the right to know this.... this truth?

Phaedra:
No, because I'm trying to turn shame into honour.
Nurse:
But then, will this honour not be greater if it were revealed?

Phaedra:
Oh, Nurse!
Please! By the gods, I ask you to leave me be! Let me go of my hand!

Nurse:
I shall not! Not until you give me what is mine!
Phaedra:
Ah, nurse!
I have too much respect for your suppliant hand not to give it you, so I shall!

Nurse:
Good. Then I'll say no more.
From now it is your turn to speak.
The Nurse lets go of Phaedra's hand and knee.
Phaedra sits up on the couch.

Phaedra:
Oh, mother! Oh, Pasiphae! King Minos' bride!
Oh, my poor mother! What a love you had endured!
Nurse:
Are you talking about the bull from Crete, my child?
Is that what you mean?
Phaedra:
And, you, poor darling sister, Ariadne, Dionysus' bride!

340

Nurse:

What's wrong, my child? Are you speaking ill of your parents?

Phaedra:

Yes, those two and me, a third! How miserably I die!

Nurse:

Child you're baffling me! Where do all these words take us?

Phaedra:

They take us back. Back to that time... This misery of mine is old. It comes from long ago.

Nurse:

That does not make things any clearer for me, child...

Phaedra:

Oh, nurse! If only you could utter my words instead of me!

Nurse:

Phaedra, I am not a seer to uncover what is hidden in your mind.

Phaedra:

Nurse, tell me, please: What do people mean when they say, they're in love?

Nurse:

Ah, love! They mean to say, my girl that they feel great pleasure and great pain all the very same time!

Phaedra: Well then, it would be the second that I feel.

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Nurse:

What are you saying, my child? That you are in love? But who is the man?

Phaedra:

His name?

I wonder what it is.

Turning towards the statue of Artemis.

He is the son of the Amazon goddess.

Nurse:

Hippolytus? Do you mean Hippolytus, child?

Phaedra:

You uttered the words, not me!

Nurse:

Oh, no! My child, what could you mean by this? You have destroyed me with this!

Turning to the chorus

Ladies, no! No, this is unbearable! I cannot bear to live any longer!

No! I hate the light of this day! I hate this day!

I shall throw myself over a cliff and die! Hades will save me from this life!

Farewell, ladies! I am leaving you! I am no longer alive!

Even the virtuous desire the evil! They might not wish it but they do, just the same.

Indicating the statue of Aphrodite

Aphrodite!

Now I see!

Now I see that she is not just a mere god but some force far mightier than that!

She has destroyed Phaedra!

She has destroyed me!

She has destroyed the Palace!

The chorus rushes about in alarm and confusion.

362

Chorus:

Ah! Did you hear that? Did you hear what our queen just said between her sighs of pain?

Chorus:

Misery that the ears can't bear to hear!

Chorus:

How I wish! How I wish I was not alive to hear the pain in your heart, my queen!

Chorus:

Ah!

Chorus:

Oh, how you must suffer from this agony, my queen!

Chorus:

Ah, what pains we mortals feed on!

Chorus:

Oh, my Queen!

You have brought evil –evil and death!- out into the sunlight!

Chorus:

What else awaits you this endless day?

370

Chorus:

Some unexpected horror will happen to the palace!

Chorus:

There is no doubt about what the Cretan goddess has in store for us.

Chorus:

Oh, you poor Cretan girl!

Phaedra:

Ladies!

You, women who live in this, the uttermost corner of Pelops' land!

I have often wondered, just wondered, during some long nights, what it is that brought about the downfall of the lives of mortals and I came to the opinion that this is not due to the nature of their minds because, many of them do possess much wisdom.

Rather, I think, we ought to look at the question in this manner:

380

We know and understand very well what is virtue and what is evil but, unfortunately, we fail to act virtuously. Some of us do so because we are lazy, others again because we give priority to pleasure rather than virtue.

And life has many pleasures. Lengthy and idle chats, for example, and indolence –a pleasant wrong, and shame; which has a double face, one of which, to be sure, is not an evil thing to possess but then there is yet the other face of it, the one whose weight crushes whole households, and if which was the good face of it and which was the bad was easy to discern, then the word describing them would not be the same.

This, as it happens, is my opinion on the matter and no drug, no magic potion that would make me contradict it and then believe its opposite.

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Let me tell you the path my mind took to arrive at this conclusion.

Once the darts of love had caused their wounds, I wondered how best to treat them.

First, I thought I'd say nothing about them. The tongue can never be trusted, I thought. It can give grand advice to others but it can also get you into a great deal of trouble, all by itself!

Then, I thought that I could behave like the noble woman I am and tolerate this madness nobly. Use self discipline, I thought. That would heal it.

400

But then, when neither of these two plans managed to beat Aphrodite's attack, a third plan came to my mind.

It's the best plan and I am certain you'll agree.

It is to die.

Death will not only hide what good deeds I have committed but it will also spare me from a throng of witnesses to those deeds I am ashamed of.

I knew only too well that this madness I suffered and the deed that brought it about was shameful. Not only that but I am also a woman, something that men detest!

Curse the woman who first began to pollute her marriage bed by sleeping with another one! Let her die a most miserable death!

410

And this thing... this evil.... it begins with the women in the families of the nobles. Where else?

Because when the common folks see the nobles behaving in such a shameful manner, they'll think that it's acceptable and so they, too, will behave just as shamefully!

And then there's the other lot! The lot that are full of virtue with words but their thoughts are full of mischief. I hate that sort of woman, as well!

Turning to the statue of Aphrodite

Tell me Aphrodite! Tell me Lady of the sea!

Tell me how these women can dare look at their husbands in the eye? How can they be so certain that their accomplices, the Night and the walls of their house won't suddenly start screaming? How can

they not be afraid of that?

419

And that's what brought me to my conclusion, dear friends. To my death.

I don't want to be found shaming my husband or the sons I bore. I want my sons to live as free men in this glorious city. In Athens. Free to speak their mind, free to flourish, free to enjoy a good name, a name untarnished by me, their own mother.

Even the bravest of men falls if he finds out that his mother or father have committed deeds of shame. They say there's only one thing that rivals the worth of a life: to have an untarnished, a virtuous heart! The others, the mortals whose hearts are bad, will be exposed sooner or later, according to their Fate, by Time who will raise a mirror of their deeds to their face, as if to a little girl. I hope I will not be among them.

431

Chorus:

Yes, yes! What a wondrous thing virtue is everywhere!

Chorus:

How great its fruits of glory and honour they are among all mortals!

Nurse:

My lady, I admit that what you have told me earlier had given me a sudden and dreadful shock but then I thought again and realised that I was quite wrong.

Second thoughts are can often be much wiser with us mortals.

What you're suffering from, dear girl is nothing unusual nor beyond comprehension.

Indicating the statue of Aphrodite

No, dear child, what has happened to you is that you are the victim of the goddess' anger.

So you're in love! Well, what is strange about that? You're in love just like many others. Do you want to die because of that? Because of love?

440

What would then be the point of people falling in love with their neighbours, if they must then die for it? Where's the benefit in that?

When Aphrodite charges at us in full flight, she is unstoppable! No point in trying to resist her because whilst she treats gently those who accept her and obey her, she is ruthless to those who are too proud for her. Those who think they are stronger than her. She grabs that lot and what do you think she does with them? She is merciless with them!

Our goddess is everywhere. In the air, in every wave of the sea. She sows and she harvests everything! She plants love and from love all we mortals are born.

450

All those people who read the old books, those who love the Muses, they all know that Zeus once lusted madly after Semele and they also know that Dawn, goddess of that delightful light, loved Cephalus so much that she grabbed him and took him up to the heavens with her! But do these gods commit suicide like you want to do by exiling themselves from the heavens and coming to live down here, among us mortals? No, they go on living up there, with each other. They simply shrug the whole thing off as a bit of bad luck!

