

EURIPIDES'
"ORESTES"
Circa 408BCE

Translated by
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Dramatis Personae:

Elektra

(Orestes' sister)

Helen

(Wife of Menelaos)

Orestes

(Son of Agamemnon and Klytaemestra)

Menelaos

(Brother of Agamemnon)

Tyndareus

(Father of Helen and Klytaemestra)

Pylades

(Cousin of Orestes)

Hermione

(Daughter to Menelaos and Helen)

A Phrygian

(Male slave to Helen)

Apollo

(A God)

Chorus of Argive Women

Messenger

(An old peasant)

Day.

Outside the royal palace of Argos.

Six days after the murder of Klytaemestra and Aegisthus.

Left of the palace door is a couch upon which sleeps Orestes. His sleep is very disturbed and obviously nightmarish and he often tosses and turns, in violent fits. Occasionally, he sobs or groans in fear.

His sister, Elektra sits by his side, comforting him and fixing the cloak that covers him.

On either side of the palace stand armed guards.

Elektra:

They say that there's no ill, nor pain, nor grief that is sent by the gods, the weight of which cannot be endured by the soul of a mortal.

The blessed Tantalus—a blessedness which I do not begrudge him— who, as I've been told, is the son of Zeus—the very son of Zeus, mind— and yet, there he is, suspended from the clouds and trembling with fear, lest a huge rock, hanging over his head, falls on him!

Well, people say that he's paying for a sin he's committed. A grave one, they say. That of having an undisciplined tongue.

He was a mortal and the gods had given him the honour of inviting him to their table, to share in their feast—eat like them, sit next to them— but Tantalus just couldn't keep his mouth shut!

Tantalus was Pelop's father and Atreus' grandfather and it was this grandchild, Atreus, who, when Fate

spun out her wool tufts of destiny for everyone, for him, she spun out a web of troubles, troubles which even included fighting a war against his own brother, Thyestes!

But what am I doing, retelling that tale of horror?

In any case, this man, Atreus, slaughtered his brother's children and served them up to him, to eat, on a feast to which his brother had invited him. But let me jump over the events that follow that one and get onto the fact that Atreus married Aerope of Crete. Those two had Agamemnon, who later became the famous (if you could call him that) General of the Greek army and Menelaos who married that heaven-hated woman, Helen.

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Then, Agamemnon married Klytaemestra -another famous personage in Greece- from which couple emerged us three daughters: Chrysothemis, Iphigeneia and I, Elektra; as well as a son, this one here, Orestes.

Four of us, out of the same, heaven-cursed mother, who had snared her husband inside the folds of a huge piece of cloth and then murdered him!

What she gave as an excuse for that murder... well, that is something that would be highly improper for a young woman's lips to utter in public, so I'll just leave it for the world to work out on its own. No need for me to be the one to blame Phoebus with anything either... even though it was he who had urged Orestes to kill his own mother, which, admittedly, was not a thing that would earn anyone any glory. Still, poor Orestes acted out of obedience to a god and I? I, too, took part in that murderous deed, just as Pylades did, who had helped us bring about the deed's success.

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She gets up and comes closer to the chorus

The very moment Orestes committed that murder, he was overcome by a dreadful illness. A shocking disease that has his body wasting away.

There he is, the poor man, lying on that couch, his mother's blood spinning him into fits of frenzy. I am very reluctant and afraid to name the goddesses who chase him with such terror but... well, it's the Eumenides.

It's been six days now that the corpse of his murdered mother was committed to the cleansing pyre.

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Six days and no food has passed the poor man's lips.

Six days and he has yet to wash the blood off his skin.

For six days he's been laying there, under his cloak, burning with fever or, whenever the fever eases a bit, he starts crying. Sometimes he jumps up like a young colt that's just been freed from its harness!

And then, there's also the fact that this city, Argos, has decreed a law which says that, because we are matricides, it is forbidden for anyone to give us a place by his fireside or to shelter us under his roof or even talk to us!

Today is the day when they'll all vote whether we are to die by stoning or by someone's sword, specially sharpened for the task.

50

A sword plunged into our throat.

There is one small hope for us. Our uncle, Menelaos, has just arrived from Troy. The harbour of Nauplia is cluttered with his fleet. All his ships are anchored there.

After he left Troy he wandered about the seas for a very long time.

He was afraid about his wife's welfare though. Sent her off to the palace in the middle of the night last night, ahead of him, to escape the wrath of those whose sons were killed beneath the tall towers of Troy. He was afraid they might throw stones at her.

Helen! She's taken on the role of the "ill-fated one!"

60

She's in there now, crying and grieving the death of her sister and all the misfortunes that her family has suffered.

Still, she does have some solace to her pains. Her daughter, Hermione, is with her.

The little daughter she had left behind when she sailed off with Paris to Troy. The little girl that Menelaos brought here from her home in Sparta, for my mother to look after her. That's something that will give her some joy, something to keep her mind off her misery.

So, now, I'm eagerly watching every road leading this way to catch Menelaos when he comes. Without his help, I'm afraid we'll be sunk. There's no one else who will lend us a hand.

A house in the midst of a disaster is helpless!

Enter Helen from the palace.

She is carrying a basket containing small libation jugs and a lock of hair.

She is very vain and conscious of her beauty, often fixing her hair or her clothes.

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Helen:

Poor, poor, Elektra! Poor, unfortunate Elektra! Daughter of my sister Klytaemestra and Agamemnon!
Poor, poor, unmarried, Elektra!

How is it all going, Elektra? How are you managing with your brother, there, Orestes? Our poor
Orestes who has killed his own mother!

Oh, and by the way, Elektra, by talking with you, I am not committing a sin and so I will not bring
upon myself any pollution because, personally, I blame Phoebus Apollo for that event.

Still I do grieve for my sister, Klytaemestra!

My poor sister! I haven't set eyes on her since the day I was made by some madness, sent by the
heavens, to sail off to Troy! A most dreadful journey!

Poor Klytaemestra! She gone now! Gone! So I cry sad tears over her loss.

81

Elektra:

You ask about Orestes? Need I tell you anything about him when your own eyes can see the awful state
Agamemnon's son is in?