459

And you can't cope with all that?

Well then, my child, if you don't want to live under these rules, then perhaps your father should have made a deal with the gods before he did his sowing, or perhaps he should have given you a different lot of gods to be your masters!

Think, child!

How many men do you think there are –men full of sense- who see their marriage beds betrayed but pretend to see nothing?

How many fathers do you think there are who have helped their sons deal their way out of entanglements with Aphrodite?

Here's the rule mortals follow: The wise thing to do with shameful deeds is to hide them! Out of everyone's eye!

No point in mortals killing themselves trying to make their lives all perfect! Nobody can build a perfect roof over their house, now, can they? Same thing.

470

A horrible misfortune like the one that has crashed upon you – how could you hope to escape it? No, my child! In the full reckoning of things, being a mortal, if your good deeds outweigh the bad ones, then consider yourself lucky, indeed.

So, dear girl, forget all these ugly thoughts. Swallow your pride. What, after all, is pride? It is thinking

that you're better than the immortals!

Accept, it, girl: You're in love! You're in love because a god ordered it that you'd fall in love; and if being in love is making you ill, then try a good remedy to ease its effect, not all this horrible stuff you've got in your head!

There are all sorts of charms and chants and potions that we can find to cure you of it.

And it has to be us, us, women, to go looking for these devices because men, well, men are just too slow when it comes to conjuring them up for us.

482

Chorus:

Phaedra, I think the advice your nurse is giving you to overcome your great misfortune, is admirable, though I prefer your way of thinking.

But I do know, my lady, that my words are more hurtful to your ears than hers.

Phaedra:

And that's exactly what destroys good cities and homes: fine speeches!

No, our words shouldn't just try to please our ears but, rather, to build us a good reputation!

490

Nurse: *Angry*

Oh! What huge words! What piousness!

Forget the big words, dear girl! We must think of this man of yours! Find him immediately and tell him with straight talk what's really going on here.

Now listen, my girl!

If you hadn't strayed and fallen into such a great mountain of troubles, I wouldn't have talked to you the way I did about love and lust and all that!

But trying to save your life, my dear girl, requires lots of hard work and so, who would argue with my method?

Phaedra: *Outraged at the Nurse*

Shame! Shame on you for uttering such disgraceful words! Keep your mouth shut and never talk like that again!

500

Nurse:

Shameful they might be but they speak of the better course for you!

The deed that saves your life is better than the fine words that may save your reputation but send you to the world below!

Phaedra:

By the gods!

I beg you, go no further! Speak no more!

You utter pretty words that say shameful things.

My soul has been worked upon by love so much that if you use these pretty words to say such shameful things then, I'm afraid, I shall be undone by the very thing I'm trying to escape!

Nurse:

As you wish.

Still, since you've made the mistake then take my advice and do as I tell you now: I just remembered that I have some love medicine at home which, if you're brave enough to take it, will get you out of this trouble of yours without shame to your reputation nor harm to your mind.

510

First, though I must get some little token from your lover. A lock of hair, or a small piece of his clothing and then mingle the two into one, single charm.

Phaedra:

What sort of medicine is it, something you drink or do you apply it on your skin?

Nurse:

I don't know, child. Seek the cure, not the knowledge!

Phaedra:

I'm afraid you're getting too clever for me!

Nurse:

Afraid of what child? There's nothing to be afraid of.

Phaedra:

I'm afraid you might say something to Theseus' son.

520

Nurse:

Oh, don't worry about that, my child!

I'll organize everything perfectly.

Turning to the statue of Aphrodite

I only pray that you, my lady, goddess of the sea, help in all this.

As to the rest of my plans, I've got enough friends inside the palace to talk them over with.

Exit Nurse

Phaedra retreats to the couch and lies down, covering her face with her scarf.

Chorus:

Oh, god of lust!

Chorus:

Eros!

Chorus:

You make eyes drip with desire!

Chorus:

You infuse sweet pleasure into the souls you hunt!

Chorus:

Oh, Eros! Never hunt me in anger! Never be violent towards me!

530

Chorus:

Neither the arrows of fire or that of the stars are as powerful as those of Aphrodite which Eros, the son of Zeus, flings at us by his own hand!

Chorus:

It's pointless for the Greeks to slaughter even more bulls on the shrines of the Pythian Apollo, and by the banks of the Alpheus river, if we neglect to honour Eros!

Chorus:

Eros! Lord and master of all mortals!

540

Chorus:

Eros, who holds the keys to Aphrodite's sweet chambers!

Chorus:

Eros, whose visits bring ruin and devastation to mortals!

Chorus:

And then there was princess Iole of Oechalia!

Right up until the moment that Aphrodite delivered that girl to Herakles, Alcmene's son, she knew nothing of men, of marriage beds or love.

Chorus:

Like a Water nymph!

A Maenad!

A carefree filly!

550

Chorus:

Aphrodite tore that poor girl from her father's house.

The house of Eurytus.

Chorus:

What blood was shed for the sake of that union!

What smoke was raised for the sake of that wedlock!

What a murderous wedding!

Chorus:

A whole city was sacked for the sake of that marriage!

Poor girl!

What misery that yoke had brought you!

Chorus:

Oh, sacred walls of Thebes!

And you, springs of Dirce, witness my account of how Aphrodite comes to us.

560

Chorus:

Even Semele, mother of twice-born Dionysius, she yoked with the fiery thunder!

Chorus:

A wedding bed of death for the poor girl!

Chorus:

Aphrodite is dreadful!

Her breath kills all!
She hovers above us all like a bee.
Suddenly Phaedra hears a noise from the palace and bolts upright with fright.

Phaedra:

Quiet, women!

She moves closer to the wall and listens.

Oh, no! I hear my undoing!

Chorus:

What is it, Phaedra?

Chorus:

What did you hear in the house that made you so afraid?

Phaedra:

Wait! Be quiet! Let me work out what they're saying in there!

Chorus:

I'll be quiet but this looks like trouble.

Phaedra:

Oh!

Misery!

Oh!

Pain!

571

Chorus:

What is it, my lady?

Chorus:

What are you saying?

Chorus:

What did you hear, my lady?

Chorus:

What is that shook your heart so much?

Phaedra:

I am dead, ladies! I am dead! Come and listen! Listen through this door. Listen to what havoc the house is in!

Chorus: *Refusing to approach the door*

No, my lady! You listen through the door.

What goes on in your house is for you to find out...

Chorus:

...and then for you to tell us!

581

Phaedra:

It's Hippolytus, the son of that amazon woman who loves horses!

He is shouting horrible things at my servant!

Chorus:

Ah! I can hear his voice but I can work out what he's saying!

Chorus:

Tell us what he's shouting about!

Phaedra:

I can work it out very clearly! He's just called her a dirty bawd and told her that she has betrayed her master's marriage bed!

591

Chorus:

Ah! How terrible!

Chorus:

Dear friend, you've been betrayed!

Chorus:

How can I help you, my dear girl?

Chorus:

Your secret is out!

Chorus:

You are destroyed!

Phaedra:

Ah!

Ah!

Chorus:

Betrayed by your own friends!

Phaedra:

She has destroyed me!

Out of love and out of a desire to cure this illness of mine, she has told him of my concerns! Love but betrayal also.

Chorus:

So, what will you do then?

Chorus:

Oh, you have suffered something that no one can cope with!

599

Phaedra:

I know only of one thing that I can do.

To die as quickly as possible! It's the only cure of these troubles of mine.

Exit Phaedra into the palace.

A minute later an outraged Hippolytus, enter through the same door, followed by the Nurse

Hippolytus: *Shouts*

Oh, mother Earth!

Oh, broad sunlight!

The things I hear! Unspeakable stuff!

Nurse:

Hush, my boy!

Quiet!

Someone will hear you, shouting like that!

Hippolytus:

Quiet?