He is no more than a miserable corpse. Barely a breath out of him and I'm not surprised he's suffering
so much. I am not surprised and I'm not blaming him for them. I merely sit beside him, sleeplessly
watching him.

You and your husband, though! You are both so blessed!

Ah! You have arrived at our worst hour! A miserable hour!

Helen:

How long has been lying on that couch like that?

Elektra:

He's been like from the moment he spilled his mother's blood.

Helen:

Poor man!

And poor woman who had suffered such a terrible death!

Elektra:

Unhappy both. He killed her and by that action he also killed himself!

Helen:

Please, dear girl, could you do something for me?

Elektra:

Sure, if I can. I've got to sit here, watching over my brother.

Helen:

Could you go to my sister's tomb for me, please, Elektra?

Elektra:

You want me to go to my mother's tomb? What for?

Helen:

Because, my dear, I want you to make a libation for me and an offering of a lock of my hair.

Elektra:

But why? Aren't you allowed to visit your own sister's tomb?

Helen:

No, no! I am allowed but I am just a bit ashamed to show myself to the people of Argos.

Elektra:

Good thinking, Helen but a little late. I was you who has left her home so shamefully!

100

Helen:

True words, Elektra but unkindly spoken!

Elektra:

So why are you suddenly ashamed to be seen by the people of Mycenae?

Helen:

Elektra, I am afraid of the fathers of all those men who died at Troy.

Elektra:

So you should be, Helen! Your name is echoed throughout Argos. Every mouth shouts it!

Helen:

So, Elektra, do this little favour for me and relieve me of this fear, please.

Elektra:

No, I couldn't bear to face my mother's tomb!

Helen:

But it would be an even greater shame to send these offerings over by a servant.

Elektra:

Well, then why not send your daughter, Hermione with them?

Helen:

Because it's not proper for young girls to be seen in public.

Elektra:

But it would be a way of repaying her dead aunt for looking after her all these years.

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Helen:

Ah! Yes! Thank you, dear, you have convinced me. You are right. I'll send my daughter over.

Calling through the palace gates

Hermione!

Hermione, darling, come out here, please!

Enter Hermione from the palace. Late teens.

Ah! Darling, please take this basket of libations and this lock of my hair to your aunt's tomb. Pour out the mixture of honey and milk, as well this frothy wine first and then, stand on top of the heaped soil of the tomb and utter these words:

Your sister, Helen, sends these libations to you as a gift. She could not come here herself, personally, because she's terrified by the mob of Argives."

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Then ask her to have good and kind thoughts about me and you and y husband... as well as those two, poor miserable creatures who've punished by the heavens so badly.

Oh, and tell her also that I'll pay, in full, whatever funeral gifts are appropriate from a living sister to a dead one.

Now, go, my child and hurry. Don't waste any time and the moment you've finished with this, think only of getting yourself home, quickly.

Exit Hermione with the basket of libations. SR.

Helen goes into the palace.

Elektra: *Talking about Helen*

Physical beauty! What a disaster it is for humans who don't possess it and what a saving joy it is for those who have it!

Did you notice how she had trimmed off just the very tips of her hair? Just the very tips! We wouldn't want to disturbed our natural beauty, now, would we?

Same old Helen! She was like this all her life.

130

She spits in disgust

Ah! I hope the gods' anger destroy you, Helen, just as you've destroyed not only my life and my brother's life but also the lives of all of the Greeks!

She sees the chorus approaching

Ah! I can see my friends are coming again. They come and they help me sing my sad laments. But I hope they won't wake up my brother from his gentle sleep because then his frenzied fits will start and I'll start crying all over again.

Enter the chorus of Argive women softly, conscious that they must not make any noise.

140

Come, good friends come but step very softly! Not a sound, please, not a whisper.

I know your heart is in the right place but, it would be terrible if you woke him up now.

Chorus: *To the rest of her friends*

Hush, girls, walk quietly, softly, with no noise. Not a whisper!

Elektra:

Stay back, girls! Don't go too close to his couch, please!

Chorus: *Moving back*

Yes, yes. I'll do that.

Elektra:

Shhh! Please my good friends... speak softly; as softly as the breath of a slender reedy flute, my friends.

Chorus:

Yes, yes. See how softly I'm talking now?

Elektra:

That's right. Lower your voice even more. Come. Come quietly.

Now tell me why you're here.

It took him so long to fall back to sleep again!

Chorus:

How is he? Tell us, Elektra. Is he any better?

Elektra:

Well, he's still alive but his breathing is getting slower. Short little gasps, they are.

Chorus:

Is that right? The poor man!

Elektra:

Don't wake him up now! If he as much as twitch his eyelids he will die! He is sleeping so deeply, so sweetly!

160

Chorus:

Poor man!

The work of the gods have brought about all his suffering!

Elektra:

So much suffering!

An unjust god uttered an unjust command to him.

Apollo! It was he who had uttered it to Orestes from Themis' tripod: the unjust murder of our mother.

Chorus:

Ah, look! He's moving under his cloak! Did you see that?

Elektra:

Yes, I did! It was you loud voices that woke him up, you stupid woman!

Chorus: *She approaches Orestes to check more closely*

Ah, no, I think he's still asleep!

170

Elektra:

Get away from there! Go on, go away!

Leave us alone! Move back from there!

Go on and stop all this noisy chatter!

Chorus:

He's asleep.

Elektra:

Good, let him rest!

Chorus:

O Night!

Chorus:

Blessed Night!

Chorus:

You give sleep to the weary limbs of men!

Chorus:

Come now, my Queen!

Rise from the abyss of Erebus and let your wings carry you here, to Agamemnon's house!

Chorus:

A house in ruins!

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Chorus:

A house destroyed by overwhelming misfortune.

Elektra:

Hush! Stop that noise!

For Heaven's sake, control your tongue!

Silence! All of you!

Move back from his couch!

Let him enjoy his peaceful sleep!

Chorus:

How will all this end, for the poor tortured man, Elektra?

Elektra:

Death! It will end by his death, my dear friend. What else? He won't even eat!

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Chorus:

Yes, it's obvious. There's only death left for him.

Elektra:

It was Apollo! Phoebus Apollo!

It was he who has delivered us this fatal blow!

He who has given us a mother who shed the blood of our father!

Chorus:

Justice dictated it so.