How can I be quiet after the words I've heard?

Nurse: *Takes his right hand and raises it to her heart*

My, son, I beg you!

Please, by your beautiful, right hand, I beg you!

Hippolytus:

Keep your distance! Don't touch my clothes, woman!

Nurse: *She falls to her knees and touches his*

By your knees, my son!

I beg you, my son! You will ruin me!

Hippolytus:

Ruin you? How would I ruin you?

Didn't you just tell me that there was nothing wrong with your little tale?

Nurse:

My son, what I've told you was not for everyone else to hear.

610

Hippolytus:

It is best that good tales are heard by many.

Nurse:

Your oath, my child! I beg you, don't break it!

Hippolytus:

That oath was sworn by my tongue, not by my heart!

Nurse: *Rises from her knees*

But what is it you want to do, my son, destroy all your friends?

Hippolytus: *Spits*

Ha! Friends! I spit the word! Criminals are not friends!

Nurse:

Then forgive them!

All mortals make mistakes, my son. It is in our nature.

Hippolytus:

Zeus!

Oh, Zeus! Why did you bring woman into the light of the sun?

Woman, this impure, this evil destroyer of mortals!
If you wanted to sow the seeds for the mortal race you should not have done it through women but a price.

620

Men should be able to just go to some temple or other, put there some piece of bronze or iron, or even some gold –whatever their means would allow- and with that price paid, pick themselves the son they want. Take him home with him and there, the two men could live out their lives, in their house without a woman to be seen anywhere!

As it is now, even before we want to bring this... this curse, into our house, we must squander away our whole estate!

And here's what I mean by this. Here's the clear proof of it: The woman's father, the man who had begotten that beast and who had raised her -that poor man, not only has to lay a dowry out for her but he must also send her away, so he can shed from himself this unbearable burden!

630

And then, her husband, the other poor creature, the one who has brought this... fake statue, into his house, this ruinous beast, her husband, the moment he gets her into his house, he begins to happily decorate her!

He begins the little game of cajoling her with pretty clothes! Fancy clothes for a worthless, vile statue! And there, you see, there goes, bit by little bit, all the wealth of his estate!

And then come the unavoidable choices of his constraints. Either his in-laws are so good that he accepts the burden of having to endure a rotten and painful marriage, or it's the other way around: he gets a great wife but rotten and painful in-laws, in which case, he'll need to content himself with the thought that, the good part of this marriage cancels out the rotten part.

But the man who gets it the easiest is the one who brings into his house a woman who is totally useless. A nothing. A zero. A simple, simple-minded woman. A useless woman.

640

But I hate the smart ones! I simply loathe that sort!

Oh, Zeus, spare me!

I hope I'll never end up with a woman in my house who's cleverer than women should be! Aphrodite plants a lot more evil schemes in the minds of those clever ones! The dumb ones are kept on the straight and narrow because of their... rather diminutive wit.

And, if you do get a wife, give her no slave. Instead, give her animals. Give her dumb brutes for companions. Wild beasts that you can't talk to and they can't talk back.

Give a bitch of a wife a servant and what have you got? The two talk together inside, hatch up all sorts of evil plans and then the servant goes off and carry those plans outside the house!

651

Turning to the Nurse

And that's how you did this, you vile creature!

That's how you came to me, to fill my ears with abhorrent stories about my father's sacred marriage bed.

Stories that I will flush out with running water. How could I ever be such traitor, the very thought of it makes me feel disgusting?

And let me tell you straight, woman! What saves your life after this, is my own piety because, had not my hands been tied by that oath, I'd never have kept this whole story from my father! But since he's out of the country, I'll leave the house and keep silent about it.

660

But we'll both be back and then I'll see how you treat him. You and your mistress. I've had a taste of your arrogance, now, so I'll see how you behave in his presence.

Turns to leave in disgust

Curse you woman and curse all of you, women!

No matter how often I'm told that I am constantly saying this, my hatred to you all will never be quenched. I say it again and again because again and again you prove yourselves to be hateful and if they want me to stop saying it then let a man teach them how not to be hateful Otherwise let me disparage them for ever!

Exit Hippolytus SL

Nurse:

How miserable is the fate of women! How unfortunate their lives!

Chorus:

What then?

Chorus:
What's left for us now?

670

Chorus:
What words are left for us?

Chorus:
What tricks can we devise to undo this miserable knot of accusations?

Nurse:
We have failed.

Enter Phaedra from the palace

Phaedra:
We have received justice!
Oh, mother Earth!
Oh, Sun!

How can I escape what Fate has in store for me, my friends?
What god, my friends, what mortal will come to help me now?
Who will appear at my side to help me, my friends, help someone to commit unjust deeds?
This pain, this torture I'm suffering now will be hard to endure in life.
Oh! What woman is more unfortunate than me?

680

Chorus:
Ah!
Chorus:
Ah!

Chorus:
Dear lady, it's all over!

Chorus:
Your servant's schemes have not worked!

Chorus:
It's all bad, my lady!

Phaedra: *To Nurse*

Vile monster!

Monster who destroys friends! See now what you have done to me!
I hope Zeus, who is the father of my race destroys you now! I hope he destroys you with his blazing thunderbolt! Destroys you root and branch!
Have I not told you to be silent about these things? Not to reveal any of these things and that to do so would cause me this horrible shame?
But you couldn't keep your mouth shut, could you? How can I now die with my honor unblemished?
Ah! Now I must work out new plans because now, with a mind whetted with rage, he'll run off to his father and tell him that it was all my fault – blame me for all the wrong things you've done.

690

He will tell the old man Pitheus about my troubles and then he will have the whole world echoing with tales of shame about me!

Curses to you!

Curses to you and to anyone else who thinks of helping their friends against their will and by shameful means!

Nurse:

My lady, you are right in blaming me for the trouble I have caused you but, my lady, what hurts sharply stops good judgment.

But, my child, listen to me and you will hear that I do have a reason for what I've done. I brought you up, my child and so I love you.

I looked around for the medicine to cure your illness, my child but I could not find it but rest assured, if I had found it, I would have been considered as one of the wisest mortals alive. Wisdom is measured by success, my child.

702

Phaedra:
What? What manners are these?

First you cause me all this shame and then you argue with me?

Nurse:

We are chatting idly now, my lady. I admit, I made a mistake but even from this point you can still save your life, child!

Phaedra:

Enough of your talk!

Your first advice was shameful and what you did was wrong.

Now leave me and you look after your own affairs. I shall look after mine –honourably!

Exit Nurse

710

As for you dear noble ladies of Troezen, grant me, please this one request: Say nothing of what you've just heard here.

Chorus:

I swear, my lady!

Chorus:

By holy Artemis!

Chorus:

Zeus' own daughter!

Chorus:

I will reveal none of your troubles to the daylight!

Phaedra:

These are good words to hear, my ladies!

I have found a means by which I can remedy my situation in such a way that my sons can live with an honourable reputation and for me to get some benefit out of my present troubles.

I will never disgrace the homes of Crete, nor will I appear before Theseus after having committed shameful deeds, just so I can save my one life!

722

Chorus:

What horrible, incurable deed are you thinking of performing, my lady?

Phaedra:

The deed is death. But its performance will be directed by me.

Chorus:

Ah!

Chorus:

Such shocking words, my lady!

Chorus:

Utter good words only, my lady!

Phaedra:

And you, dear friends, only give me good advice.

This day, I shall please Cypris, the goddess who so wants to destroy me, by shedding my life. I am weaker than this bitter passion.

My death though will hurt someone else. A man who shall learn not to rejoice over my ill fate. This man will take his share of my misfortune and doing so will learn about humility.

Exit Phaedra into the palace.

732

Chorus:

Oh, how I wish!

Chorus:

How I wish I lived in hidden caves...

Chorus:

... far away on some steep crags.

Chorus:

... mountains and rocks.

Chorus:

And a god turned me into a bird with wings...