Elektra:

Disgraceful Justice!

Oh, mother!

Mother, you have killed and you have been killed in turn.

You have given birth to us, yet you have killed us, killed our father.

200

We are dead, mother! We are dead! No more alive than are corpses!

You are in your grave, mother but the greater part of my life has gone!

It will be spent in tears and in groans of grief; of midnight tears!

I will spend the rest of my life, unwed, childless, dragging a lifeless life to its end.

Chorus:

Elektra, my darling, you're standing right next to your brother. Do check to see if he's still alive.

Perhaps he has died without you noticing it.

His body is so slack, it worries me.

Suddenly Orestes moves, then slowly sits up. He looks refreshed

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Orestes:

Ah, sweet, absorbing sleep! Healer of sickness!

I am so grateful for your visit.

I needed this sleep. You came just in time.

Oh, blessed lady goddess Oblivion! Goddess who destroys pain.

What a wise goddess you are, Dear Sleep!

You are the first goddess whom the suffering souls call for help!

But... Elektra, what am I do doing here? Where was I before this? How did I get here?

I can remember nothing. My mind has gone.

Elektra:

Darling brother!

How happy I was to see you fall asleep!

Would you like me to help you sit up?

Orestes:

Yes, yes. Help me up. Give me your hand.

Ah! Now, wipe away this horrible froth from my mouth and eyes.

With a handkerchief, Elektra does as he says.

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Elektra;

Gladly, my dear brother!

It's sweet work for a sister to help her brother, work that I cannot refuse.

Orestes:

Sit here beside me.

I need to lean my body against yours so I can stay upright.

Elektra sits next to him

Can you brush back my slimy hair from my face, please? I can hardly see through it.

Elektra:

Ah, your poor head!

Look at it!

And your hair! Slimy and horrible! Unwashed like the hair of a savage!

Orestes:

Ah!

Let me lie back on the couch again.

These fits leave me paralysed. No strength in my arms and legs at all.

She helps him lie down

Elektra:
There you are.
A couch is a sick man's best friend.
It's annoying, I know but it's necessary.
After a minute or so Orestes tries to raise again

231

Orestes:
Ah! Help me sit up again!
Now help me turn round a bit.
I am such a nuisance!
That's how sick people are: helpless and a nuisance to others!
Elektra:
Shall I help you put your feet on the ground?
Perhaps you ought to walk a bit. The change may do you some good.

Orestes:

Yes.

I think I should try. It just might do me some good and even if it doesn't it still would be better than lying here like this.

Elektra:

Well, then my darling brother, now, while the Furies have left your mind, listen to what I'm about to tell you.

Orestes:

You have news for me?

If it's good news, then you will please me but if they're bad, no don't tell me. I have enough troubles as it is.

241

Elektra:

Our uncle, Menelaos has come. He's here, in Argos, Orestes.
His ships are right now, anchored at Nauplia.

Orestes:

What? What did you say?

Menelaos is here? Has he come here as a beacon of hope to save us from all our troubles? Has he come to us as a close relative, a relative who wants to repay our father for all he has done for him?

Elektra:

Well, he HAS come! He is here now and the proof of what I'm telling is that he has brought Helen here as well. Brought here from the towers of Troy.

Orestes:

I'd feel more pleased for him if he had survived the war without her.
If he has brought Helen here then he's brought us a great deal of trouble.

Elektra:

The daughters of Tyndareus –our mother and our aunt- are disgraced throughout Greece.

251

Orestes:

Now, don't you act like them! You can certainly behave better than that evil lot! Better in both, word as well as heart.

Suddenly Orestes begins to behave irrationally, responding to phantoms, his eyes becoming wild with extreme distress.

Elektra:

Ah!

Darling brother!

Your illness has come back. Your eyes!

Your eyes look fearsome. Disturbed.

Your calm and sanity has been taken over again by this frenzy!

Orestes: *Talking wildly to the phantoms*

Oh, mother!

Mother I beg you! No!

No, mother don't release those horrible women!

No! Their eyes! Their bloodshot eyes! Ah!

And their hair! Like spinning snakes!

Ah! Look! Look! They're getting closer!
They're about to leap at me!

Elektra:

Come, come you poor tortured man! Come now, here, lie on the couch!
It is your mind that sees these horrors, not your eyes.

260

Orestes: *Still in the state of frenzy.*

Oh, Apollo!

Those bitches... those bitches there, bitches of hell... ah! Those priestesses of Hades... their eyes terrifying like those of a gorgon... they want to kill me!

Phoebus Apollo, help!

Elektra wraps her arms around him and tries to control his madness

Elektra:

No, stop!

No, I won't let you go!

No!

I'll hold you... stop shaking all about the place!

Orestes:

Let me go!

Ah! You are one of those fearsome bitches who hold me by the waist and want to hurl me into the hell of Tartarus!

Orestes breaks away violently from Elektra's grip

Elektra:

Ah!

How can I win when even Heaven is against me!

Orestes: *Talking to some imaginary attendant*

My horn-tipped bow! Give it to me! It's a gift from Apollo. He gave it to me so I could defend myself against those goddesses, if they try to frighten me with this raving frenzy.

He takes the imaginary bow from the attendant.

Screaming at one of the goddesses, warning her.

Some bitch of a goddess will be severely wounded by this mortal hand, if she doesn't disappear from my sight!

He places an arrow in the bow and stretches the string threateningly.

Elektra lifts her robe to her face and begins to cry behind it.

Are you listening, bitch?

The feathered arrow is all ready and waiting in my far-shooting bow! They're ready for you if you don't disappear.

Do you hear me? Are you still here? Go on! Off you go! Raise your wings and fly off into the sky!

The goddess finally obeys but he calls after her:

And blame all those oracles by Phoebus Apollo!

Suddenly he recovers from his madness

What?

What's going on?

I'm raving like a madman!

I'm panting! Gaspings!

Looks around him

How did I get here, out of bed?

Ah! The tempest of madness has passed. The sea is tranquil again.

Sister!

280

Elektra, what is it? Why are you crying like this, in the folds of your robe?

Ah, I feel so ashamed, my sister! So ashamed to have made share my suffering, my disease! A beautiful young woman like you, suffering as I am!