Chorus:

A bird flying in huge flocks.

Chorus:

Soaring high above the swelling ocean...

Chorus:

...all the way to the shores around the Adriatic...

Chorus:

...above the waters of Eridanus

Chorus:

The waters of Eridanus where the tears of grief from the unlucky virgins fall...

Chorus:

Drip by drip the gleaming amber of their tears...

Chorus:

Tears of grief over their brother's fall...

Chorus:

...son of Helios, the sun god...

Chorus:

They fall and fall into the deep blue waves.

741

Chorus:

How I wish!

Chorus:

How I wish I could fly to that shore where the apple trees grow.

Chorus:

The trees of the harmony lovers, the Hesperides!

Chorus:

There, where Poseidon, the Lord of the sea, forbids the mariners from passing through into the turbulent waters and where he marks the boundary in the sky which Atlas holds.

Chorus:

There in Zeus' halls, where fountains gush out ambrosia, beside his every couch.

Chorus:

There where the sacred earth gives rich fruit to the gods, gracing them with even greater bliss.

Chorus:

Oh, you great white-winged ship from Crete!

You have carried my queen through the salty waves of the thunderous ocean!

Chorus:

And from a blessed home you carried here, to a miserable marriage!

Chorus:

A joyless joy!

760

Chorus:

An evil omen sent her off from Crete, her land, her home and an evil omen brought her here, to glorious Athens.

Chorus:

Here, her ship tied their platted ropes on the moorings of the shores at the port Munichus. Here it was where she first stepped on our land.

Chorus:

And so the omens were correct.

Chorus:

Our lady was smitten by a gruesome illness.

Chorus:

An unholy passion sent by the goddess Aphrodite.

Chorus:

An incestuous love that spun her heart into madness.

770

Chorus:

Now, crushed by her bitter luck, our lady will tie a noose around her white neck and hang herself from the beams in her bridal chamber.

Chorus:

Shame and a hatred for life, drove her to leave it for the glory of a clear reputation and for the ridding from her heart the pain of a shameful desire.

Nurse: *within*

Ah!

Ah!

Help! Anyone who's near the palace, come! Help!

Oh, my lady!

Phaedra, Theseus' wife has hanged herself!

Help!

Chorus:

Ah!

Chorus:

Ah!

Chorus:

It's all over!

Chorus:

The queen is dead!

Chorus:

Snared in the noose!

Chorus:

She has hanged herself!

780

Nurse: *within*

Hurry!

Please someone hurry!

Bring a knife someone to cut the noose!

Won't someone please bring a knife?

Chorus:

Ladies, what do we do now?

Chorus:

Should we rush into the house and cut our lady free from the noose?

Chorus: *Shouting through the door*

Are there no young slaves about the place?

It's not wise for us to meddle!

Nurse: *Within*

Come, lay her neatly on the stretcher.

Straighten out her poor corpse.

What bitter house work I must perform for my master!

Chorus:

Ah!

Then the poor girl must be dead now!

Chorus:

They are laying out her corpse.

Enter Theseus SR.

He is wearing a garland of green leaves.

He walks over to the palace door and bangs on it but the door is not opened for him.

Loud noises of people moving about, of tears, of wails come from within the palace

Theseus turns to the chorus:

790

Theseus:

Ladies, do you know what those noises in the palace are about?

I hear such loud screams from the servants!

No one in palace is seeing fit to open the door for me and, as usual, receive me with joy and with due respect.

Could it be that something has happened to old Pittheus?

He is far into his years but losing the man would still grieve me greatly.

Chorus:

No, Theseus!

It is not the old folk who is hit by ill fortune!

Chorus:

It is the young, Theseus!

It is the young who have died!

Chorus:

Grieve for the young, Theseus, the young!

Theseus:

Oh, no!

No!

No, it isn't my sons, surely!
Have I been robbed of the lives of my sons, ladies?

800

Chorus:

No, Theseus. Your sons live.

Chorus:

It is their mother who is dead!

Grieve for their mother, Theseus!

Theseus:

What? What are saying?

Is my wife dead? How did she die?

Chorus:

Theseus, she has hanged herself.

Chorus:

She tied a long rope to the rafters of her ceiling and made a noose.

Theseus:

Did some great sorrow stirred her mind? Or was it some other misfortune?

Chorus:

I know no more than that.

Chorus:

We've only just arrived to the palace, ourselves, Theseus. We came to grieve at your misfortune.

Theseus:

Oh!

Oh!

Tears the garland from his head and throws it to the ground in disgust

And here I am with a crown of plaited leaves on my head!

Oh, such a foul oracle!

Shouts through the door

Servants!

Servants unlock this door! Pull back the heavy bars! Loosen its bolts!

I want to see the bitter sight of my dear wife!

A sight of death that has destroyed me!

The door opens and through it, the body of Phaedra is carried on a bier by servants.

Her hands are crossed over her body and a wrapped and sealed tablet lies over them.

811

Chorus:

Ah!

Chorus:

Ah!

Chorus:

Poor woman!

Chorus:

Unfortunate girl!

Chorus:

What things you've done, my girl!

Chorus:

Things that have destroyed this house!

Chorus:

What courage, my child!

Chorus:

How horrible the death you've died!

Chorus:

Unholy death!

Chorus:

A death by your own hand, Phaedra!

Chorus:

What was it, Phaedra?

What was it that took your life down to Hades' darkness?

Theseus:

Ah!

What pains I feel!
What misery I am suffering!
How horrible my Fate!
Oh, my city! Oh, Athens!
How heavy this Fate has fallen upon my house! Upon my head!

820

Some invisible stain, sent here by some invisible spirit!
It has crushed my life! It has made my life unlivable!
Dear woman!
Oh, the endless ocean of sorrow I can see before me!
I cannot swim through it! I cannot cross its span.
What word would be proper for me to utter, dear woman? What word would match your grave misfortune?
You flew away from within my hands and with force and violence you jumped into the hands of Hades.

Ah!

Ah!

830

How can I bear the horror of this Fate?
This is the doing of some ancestor!
The evil deeds of long ago.
The gods are punishing me for those ancient deeds.

Chorus:

My King!

The pain falls not only upon you but upon many others!

Theseus:

I want to go to the gloomy darkness of the world below the earth, Phaedra, wife, since I've been robbed of your sweet company!

Ah!

Phaedra!

You have killed me more than you have killed yourself, wife!

840

Who can tell me, dear wife, where this deadly arrow came from, this arrow that pierced your heart?

Will not someone tell me?

Or does this royal house give shelter to all these servants for no reason at all?

Ah!

Ah, my wife!

What pain comes with your death!

What grief do I see here, my wife? What grief sees my palace!

Unbearable grief, unutterable pain, my queen!

Oh, this is death! This is my death and the death of my house!

You have left our sons, dear girl! Made them orphans!

Ah, the most beautiful of all the women under the bright sun and under the sparkling light of the night's stars!

851

Chorus:

Poor man!

Chorus:

What miserable grief has come down upon your house!

Chorus:

Tears have flooded my eyes!

Chorus:

Your pains have melted my heart, my lord!

Chorus:

I shudder at the thought of what's to come yet!

Theseus:

What's this here?

This tablet. It's hanging from her hand. Is there some message on it, something I don't know? Perhaps she's left me some instructions about our children, our marriage....

860

Oh, my poor girl, fear not! Our bridal bed and my house will be possessed by no other woman!

Takes the tablet out of her hand

Ah! Look! Her golden seal on the message! How enchanting it is to my eyes!

Let me see what the tablet says.

He unwraps the tablet and begins to read it silently

Chorus:

Ah!

Chorus:

Ah!

Chorus:

A fresh catastrophe from the gods!

Chorus:

Another to follow the old one!

Chorus:

Why live any longer now?

Chorus:

This is the end of my King's house!

Chorus:

Of Fate!