No, dear! Stop worrying about me and my pains! It is true, you agreed with me but the hand that has spilt our mother's blood was mine.

No, no! I blame Apollo!

It was at his urging that I committed this most irreverent act. It was he who encouraged me to perform it.

Encouraged me with words but not with deeds!

Ah!

If only I had I asked my father –Agamemnon, who is Hades- if only I had I asked him, eye-to-eye, if I should kill my mother, he would have begged me –with his hand at my beard- he would have implored me earnestly not to do it!

290

He would have told me not to plunge a murderer's sword into her breast. Not ever!
The deed would not bring him back to life but I, I would go on, for the rest of my life, suffering this madness!

Come, my sister! Uncover your face and stop crying. I know things look bad.
And, dear sister, when you see me all dispirited, come and help me regain my calm, soften the terrors and the nightmares that spin about in my brain. Encourage me, comfort me and I shall do the same when you are sighing and groaning with pain. I will come by your side with soft words of comfort. That's how friends should behave towards each other, with love and with kind help

300

But now, dear sister, go to your room and rest. Lie down and shut your poor, weary eyes for a while. Eat something. Have a refreshing bath.
Or else you'll collapse with exhaustion, or catch some disease from me while you're sitting here, looking after me. What will I do then?

You're the only I have left to take care of me. As you can see, everyone else has gone.

Elektra: Uncovering her face

Leave you, Orestes? Never?

I will live and die along with you. There is no difference to me –alive or dead- if you are dead. What can I, a woman do, alone? How can I survive by myself? No brother, no father, no friend?

311

Still, if that's what you think I should do, then I shall do it.
You just lie down on your couch, here, and try not to be too alarmed by the terrors and dreads that chase you away from it. Don't move from here.

She helps him get under the covers.

Don't move from under this blanket. Real or imagined, illness can tire and perplex mortals.

Elektra exits into the palace.

Chorus:

Ah!

Chorus:

Ah!

Chorus:

Ah!

Chorus:

Winged goddesses!

Chorus:

Goddesses of Frenzy!

320

Chorus:

Dancers of tears!

Chorus:

Singers of groans!

Chorus:

Eumenides!

Dark skinned goddess who spread your wings across the endless upper firmament!

Chorus:

Avenging spirits who seek the spilling blood for blood spilled.

Chorus:

Murder for murder!

Chorus:

Goddesses, I beg you!

Chorus:

Goddesses, I pray to you!

Chorus:

Let Orestes, Lord Agamemnon's boy, shed this raging madness from his mind!

Chorus:

Let him regain the reins of his fleeing wits!

Chorus: *To Orestes*

Poor boy!

What a deed! What a deed, you performed, you poor boy!

What destruction that deed has brought for you to suffer!

Chorus:

Brought to you by Phoebus Apollo!

Uttered to you from his holy tripod!

330

Chorus:

In his holy shrine!

In Delphi, the very navel of the Earth!

Chorus:

Oh, Zeus!

What mercy, then?

What murderous struggle makes you go on, you poor boy?

Chorus:

Poor boy!

Zeus has given you only tears, poor boy!

Chorus:

Tears upon tears!

Chorus:

A blood thirsty spirit, a spirit in frenzied search for vengeance, dances in your house, poor boy, a spirit that spins you into fits of madness, crying out, "You have murdered your mother!"

Chorus:

Tears upon tears I shed for you, my boy!

Chorus:

Tears upon tears I shed for you, poor boy!

340

Chorus:

There is no permanency in the happiness that mortals feel!

Chorus:

Some god or other will shake it this way and that, batter it, like the sail of a swift ship is battered by the gales and tempests of huge seas, with mountainous waves of disastrous and deadly troubles!

Chorus:

Yet what other house can one honour more than yours?

It is the house of Tantalus!

A house that sprung from the marriage with gods!

Chorus:

Ah! Look!

Here comes King Menelaos!

Chorus:

What splendour!

Chorus:

What luxury!

Chorus:

What greater proof is needed that his blood is that of the house of Tantalus?

Menelaos, accompanied by soldiers make a noisy and pompous entrance.

Chorus:

Greetings, Menelaos, the chief of that fleet of a thousand ships that had sailed to Asia!

Chorus:

You and the Heavens have achieved all of your heart's desires!

Menelaos:

Ah!

This is the house!

What pleasure it gives me to see it after Troy!

What melancholy it gives me when I think of the miserable despair that has gathered around its hearth!

360

I first heard of the murder of Agamemnon by his wife, when I was anchoring at Cape Malea. The seer, Glaucus, Nereus' prophet –never has that prophet erred- told me about it. Glaucus is the sailor's prophet. He emerged through the waves and told me directly, "Menelaos, your brother is dead. His

wife has given him his last bath.

Words that flooded my eyes and the eyes of all my sailors with tears.

370

When we reached Nauplia, Helen, my wife, disembarked and got here before me.

I was looking forward to wrapping my arms around Orestes and his mother. I thought things were going well for them but then, a sailor told me the other piece of dreadful news. The news about the unholy murder of Klytaemestra, the daughter of Tyndareus himself! So tell me, young ladies, where is Orestes, that poor boy who got himself into this horrible mess. I left this palace for Troy when he was but a baby in his mother's arms, so I wouldn't be able to recognise him now.

Orestes gets up from the couch and comes to Menelaos.

380

Orestes:

Menelaos, here I am.

I am the Orestes you are looking for.

I will tell you my whole sorry tale, uncle but let me first kneel before you and grasp your knees, beg you, pray to you with my own lips but without the ceremonial bough, to save me. Save me from destruction, my uncle!

Save me! You have come just in time for that.

Menelaos:

Good gods!

What is this? What corpse is this?

Orestes:

A corpse, indeed, uncle!

More corpse than a living man!

Turned into a corpse by many pains, though I still see the light of day.

Menelaos:

My poor boy!

You look like a wild beast with this filthy hair!

Orestes:

It is my deeds, uncle, the things that I have done that torture me so, not my appearance.

Menelaos:

And your eyes, Orestes!

Such icy stares they shoot forth!

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Orestes:

My whole body, uncle! My whole body is dead.

I am me, Orestes, by name only!

Menelaos:

But this horror, this... disfigurement, defies words!

Orestes:

Yes, it is I. I, the man who has killed his mother!