I pray to you, if prayers you accept!

870

Chorus:

Fate do not destroy this house!

Chorus:

Ah!

I see evil signs heading this way!

Prophetic signs!

Theseus:

Ah!

What is this?

A new grief!

Ah! A grief upon a grief, this one even more unbearable, even more unutterable!

Ah! What a dismal creature I am!

Chorus:

What is it, my lord?

Tell us that we may know!

Theseus:

This tablet shouts its words!

It shouts the horror!

Ah! How can my ears endure the burden of this heavy song?

I cannot! I cannot!

881

Chorus:

Ah!

What ominous words!

Theseus:

I cannot!

I cannot hold the words locked behind my lips!

I cannot!

Destructive words! Unutterable words that must be uttered!

Shouts as if to the whole city

Citizens!

Various citizens stream in from the sides of the stage

Come, hear my words!

My son, Hippolytus!

He dared assault my bridal bed!

Hippolytus has shamed the holy eye of Zeus!

Well then, my father Poseidon, I call upon you!

You have promised me three curses, once! Grant me one of them now!

Strike dead my son and let him not live beyond the end of this day!
Show me, father, that your gift is true!

891

Chorus: *Shocked*

Ah!

My lord, no!

Chorus:

No, my lord!

In heavens' name, I beg you!

Call back that prayer!

Chorus:

Soon, you'll learn my lord...

Chorus:

... You've made a mistake, my lord!

Chorus:

Listen to me, my lord!

Theseus:

No, no it's not a mistake!

And, to be certain, I shall also banish him from this land!

One of the two punishments will strike him. Either Poseidon will hear my prayer and send him off down to the house of Hades, or else, he'll go off wondering as an exile, his miserable life draining away over foreign soils.

Chorus: *Indicating within, SL*

My lord, look!

It is your son, Hippolytus.

Chorus:

Just in time!

900

Chorus:

Soften your anger, my lord, Theseus!

Think carefully about what's best, for you and for your house!

Hippolytus rushes in.

Hippolytus:

Father, what is it?

I've just heard your shout of distress and came straight here.

Tell me what's troubling you so much?

He sees Phaedra's corpse.

Ah!

What? What is this here? Father, this is your wife. She's dead!

Oh, what painful shock, is this!

But I have only just left her, father. She was alive only a short time ago. What's happened to her? How did she die?

Father tell me. I want to hear about this only from your own lips.

Theseus lowers his head but says nothing

911

Why the silence, father?

It is no use being silent during misfortunes, father because the heart, the heart, father, is even more greedy to hear things when it comes to misfortune.

It is not right to keep things from friends, father, and we are more than friends!

Theseus:

To hell with all you, mortals!

So much, you are so wrong!

Why teach a thousand crafts and skills, a thousand tricks, a thousand inventions!

Why teach all that, when you can't even teach –not even seek to teach- how to give wisdom to the fool?

921

Hippolytus:

Father, you ask for much: A teacher wise enough to make a fool think!

But what may these words of yours mean here and now, father?

I'm afraid, father, your grief has made your tongue wander about of its own accord.

Theseus: *His tone implies that he blames Hippolytus of being an untrue friend.*

There should be some way of knowing, of proving, which man is true and which is false. To show clearly the true friend from the false one.

And each man should own two voices, one of them to be true and the other as it will; and then the voice of truth would convict the other of its falsehood and so we would never be deceived!

932

Hippolytus:

Father!

Has someone in our family whispered in your ear some accusation against me?

Am I to suffer for something I have not done?

Your words are baffling, father! They are too hard for my mind to understand.

Theseus:

The boldness of the mortal mind! How far does it extend? Where does its arrogance, its shame end?

940

Because if it burgeons on endlessly with every new generation, if each successive man surpasses his predecessor in evil, then the gods must build yet another earth upon this earth to fit all those who are born bereft of virtue.

Ha! Look at this man here!

My son! The product of my own loins! And yet he has disgraced my bridal bed.

This dead woman here has convicted him completely! He is a man of shame. The accusation is clearly made.

Hippolytus turns to walk away

Come now, turn and face your father! Give me your eye!

No, don't worry about polluting me now. I am already polluted by your presence, the presence of one who has shed blood. My pollution is beyond redemption.

So, come, turn and face me!

Hippolytus turns towards his father

Well then, are you the man who goes about in the company of gods, away from us, mere mortals? Are you such a rare mortal? Full of virtue and chastity and free of sin?

950

Oh, I'm not in the slightest way convinced by all of this boasting of yours and the gods are not such fools as not to be able to see what you're truly like.

Go on, then, by all means, spout out all you want about your vegetarian diet like a quack. By all means, let Orpheus be your master! Enjoy, no, revere, if you so wish, all his idle musings, all of his many books.

Hypocrite!

You have been caught out red handed!

Citizens, I warn you all!

Have nothing to do with such men! They will trick you with their holy-sounding words, only so that they can conjure up against you, deeds of shame!

Look there!

Yes, she is dead!

Do you think this fact will save you?

No, murderer! It will not! Because this fact is the very fact that will convict you!

Waves the tablet angrily at Hippolytus

960

What oaths, what arguments could there be, you evil man, what could you possibly say that could yield more power than this tablet? Where is there more powerful proof than this? Where is there proof enough to save you from the charge of murder?

Will your argument be that she hated you? Will I be that a bastard son is always regarded as the enemy of the pure-bred? Will that be your defence?

Do you think of her such a poor merchant, then, as to trade her own life, the thing she values the most, with something as worthless as mere hatred, the hatred of you?

Or will you argue that evil resides only in women but never in men?

Ha! I know of men who, once Aphrodite takes a hold of their minds and shakes them about for a bit, they are far less stable than women. Their heads spin into utter befuddlement. And their maleness, in fact, gives them an advantage over women.

970

Bah!

Why waste my breath arguing with you when the body of this dead woman, the very proof of your evil

deed, is right here?

Leave this land immediately!

Go off into exile and never return to this land, this land which was founded by the divine Athena herself! Go and never approach any other land ruled by the might of my spear either!

Let it not be said by anyone that in this affair I am proven to be weaker than you, or else the Isthmian Sinis will also say that I have never killed him and that I have merely boasted that I have, and so too, with the rocks of Skiron by the sea. They, too will say the same.

981

Chorus:

When things can change so quickly, from excellent to dreadful, how can any mortal say he's ever truly happy?

Hippolytus:

Father!

This intense anger in your heart is dreadful!

If you had examined the issue more thoroughly, father, you would have seen that though your words were good, your facts were lacking.

Father, I am more skilled in making speeches to small crowds of my own age group than to the general public. It's only natural.

And then, those who are found by the wise folks to be fools, are seen by the mob as persuasive orators.

990

But I am forced by this disaster that has fell upon me, to loosen my tongue and speak! But let me begin with your first attack against me.

You said you would crush me, crush me, even before I had a chance to speak even a word in my defence!

Here is the light of the sun and here is the earth and upon this sun lit earth there is no man -deny it all you wish- there is not a single man, who is more moral than I am!

To begin with, I know the importance of showing reverence to the gods. Then I also know how to make friends only with those who will do no evil whatsoever, who would feel great shame in even suggesting to others to commit evil or to do evil themselves.

1000

And, father, I don't pretend to be one thing to those of my friends who are present and yet another to those who are absent.

The very thing which causes you enough anger that you want to destroy me, the very thing that you think you've caught me at red handed, I am innocent. To this day, my body is unstained by sex. I know nothing about this act except for what I have heard in talk or seen in paintings, paintings that I care not to look at either, because I have a virgin soul.

But perhaps you are indeed not convinced that I am pure. Well then, show me the proof you have that I am not so. What is it that you think has corrupted me?

1009

Her body? Do you think hers was more beautiful than that of all the rest of the women in the world, or do you think I wanted to marry her so as to rule your kingdom and inherit your estate? What a fool such thinking would have made of me! Totally without a wit!