Menelaos:

So I've heard, my boy but... but be frugal in your words about it, Orestes. Spend as few of them on it as you can.

Orestes:

Frugal! Frugal I am, my uncle! Now if only God would be as frugal with the disasters he sends upon me!

Menelaos:

What is it you're suffering from, Orestes? What is this illness of yours?

Orestes:

Understanding, my uncle. The understanding that I have committed evil.

Menelaos:

Understanding? What do you mean by that? The wise must have clear speech, my boy. Leave the obscure mutterings to the unwise.

Orestes:

Grief! Grief is what is causing me the most pain...

Menelaos:

Grief, ey? She is an awful goddess, that one but, she's by no means, terminal.

400

Orestes:

And then there are these attacks of madness. No doubt a punishment for murdering my mother.

Menelaos:

And these attacks, these attacks of madness you say you suffer, when did they first begin? Which day, exactly?

Orestes:

The very day I was building a mound for my poor mother's tomb.

Menelaos:

Were you inside at the time they came or were you sitting by the pyre?

Orestes:

No, I was outside waiting for her bones to be gathered.

Menelaos:

Was there anyone else around... to help you stay on your feet, I mean?

Orestes:

Yes, my friend, Pylades. He had also helped me with the murder.

Menelaos:

What sort of visions accompany these attacks of madness?

Orestes:

The vision I saw was of three young women who looked like the black goddess, Night.

Menelaos:

Ah! I know them! I know the women you mean but I do not wish to call them by their name.

410

Orestes:

Yes, they are holy. You are wise not to call them by their name.

Menelaos:

So these are the goddesses who attack you with madness because you've shed kindred blood. Is this right?

Orestes:

Ah! They hunt me and hound me so terribly!

Menelaos:

He who has committed grave ills must suffer grave pain. There's nothing strange about that!

Orestes:

But there is a way out for me...

Menelaos:

Oh, no, my boy! Not suicide! No! That's not a very wise thing to do, that one!

Orestes:

No... I mean... Well, it Phoebus Apollo who had ordered me to murder my mother.

Menelaos:

A very unwise thing for him to do, that one. He has no idea of what is just and right that god!

Orestes:

Wise or not, mortals are the slaves of the gods.

Menelaos:

And Apollo gives no support now?

420

Orestes:

He's like all the other gods. Slow to do anything.

Menelaos:

How long has it been since your mother... breathed her last?

Orestes:

Today is the sixth day. Her pyre mound is still warm.

Menelaos:

Well, these goddesses certainly weren't slow, were they?

Only six days and they're already hounding you for your mother's blood!

Orestes:

Yes. I was quick to obey them but they are slow offering their help.

Menelaos:

The wise god stays out of blame.

Orestes:

But the truly wise stay with their friends through good and evil.

Menelaos:

Did you get anything out of that deed? Of avenging your father's murder?

Orestes:

Not yet and, to me, this delay means I should expect nothing, ever!

Menelaos:

And how have the citizens of Argos been treating you since the murders?

Orestes:

They all hate me! No one will talk to me.

Menelaos:

Haven't they cleansed your hands of the blood, according to our custom?

430

Orestes:

No. All their doors are firmly shut to me.

Menelaos:

But why? Who's responsible for this?

Orestes:

Oeax. He blames my father for the death of his brother, Palamedes, in Troy.

Menelaos:

I see. You get punished because of his brother's murder.

Orestes:

A murder which, uncle, I had nothing to do with.

There are three things that are killing me, my uncle.

Menelaos:

Three? Aegisthus' friends, perhaps?

Orestes:

Yes, uncle. They are being terrible to me and the whole city listens to them.

Menelaos:

What about the sceptre? Agamemnon's royal sceptre. Do they let you hold it?

Orestes:

Royal sceptre? They won't let me hold on to my life, uncle!

Menelaos:

So, what are they up now? Anything definite you can tell me?

440

Orestes:

This very day they will be taking a vote against me.

Menelaos:

What will they be voting on, your banishment or your life?

Orestes:

Death by stoning. At their own hands.

Menelaos:

So why aren't you running away –jumping the border?

Orestes:

Uncle, they have me totally surrounded by men armed in bronze!

Menelaos:

Mercenaries or Argive men?

Orestes:

All the citizens. They're all after my blood.

Menelaos:

My poor boy! This is as bad a fortune as one can get!

Orestes:

Yes, my uncle and this is why you are my only and last hope to get out of this lot of horrors! My fortune is truly, as bad as it can get but yours, my uncle, you have arrived here, in the greatest of fortunes, so, please, share it with me.

450

Give your nephew some of your good fortune.

Don't keep all this great fortune to yourself. Pick up some of our burden as well for the sake of my father do whom you owe a great debt of gratitude.

True friends, friends who are not friends just in nae only, help one another in hard times.

Chorus: *Indicating into the distance*

Ah! Look here comes, Tyndareus, the old Spartan, hurrying his poor old legs.

Chorus:
He's wearing black and his hair is cut short.

Chorus:
He must be in mourning!

459

Orestes:

Ah!

That's it! Now I'm dead!

Uncle, after what I've done, I'm terribly afraid, ashamed, to meet Tyndareus!

When I was a little boy he looked after me as if I was his own child. He would pick me up and carry me around in his arms, singing, "Agamemnon's little boy, Agamemnon's little boy!" So did his wife, Leda, my grand mother. The two of them treated me like they treated their sons, the Dioscuri, Castor and Polydeuces.

Oh, uncle!

Oh, my poor heart!

Oh, my dear soul!

Oh, how dreadfully I've repaid them for all their kindness and love!

Where can I find a dark corner to hide my face? Where can I find a cloud that I can spread across my face to avoid his eyes?

Orestes huddles up tightly, fearfully against the walls of the palace.

Enter Tyndareus with attendants.

He is an old man. Slow. Pain and grief accompanies his every move and every word.

470

Tyndareus: *To the chorus*

Women, where can I find Menelaos? Where is my daughter's husband?

I was pouring the libations on my Klytaemestra's tomb when someone told me he has come here, that he has arrived in Nauplia. Safe and sound they say, after all these years away.

Come, women, take me to him!

I can't wait to take Menelaos' hand and shake it. I can't wait to welcome my son-in-law. It's been a long time!