To be pure and to be a king at the same time? Do you think that would be such a pleasant thing? Not in the slightest! The crowns of tyranny corrupt the minds of those who love to wear them. I prefer the crowns of victory in the sporting events of Greece but as a citizen, I am quite content to be a runner up and enjoy the blessings that come with the company of my noble friends. That would give me enough freedom to do as I please, free of danger, something that I consider to be far more enjoyable than the crown of a king.

1021

There is only one more thing left for me to mention. You've heard all the rest.

Had there been a trial and had I a witness to speak on my character and had this woman been alive at this trial and had there been a careful examination of the facts, then you would surely learn who the real guilty person is.

But all I can do as things are now, is to swear by Zeus, god of all oaths and by the earth beneath my feet, that I have never touched your wife, that I have never ever wished to do so and that the thought had never crossed my mind.

And if I am lying then let me die in dishonour, without a name, without a city, without a shelter, an exile ever-wandering all over the earth!

1030

And, if I am guilty, let no sea, nor soil receive my flesh once I am dead!

Perhaps she has taken her own life out of some fear she had. That, I don't know.
Beyond this, it is improper for me to speak.
She behaved virtuously, though she could not have been virtuous, whereas I who am virtuous have used my virtue to my disadvantage.

Chorus:

The oaths you have made to the gods are adequate enough to guarantee your innocence.

Chorus:

More than adequate!

Theseus:

Well then!

Is this man not a weaver of charms and spells? Is he not a trickster?

Such confidence! Such an even disposition!

He thinks he will seduce my soul, the soul of the father he has dishonoured!

1041

Hippolytus:

I agree with your anger, father because were I your father and you my son, and had you dared defile my wife, I wouldn't have just send you into exile but I would have killed you!

Theseus:

How fitting these words are, coming from you!

But no, you will not die like this. This is the law you've declared for yourself, so, no, you will not die like this. A quick death is a merciful death for a miserable wretch like you.

No, your death will come as an exile, sent away from your ancestral land. You will go off wondering as an exile, your miserable life draining away over foreign soils.

That is the punishment of a disrespectful man.

1051

Hippolytus:

What? Will you not at least wait long enough for some evidence of my innocence appear? Will you banish me from this land immediately?

Theseus:

Yes!

And if I could, I would banish you to the furthest reaches of the world.

That's how much I detest you!

Hippolytus:

But, will you not examine any evidence? Will you not check my oaths, ask any seers?

Will you send away without a trial?

Theseus: *Shaking the tablet at Hippolytus*

This tablet needs no seers.

It has made a very convincing trial of your guilt.

And I don't care at all about what the birds of omen, that fly about over my head say!

1060

Hippolytus:

Oh, gods!

Since you, whom I worship will destroy me, why then do I not open my mouth?

But no! It'll serve no purpose. I shall not persuade those who should be persuaded and I would have also broken the oaths I've sworn!

Theseus:

Oh!

All this piety of yours is unbearable!

Leave now!

Leave your father's land immediately!

Hippolytus:

But where can I go, father?

Oh, how sad this is!

How will anyone ever offer me a shelter when I'm exiled under this charge?

Theseus:

You will find shelter in the house of people who love defilers of bridal beds, people who stay at home all day planning deeds of evil.

1070

Hippolytus:

Your insults father have stabbed deep into my heart!
To know that you think of me as evil makes me want to shed tears!

Theseus:

You should have shed these tears and thought more carefully before you had planned to perform this outrage against your father's wife.

Hippolytus:

Oh, Palace!

If only your walls could speak and reveal my innocence!

Theseus:

Now that's a clever tactic! Ask the dumb walls to stand up for you when all along, the truth, though also silent, lies right here! *Indicating Phaedra.*

Here is the proof of your evil deeds!

Hippolytus:

Ah!

Ah!

Gods, split me in two so that I can stand across from myself and weep at my own misery!

1080

Theseus:

How fitting!

You'd much rather stand and worship your own self than show respect towards your father!

Hippolytus:

Oh, poor mother!

Oh, what a miserable existence I live!

May none of my friends ever suffer the existence of a bastard son!

Theseus:

Servants!

Why haven't you thrown this man out yet?

Have you not heard me telling you for such a long time now, that this man is no son of mine. He is a stranger.

Hippolytus:

If any of you lay a hand on me you'll regret it!

Here's your chance father. Show me that you have the heart to throw me out of this land with your own hands!

Theseus:

I'll be doing just that if you don't do as you're told. My heart will not feel sorry by your banishment!

1090

Hippolytus:

So, this is the end then. Miserable Fate!

Impossible Fate! I have the truth yet I can not reveal it!

Well then, Artemis, Leto's own daughter.

You are the god, most dear to my heart!

You are the god I have hunted with and whose company I have enjoyed.

Now, Artemis, I must leave this glorious Athens and become an exile!

Oh, Athens! City and soil of Erechtheus, farewell!

Soil of Troezen! What countless blessing you provide to a young man as he grows up!

Let me take one last look at you before I bid you farewell!

Come, friends! Escort me out of this land and bid me farewell!

Come, say good bye to the most virtuous man you'll ever see, even though my father does not seem to think so!

Exit Hippolytus and friends SL,

Exit Theseus into the palace

1104

Chorus:

The thought that the gods care for us mortals sends away all my sadness but if I look for it, if I look for evidence of this care in the deeds and fortunes of mortals, I find none. One minute you see one thing and the next a thing that's totally its opposite. A man's life changes constantly.

1111

Chorus:

Oh, how I wish that the gods would answer my prayer and grant me a Fate that is replete with prosperity and a soul free of sadness.

Let me not be stubborn in my views nor also be ever-shifting.
And let not my mood be stiff and unreceptive to the new things that each dawn brings. Let it be willing
to receive each dawn's new blessing.

1120

Chorus:

But my mind is now thoroughly confused.
What I have just seen is not what I have expected.

Chorus:

The brightest star of Greece— we all saw this, we saw it with our own eyes!
The brightest star of Greece was banished from his own land by his own father!
His own father's anger!

Chorus:

Oh, you golden sands of our city's shores!

Chorus:

And you, dense woods where, with his swift hounds and the goddess Artemis, he hunted and slew wild
beasts.

1131

Chorus:

Poor boy!

The horses, Hippolytus!

You'll never train your team of Venetian steeds for the chariot races again!

There you were, thundering along the racecourse around Limna, jumping from the back one onto the
back of the other, tightening your legs hard around their bare flanks!

Chorus:

And the music, Hippolytus!

The music that never slumbered, ever-singing beneath those lyre strings of yours!

That music will now fall silent in your father's palace!

Chorus:

And the garlands, Hippolytus!

The fallen logs and the rocks, those resting spots in the green precincts of Artemis, Leto's daughter,
will miss your garlands.

1140

Chorus:

And the girls, Hippolytus!

The girls who fought over your love will stop their rivalry, now that you're an exile!

Chorus:

And I, Hippolytus!

I shall live out the rest of my life in tears!

I, who have become unfortunate because of your misfortune.

Chorus:

Oh, mother of the boy!

Why ever did you give birth to him?

Chorus:

Gods!

I am so angry with you!

Chorus:

And you, Graces of marriage!

Why do you send the poor boy away from his land for no reason at all?

He has committed no wrong!

1151

Chorus: *Indicating behind the wings of SL*

Ah!

Look there!

I see one of the boy's servants rushing towards the palace.

Chorus:

His face looks very sad!

Enter Messenger

Messenger:

Women, where is the king? Where do I go to find Theseus?

Is he in the Palace? Tell me!

Enter Theseus from the palace

Chorus:

Here he is now.

Messenger:

Theseus!

I have brought you news that will cause you and the rest of the people of Athens and the rest of Troezen, great concern!

1160

Theseus:

What sort of news? Has something dreadful happened our two neighbouring cities?