Menelaos:

Joy to you, old Tyndareus!

A mortal who let Zeus share his marital bed!

Tyndareus:

Ah, Menelaos! Joy to you, too, my dear son-in-law!

Suddenly notices Orestes.

Ah! What awful sight is this? If only one could see into the future! I'd never –

Here, before this palace!

Menelaos, look there! A mother-killing snake! An evil beast, thunderous lightning shooting out of his evil eyes!

Ah! How I loathe that beast!

You are not friends with that disgraceful snake, are you Menelaos?

482

Menelaos:

I am, Tyndareus. He is my best friend's son! My brother's son.

Tyndareus:

A man like that? Could a man like that really be the son of Agamemnon?

Menelaos:

He is, Tyndareus; and I must acknowledge this relationship if he is the victim of some misfortune.

Tyndareus:

Bah! You've spent so much time among the barbarians that you have become one yourself!

Menelaos:

No, it's something all the Greeks do: Respect the family.

Tyndareus:

True but they do not disrespect the law.

Menelaos:

Intelligent folk consider a deed performed by force is a deed performed by a slave.

Tyndareus:

That is your opinion, not mine.

490

Menelaos:

Your anger and your old age, Tyndareus, have blunted your wisdom.

Tyndareus:

My wisdom is blunted, you say?

It's that man there whose wisdom is blunted!

We all know what is good and what is evil. They are both obvious to every one.

What man's wisdom is more blunted than that of that man there?

Did he think of what is just and what is not? Did he not think of the common laws of this country?

He was my brother's judge. My brother's wife has killed my brother with a blow to his head and he had breathed his last. It was a vile act and one which I'll never condone.

500

It was incumbent upon this man to impose the blood laws of our nation and hurl her into exile, away from this house.

Had he done that, he would, not only have avoided the disaster he is suffering now but he would have been acknowledged by people as a moderate man, a man who acted with respect to our laws and to our gods.

What he's done, however is to earn the same fate as his mother. He thought she was evil but by killing her, by killing his mother, he proved that he is even more evil than her.

So let me ask you this, then my dear son-in-law: Let us say that Orestes is married and his wife kills him. Then his son kills his mother and then his son, seeking vengeance, continues with the murders.

How would this destruction ever end?

512

No, Menelaos.

Our ancestors had all this sorted out very well for us:

They would make sure that a man with blood in his hands would not be seen or be met by any of the citizens of his city. They would exile him. No more pursuing vengeance. No more of this blood for blood and death for death. With them it was exile. It was exile, Menelaos and not more blood-shedding that would restore the purity of the house and of the land. Exile and not the constant hunt for vengeance!

Now, Menelaos, I hate impious women and of them, the one I hate the most is my own daughter, Klytaemestra, who murdered her own husband in cold blood.

520

And I hate your wife, too, Menelaos!

Helen! I shall never say a good word about her and I shall never speak to her again!

Such a dreadful woman and you – you went all the way to Troy to bring her back here! That deed was unwise, my son-in-law!

The law, Menelaos! The law! I will do whatever is in my power to protect the law! Protect it from just this sort of beastly and disgraceful deeds! Deeds that brings down cities and countries!

To Orestes

You!

You, Orestes!

What went on in your mind when your mother – your very own mother! – bared her breast to you and in tears begged you not to murder her!

You vile creature!

I wasn't there to witness that horrible deed of yours, these old eyes are flooded with tears at the very thought of it!

530

You are a vile creature, Orestes and the proof of it is that the gods, the heavens, hate you!

What are these dreadful fits of madness and terror that come upon you, if they are not the punishment of the gods?

You have slaughtered your mother and so you must be hated by the gods – and so you are punished!

There is no need for me to hear the words of witnesses when I can see this – this state you're in – with my very own eyes.

And you, Menelaos. Let me use plain and clear words to you: Don't help this man! Don't act against the will of the gods!

Let the citizens stone him to death or else never walk again of Spartan land!

My daughter's death was just. She should have died but not at this creature's hands!

540

In all other things in my life, in everything except my daughters, Menelaos, I have been very fortunate. With them... with my daughters, there, alas, I have been unfortunate!

Chorus:

Fortunate!

Fortunate is the man whose children are good!

Chorus:

Unfortunate is the man whose children give him notorious disasters!

Orestes: *Slowly and painfully raises from his corner and approaches Tyndareus*

I am afraid, old man!

Afraid to say anything to you, old sir, because I'm quite certain that no matter what I say, no matter what words I use, I will cause you – I will cause your heart, great pain.

I am aware of the impious deed I performed: I have killed my mother. There's no denying in that act, sir but I have also performed a pious deed, old sir, that of avenging the murderous spilling of my father's blood.

Lowering his head in shame.

But, I respect your age, old sir and so I shall stop my tale here and take on the proper path. I respect your grey hair.

Tyndareus, though disgusted with Orestes, motions him to go on.

551

Well, then, what should have I done?

Thing of these two matters, old sir, two matters at grave odds with each other:

First, my mother, just like a ploughed field, received my father's seed and I so, was born. Without a father to sow the seed there is no child. Ever!

And so, considering the matter, I chose to protect him, rather than my mother. To protect the man who was the cause of my existence, rather the woman who brought me up.

But your daughter, old sir!

I... I'm far too ashamed to call that woman, mother!

Your daughter, sir, in secret and unholy nuptials took a ban to her bed.

560

I know, to speak of such things, not only do I hurt her but I also hurt myself but still, I must speak of them. It was Aigisthus she secretly took to her bed. Aigisthus became the husband of her house.

So, I killed him.

And after him I killed my mother! An unholy act, yes but I did it, I have performed that sacrifice for the sake of my father.

You say I should be stoned for committing these acts but let me tell you that these acts have brought a great benefit to Greece.

Women will no longer be so bold as to try and get away with the murder of their husbands like my mother did, by asking by exposing their breasts to their children and soliciting their pity. How easy for them!

570

The slightest pretext and they'd be murdering their husbands!

Not now, though!

Because of what I have done, acts which you call dreadful, I have put a stop to this practice.

I have killed my mother with Justice on my side. I hated her because she had betrayed her husband while he was fighting a war, a General to the whole of the Greek army. She had defiled her marriage bed!