Messenger:

My lord, Hippolytus is dead –or, rather, at the very edge of the sun’s light.

Theseus:

Oh, yes? And who killed him? No doubt some poor husband whose wife he defiled and turned against him!

Messenger:

No, my lord.

His own chariot has killed him. That, with the help of your curse. The one you uttered in your prayer to your father, Poseidon, god of the sea.

Theseus:

Oh, yes!

Thank you gods!

Thank you, Poseidon! You have heard my prayer because you are truly my father!

Tell me, man, how did he die? How did the sword of Justice strike this man, this man who has dishonored his own father?

1173

Messenger:

We were near the wave-torn shore, grooming our horses, brushing their manes, when a messenger came and told us that Hippolytus was no longer allowed to walk upon this land because you’ve had the poor man banished. This news made us shed many tears. Then Hippolytus himself appeared at the shore, followed by a whole lot of his friends and joined us in our groans of pain.

1181

Eventually, he stopped crying and said, “why am I so distressed over this? It is my duty to obey my father’s words. Come, friends, yoke the horses to my chariot. This city is no longer mine.”

At that, we all jumped and, in no time at all, we had the horses readied and brought the chariot around beside our master. He took the reins from the rails and planted his sandaled feet onto the chariot’s boards.

1190

Then he first spread his hands wide, palms upward in prayer and said, “Oh, Zeus, may I die, if I am evil but, whether I die or live to see the light of day, let it be known by my father that he has treated me unfairly.”

And with those words, he picked up the whip and cracked it at the four horses.

We, his servants, followed close by, on foot, along the roads that lead directly to Argos and Epidaurus.

1200

Eventually we arrived at some deserted spot, outside our territory, near the shores of a headland that’s jutting out into the Saronic Sea. Just there we heard a tremendous, horrible groan, roaring up through the earth, a groan that made us shudder, a groan that sounded like Zeus’ thunderbolts! It got the horses shooting their heads and ears up towards the heavens and us servants terrified. We couldn’t work our where that horrible noise came from; that is, until we looked towards the wave-beaten shore. That’s when we saw a huge wave, reaching up high and deep into the sky. So high was this wave that I couldn’t look past it to see the shores of Skiron, nor the Isthmus and not even the rock of Asclepius!

1210

And then this wave just surged up and swelled and splashed about and spewed out a whole lot of foam which came out onto the shore where we and the chariot with the four horses were. And then this huge wave, suddenly swelled up even more and became a ghastly bull. A vicious bull whose ferocious bellow filled the whole land. The roar echoed everywhere around us.

It terrified us all.

Our eyes couldn’t bear to look at it. It was a dreadful sight to behold.

1220

The horses panicked immediately but my master, who knew everything there is to know about horses,

tugged at the reins tightly and pulled them towards him like a sailor pulls his oars, dropping the weight of his body back against the pull of the straps.

The steeds, though, took the iron-forged bit between their jaws and charged violently away, as if their master's hand or the reins or the beautiful chariot did not exist!

Then, whenever he tried to steer the four horses towards a softer ground, the huge bull would appear right in front of them and frighten them towards the opposite direction.

1230

Or, if the horses, in their frenzy, turned towards the rocks, the bull came right up close to them and guided them towards those rocks. It did this until the chariot was toppled and thrown up against those rocks, the rims of its wheels smashing against them.

It was a horrible mess. Every bit of the chariot spun wildly into the air. Wheel naves and axel rods, every part of it flew up in all directions and the poor man got himself all tangled up with the mess of straps and dragged along until he fell against a rock, smashing his head and his flesh torn to bits.

Ah, the things the poor man yelled to those horses! Things that were painful to hear.

1240

"Stop," he called out to them. "Stop, don't kill me! You were raised in my stables!" And then he yelled, "Father, what a miserable curse you've made against me!"

And then, in utter desperation, he called out, "Will no one come to rescue the most virtuous of men?"

Of course, many of us wanted to do that but we couldn't. Our feet weren't fast enough.

And then, I don't know how, but he was cut loose from the straps and fell on the ground, barely enough breath in him to stay alive.

Then all the horses as well as that monstrous bull somehow vanished! I don't know where they disappeared in that mountainous country.

1249

My lord, I know I am only a slave in your house and I shouldn't speak out of turn but, my lord, I can never believe that your son is guilty of committing any evil deeds. I wouldn't believe that even if the whole female race hanged itself and if they had covered all the wood of Mount Ida with writing, accusing him!

I know for certain, that Hippolytus is a virtuous man!

Chorus:

Ah! New misfortunes have come!

Chorus:

What must happen will happen. There is no escape from Fate.

Theseus:

At first, your words have pleased me because I hate the man but now, because he is my son and because I have respect for the gods, now, hearing about these misfortunes of his, gives me neither pleasure nor concern.

1261

Messenger:

Well, then, my lord, what would you have us do to please you? Should we bring the poor boy here?

Tell me what you think but I suggest that you should not act too harshly towards your unfortunate son.

Theseus:

Bring him here.

I want him here, to look at him in the face and see him try to deny that he has polluted my wedding bed, eye-to-eye!

I shall give him proof of his guilt with my words and with the deeds of the gods!

Exit Messenger

The chorus gathers around the statue of Aphrodite

Chorus:

Oh, Aphrodite!

You can lead the direction of the unbending minds of both gods and mortals!

1270

Chorus:

And Eros, is with you, Aphrodite.

All around you, goddess, darting about with his swift wings and his plumes, rich in colour!

Chorus:

He flies over the brine of the roaring seas and over the earth and enchants those whose love-frenzied hearts burn with desire.

Chorus:

The god with the golden wings enchants the very hearts of all the wild beasts that live in the mountains and in the oceans and all those that the earth nurtures and the sun's rays burn!

1280

Chorus:

Beasts and men!

But you, Aphrodite, you alone, rule!

You alone are their Queen!

Enter Artemis dressed as a huntress, with a bow and a quiver of arrows.

Artemis:

Theseus! Son of king Aegeas!

I command you to listen!

I am Artemis, Leto's daughter.

Miserable man! How is it you enjoy such things? You have killed your own son in a most sinful way! You have heeded your wife's false words about things that you have not seen with your own eyes. But your sin is obvious.

How is it that you have not yet hidden yourself with the deepest shame, in the darkest recesses of the earth?

1290

Or you could turn into a flying beast and fly far away from this crime.

There is no place for you in a life lived by good men.

Listen to the nature of your misfortunes, Theseus! They will cause you great pain to hear but will give me no pleasure to tell them.

I have come here to tell you in clear terms, Theseus, that your son's heart is free of any guilt and that you must bury him with his reputation intact; and to tell you of your wife's madness –or, perhaps, nobleness.

Indicating the statue of Aphrodite

1301

She was stung by this goddesses' prick, a thing most hated by us who delight in virginity, and so she fell in love with your son, Hippolytus.

Then, when with her own will, the poor woman tried to conquer Aphrodite, she was destroyed quite by accident, by her nurse's plan who revealed the truth about her illness to your son, after she had made him swear an oath to secrecy.

Hippolytus, however, quite rightly did not heed the nurse's words but nor, being a virtuous man, did he break his oath to her, though he had to endure your anger against him.

Your wife, however, afraid that she'd be questioned on the matter, wrote that letter of lies and so, by that deceit, destroyed your son by convincing you with her lies.

1313

Theseus:

Oh, no!

Artemis:

Do the facts hurt you, Theseus?

Wait then and here the rest of them. They will hurt you even more.

Your father has given you a gift of three curses, Theseus. Curses whose results are guaranteed. You do know that, don't you?

Well, being the evil man that you are, Theseus, you've decided to use one of these curses against your own son, instead of some enemy of yours. Your father, then, Poseidon, the god of the sea, has done what he had to do, since he loves you and since has made the promise.

1320

But, to his view and mine, you acted badly. You've not examined the matter at all, nor asked for the opinion of the prophets, not even let time judge it but rushed quickly to apply the deadly curses upon your son.

Theseus:

Oh, goddess! May I be destroyed also!

Artemis:

Theseus, though you've committed dreadful sins, there's still hope for you to gain pardon.

It was Aphrodite who, wanting to vend her rage, has caused all this to happen.

Now, the rule among us gods is this: None of us will go against the will of another.

Instead, we will stand aside.

1331

And understand this well, Theseus: Had I not been afraid of Zeus, I would have never fallen to the shame of allowing the mortal I loved the most to die.
You are acquitted of the charge of being evil because you were ignorant and because, by her death, your wife has erased all hope for you of testing the truth of her words and so she has convinced you. Well, then. These sorrows fall mainly upon you, Theseus but I, too, feel the grief because we, gods, find no joy in the death of the pious. But as for the sinners, we destroy them, along with their offspring and their houses.

Enter Hippolytus, gravely hurt and supported by his servants.

1342

Chorus:

Ah!

Here's the poor boy!

Chorus:

Look how bruised and beaten his young flesh is!

Chorus:

And his blond head!

Chorus:

Oh, the mountain of sorrows that have fallen upon these houses!

Chorus:

The heavens have sent a double misery upon these palaces!

Hippolytus:

Ah! Miserable Fate!

Unjust curses delivered unjustly by an unjust father! I am utterly destroyed!

1350

Oh, how my smashed body aches!

Pains spin through my head! Shudders dash across my brain!

Stop, friends!

Let me rest my body! I am exhausted!

Ah! What wretched pain is this!

Ah those horrible horses! Horrible chariot beasts! I have fed them with my own hands! They have destroyed me! They have killed me!

Ah! Ah!

Gently, friends, gently! By the gods, I beg you, friends, careful of my wounds!

1360

Who's here? Who's by my right side? Slowly, gently, men. Lift me gently. Evenly across my whole mangled body, friends!

Ah!

Miserable man! A man mistakenly cursed by his own father.

Oh, Zeus!

Do you see all this, Zeus? Do you see this man, Zeus? Do you see how this god-fearing man, this most chaste of men is dying?

I am destroyed!

In vain, I have spent my whole life working hard at respecting all men.

1370

Ah! What pain is this! It spreads throughout my whole body!

Ah! Miserable man!

Pain leave this miserable man and let Death come to heal him!

Kill me!

Kill this miserable man!

How I wish a sharp sword would cut me asunder and put my life to an endless rest!

Oh, miserable curse! My father's curse!

1380

The curse and some blood-spilling evil, committed by my ancestors, long dead, family, could wait no longer and has erupted upon me!

But why Zeus?

Why upon me? Why upon an innocent man?

Ah!

What is there for me to say to free my life from this pain, this gruesome disaster?

Oh, how I wish!

How I wish that Hades' dark night, Death's Fate, came to take me. To put this miserable wretch to sleep!

Artemis:

You poor man!

How dire the disaster to which you are yoked!

But it was the nobility of your mind that has brought this destruction upon you!

1391

Hippolytus: *Suddenly noticing Artemis*

Ah! A heavenly fragrance!

My goddess!

Though my misery is great, I feel your presence, goddess and the pain of my body has softened.

The goddess Artemis is here!

Artemis:

Yes, my poor man. The goddess dearest to your heart is here!

Hippolytus:

Oh, my lady!

Do you see the wretched state I am in?

Artemis:

I do, Hippolytus but divine law forbids me to shed tears.

Hippolytus:

Ah, my goddess!

You no longer have your fellow huntsman and servant.

Artemis:

No, Hippolytus but even though you will die, you will still have my love.

Hippolytus:

There is no one to care for your horses and your statue, my lady!

1400

Artemis:

No, Hippolytus because this was the will of Aphrodite.

Hippolytus:

Ah!

Now I know what power has killed me!

Artemis:

Her honour was attacked and she hated your chastity, Hippolytus.

Hippolytus:

I can understand it now. One power has destroyed all three of us!

Artemis:

Yes, you, your father and then your father's wife, was the third.

Hippolytus:

And so I moan for my father's fate as well!

Artemis:

Theseus was deceived by a god.

Hippolytus:

Poor father!

How terrible is your misfortune!

Theseus:

This is the end for me, my son!

I have no joy left in life.

Hippolytus:

You have made a mistake father and I grieve more for you than I do for me.

1410

Theseus:

If only I could die in your place my son!

Hippolytus:

Oh, what bitterness your father's gifts have brought upon us!

Theseus:

If only they had never reached my lips!

Hippolytus:

But what then? Your anger was so great father, that you would have still killed me.

Theseus:

Yes, son. The gods have twisted my reason.

Hippolytus:

Ah!

If only mortals could curse the gods -

Artemis: Interrupts Hippolytus

Leave it at that, Hippolytus. Because even in the darkness of the earth where you are buried, Aphrodite's anger which has broken over you, your chastity and virtue will be rewarded by many and great honours.

1420

I, personally, will see that justice will be granted to you with these unerring arrows of mine, by shooting them at another mortal, whoever is the dearest to her.

And to you, you poor, suffering man, for these pains you have endured, I shall grant you the highest honours in the city of Troezen.

Unmarried girls will cut their hair before their wedding and through the passage of many years, you will harvest an abundance of tears of their grief, for you.

Virgins will cherish you for ever and they will sing about you and keep the memory of Phaedra's love for you alive.

1430

Turning to Theseus

But you, son of old Aegeas, take now your son, Hippolytus, in your arms and hold him close to you.

You were not responsible for his death because it is only to be expected that men will make dire mistakes when the gods declare it so.

Back to Hippolytus

And you, Hippolytus. I urge you not to hate your father because you know well Fate by which you were destroyed.

And now I must leave because it is unlawful for me to look upon the dead, or to pollute my sights with the final breaths of the dying and I can see, poor man, you are already near that calamity.

Farewell, Hippolytus!

Exit Artemis

1440

Hippolytus:

Farewell to you, too, blessed virgin! May you quickly forget our days together and, since you ask this of me, I shall hold no animosity towards my father. I have always done as you have asked of me.

Ah!

Ah!

Father, take my body and lay it straight. The darkness is coming over my eyes!

Theseus:

My, son, my poor son! What are you doing to me?

Hippolytus:

Father, I am gone. I see the gates of Hades!

Theseus:

Will you leave me like this, my son, with my soul polluted after spilling your blood?

Hippolytus:

No, father. I set you free of any guilt for this murder.

1450

Theseus:

What did you say son? Do you set me free of murder?

Hippolytus:

Let the huntress Artemis be my witness!

Theseus:

Oh, my darling son! How magnanimous you are to your father!

Hippolytus:

Father, farewell to you, too and may your life be filled with joy!

Theseus:

Oh, what a virtuous and brave soul!

Hippolytus:

Then pray father that you have legitimate sons like me.

Theseus:

Courage, my son. Don't abandon me!

Hippolytus:

My courage has left me, father. I am finished.

Quickly, now, cover my face with my cloak!

Hippolytus dies.

Theseus covers his son's face and after a few moments of contemplation rises and addresses the chorus

1459

Theseus:

Glorious land of Erechtheus and Pallas Athena!

You have lost a great man!

Turning to the statue of Aphrodite

And I, Aphrodite! In my misery, I shall remember well all the pains you have delivered us!

Exit Theseus

Chorus:

This unexpected grief has fallen upon all the citizens.

The tears will fall in floods for a long time because the grief of the famous is mightier.

Exit All

END OF

EURIPIDES'

"HIPPOLYTUS"

The French playwright Racine was inspired by this play to write "Phaedra." You may wish to read Tony Kline's translation of this play into English [here](#).

AND

Seneca's "Phaedra" Translated by F.J. Miller [here](#)