She knew she had sinned! She knew very well she did the wrong thing but did she make some way of reparation, perform some deed of atonement?

No. Instead, because she was afraid of being punished by my father, she killed him!

No punishment for her but ample punishment for my father!

580

By the gods!

Oh, I know it's a sin to call upon them now, because gods judge murders but – oh, Gods! What would the dead man – my father – have done to me if I had left that woman's deeds unpunished?

The furies are working for my mother now, sending me into fits of frenzy. Well had not my father suffered an even greater wrong? Would he not then, outraged by me, send his furies to haunt me?

Old sir, it was your fault. You have produced a daughter who has destroyed me. A very evil daughter who had the temerity and boldness to murder my father and make a murderer out of me!

But look at Telemachus. Odysseus' son. He didn't have to kill his mother! Why? Because she, Penelope didn't betray her husband's bed!

591

And what about Apollo? The god of prophesy who lives in the very centre of the earth, the god whose oracles are the clearest guides to all the mortals. Oracles that the whole world obeys. It was his oracle that I, too obeyed. It was his oracle that told me to kill your daughter! Accuse him of the murder, then! Put him to death! It was he who has erred, not I!

What was I to do?

Can he not undo the pollution that he had caused me to commit in the first place? If not, then where could I go, if the god who had ordered me to kill my mother won't save me?

Old sir, I repeat, the blame for my misfortune rests with you, for having brought to life such an evil daughter. It was because of her reckless behaviour, because of the fact that she had murdered my father that I became my mother's killer.

600

So, don't say that the deed was evil. Evil is what he who has performed it must now suffer!

Blessed are those mortals who have married well. But when marriage fails, then all around them fails with it.

Chorus:

Women!

They are the very seed of every man's misfortune!

Tyndareus:

The impudence!

Such an undisciplined tongue!

You talk back to me with words that wound my soul!

Well then, you've made me even more determined to see you die!

610

To Menelaos

Ha! Wonderful!

What a great addition to my pains this wretch here has given me!

I have come to adorn my daughter's tomb with some flowers, pain enough without this man's accusations! Now, I shall go to the city and urge all the Argives to go after him with all their might.

Him and his sister.

Back to Orestes

I shall urge them to stone you two to death! That woman deserves to die even more than you do. It was she who dropped the seed of wrath against your mother. She who kept murmuring in your ear insulting tales about her, to make you hate her. Tales springing out of Agamemnon's dreams and Aigisthus' bed. Ah! May the gods below be disgusted by all this, just like the gods above are abhorred by them.

Tales that had set this whole palace on fire. A blaze that matched those of Hephaistos but one which the god had nothing to do with. A blaze without the flames.

622

To Menelaos

Menelaos, listen to me and heed my words well because I'm about to act upon them!

If our kinship means anything to you –good or bad- do not protect this man from being stoned to death. His death is the will of the gods. Let the citizens of this city kill him; or else, never step on the soil of my country. Don't ever step on Spartan soil.

Think about what you've just heard.

Do not prefer the company of criminals to those who live by the law!

Servants, get me out of here!

Exit Tyndareus SL.

Menelaos paces back and forth, pondering deeply the words of Tyndareus.

630

Orestes:

Let him go!

Let us continue our conversation, Menelaos, without the idiotic interruptions of an old man!

Menelaos, what is it? Why are you pacing back and forth like this?

What's bothering your mind?

What crossroads of thinking bother you?

Menelaos:

Let me think, Orestes.

I am trying to decide on those crossroads. After what he has said, I have no idea which of the two to take.

Orestes:

Well then, make no decision until you hear me out.

Menelaos:

Speak then.

There are times when speech is better than silence, though, there are also times when silence is preferable to speech.

640

Orestes:

Good, then I will.

It's best to make long speeches that explain everything clearly than short ones that explain nothing.

Menelaos, I want nothing from you other than what you've got from my father; and I don't mean wealth. Save my life as he has saved yours and I will be far more content.

My uncle, I do not deny that I have done something wrong but now, I must ask you to stand by me, even though it might mean that you also do something wrong.

My father did wrong for your sake also, Menelaos. He did wrong by mustering the whole of the Greek army and went to Troy. It was wrong of him to do that but he did it because he wanted to right the wrongs committed by your wife.

651

And so, Menelaos, it is now time for you to repay my father by doing a wrong for me.

He has endangered his own body for you just like a worthy brother should. He has stood by your shield in the battlefield so that you could win your wife back.

Repay me now for that effort. Not for the whole ten years of it for one day. Protect me for just this one day!

I ask for no repayment of the sacrifice of my sister, Iphigeneia in Aulis. You may keep your daughter Hermione. I will not ask of you to sacrifice her, though this would mean you get the better of the deal.

660

However, present circumstances give me no room for bargaining and so, I'll let that stand.

But do pay back the debt you owe to my poor father. Grant me my life and the life of my sister who has remained unmarried for so long. Grant me my life because if I die, my father's house will be left without an heir.

Of course, you will tell me that what I ask of you is impossible.

Indeed it is but it is at such times, when things are impossible, that good friends help good friends.

What need do we have of friends if the gods bless us with good fortune? No need at all because the blessing of the gods suffice.

669

My dear uncle, the whole of Greece knows how much you love your wife and I'm not saying this just

to flatter you, my uncle but, in Helen's name, uncle, I beg you, in Helen's name –

Menelaos scowls at the mention of his wife's name and turns away with disdain.

Oh, no! Uncle! No, don't turn away from me!

Oh, there is no hope left!

So then, I must endure hopelessness!

Changes his mind and falls at Menelaos' feet.

Uncle! My uncle!

In the name of all the people you love, I beg you!

Brother of my own father, I beg you! Think of him!

Remember that Agamemnon can hear you from down below, in the world of the dead.

His soul, uncle is right here, with us!

Right now it is hovering around us and he's talking to you. My words are his words.

I am choking with tears and groans of pain, uncle!

Please!

He gets up

Uncle, I have made my plea to you. It is a plea for my life. A plea that not only I but all men make.

680

Chorus:

Menelaos, I know I am only a woman but I, too, beg you!

Chorus:

Help those who need help!

Chorus:

You have the power to help him, Menelaos!

After a moment of thought, Menelaos turns to Orestes

Menelaos:

Yes, Orestes, what you say about good friends is true and I understand your dreadful predicament. I want to do whatever is in my power to help you, to stand by your side and together fight the enemy. That, as you say, is the duty of good friends. Fight the enemy to the death and with all the power that gods give us.

But I need the gods to grant me that power.

My spear and I came here alone and with no friends. None of them are alive and I've been away, troubled by many ordeals, for many years.

690

For us, Orestes, for us two alone, to beat Pelasgian Argos! Orestes, on our own, it is impossible! Perhaps we could do it with gentle and persuasive speech. But then, how can such enormous troubles be conquered with such flimsy efforts? It's stupid to even think of it! When the masses get wild with anger, when they can feel the power of their madness, efforts like this are like trying to quench a fire that went amok!

But if you sit back quietly and wait. Wait and watch. Watch the anger of the masses.

700

Watch it, watch their rage carefully, until it finally recedes and when it does, you can then get from them whatever you want.

The souls of these people have both, burgeoning rage as well as understanding, so, act wisely and wait for them to arrive at the right temperament before you act.

In the meantime, I'll go to Tyndareus and represent you. I will try to persuade him and the Argives to use this anger of theirs, responsibly. Excess in anything is unhelpful.

A ship whose sails are stretched too tightly will succumb to a tempest. Slacken them a little and the ship will regain its balance.

Both, the gods and the mortals hate excessive passion.

You are right. I must save your life. I won't deny that but I cannot do it with the force of a spear.

Rather, it is possible to do it with wise speech.

711

Forget the force of spear! A single spear will do nothing to overturn all the troubles that beset you. Orestes, it's not because of laziness that I want to try this soft approach but because at times such as this the wise should answer to the dictates of Fortune.

Menelaos turns to leave but is stopped just before the exit

Orestes:

Coward!

You refuse to defend your friends, your relatives but you can raise an army to bring back a woman!

720

Ha!

Turn your back to me, then, and run, coward!

Obviously you think nothing of the debt you owe to my father!

Exit Menelaos, shaking his head dismissively

Poor father! Poor Agamemnon! You have no friends!

Oh! Now I have no one! He was my last hope to escape the death that the Argives have in store for me.

He was my last hope of saving my life.

Suddenly he sees Pylades in the distance SR

Ah! My best and dearest friend, Pylades!

He is coming from Phocis, running all the way!

Ah, what a delightful sight he is!

Sailors in trouble greet calm waters with less pleasure than that which a man in trouble feels, when he sees a loyal friend.

Enter Pylades

729

Pylades:

Orestes!

What is going on here?

I've rushed through the city and saw the people gathered in the assembly, discussing your execution and that of your sister! They're getting ready for it now! Why?

Orestes drops his head with shame

What is it Orestes?

Dear, dear, friend, the dearest of all of my friends! How are you dealing with all this?

Why do you look like this?

Orestes:

In a word, Pylades, we are dead!

Pylades:

If that is so, Orestes, then so am I. Friends must share everything.

Orestes:

That coward, Menelaos! He has betrayed his friendship to both, me and my sister!

Pylades:

Ah, Menelaos! It's only natural that the husband of an evil woman to be evil himself.

Orestes:

He might as well not have come to Argos for all the good he did to us!

Pylades:

Has Menelaos come to Argos?

740

Orestes:

Yes.

He was away for a long time but, once he got here, it's taken no time at all for him to show just how disloyal he is to his friends.

Pylades:

And he brought his miserable wife with him, has he?

Orestes:

No. It was the other way round. She came first and she brought him here.

Pylades:

One woman! The only woman who has killed so many Greeks!

Where is she now?

Orestes:

In there, in my house –if it is still mine, that is!

Pylades:

What did you ask Menelaos to do?

Orestes:

I've asked him not to just sit there and watch while my sister and I are being stoned to death. I've asked him to do something!

Pylades:

So what did he say to that?

By the gods, I'd love to know what his response was!

Orestes:

What did he say?

He used the talk of traitors. "Be patient, my boy, be careful..."

The usual stuff disloyal friends say.

Pylades:

But tell me why he said that. What was his excuse?

Tell me that and then I'll know everything that went on.

750

Orestes:

Well, that man came!

That man with the immaculate daughters!

Pylades:

That man? You mean Tyndareus?

Ha! Obviously he'd be fuming with rage about his daughter!

Orestes:

You've got it, Pylades!

So, Menelaos went with old Tyndareus rather than my father.

Pylades:

No courage to stand by you then, ey? Wouldn't help you at all in such an hour of need?

Orestes:

Courage? Menelaos?

Ha! He's certainly not born with it.

No, he only shows his courage to women!

Pylades:

You're in dreadful trouble then, my friend.

Is there no other way you can escape this death sentence?

Orestes:

The Argives are about to vote on whether we're guilty of murder.

Pylades:

I dread to think what their verdict will be, Orestes!

Orestes:

Either life or death, my friend. Small words for enormous deeds.

Pylades:

Well then, my friend, you and your sister should run away! Leave your palace and get away from here! Escape!

760

Orestes:

Can't you see, Pylades? There are guards everywhere. Watching us all the time!

Pylades:

Yes, I can.

I saw them in town as well. They've closed up all the streets out of it. Armed to the teeth.

Orestes:

They have surround us. Like armies surround the walls of cities.

Pylades:

But what about me?

Why don't you ask what happened to me, Orestes?

I, too am suffering!

Orestes:

You, my friend?

Yours and mine, a mountainous suffering!

But who is making you suffer?

Pylades:

My father, Strophius!

He became angry and sent me off into exile.

He told me to leave his house for ever!

Orestes:

But what for? What did he say you did wrong?

Was it a decision he made on his own or was the town involved in it?

Pylades:

He says I am polluted because I have helped you with the murder of your mother.

Orestes:

Ah, my poor friend!

It looks like my burden has fallen on your shoulders as well.

Pylades:

I am not Menelaos so I will endure them.

770

Orestes:

But, Pylades, what if the Argives will kill you along with me?

Aren't you afraid of that?

Pylades:

The Argives have no jurisdiction over me. I am a Phocian.

Orestes:

Ah, my friend! When mobs have rotten leaders they are likely to do all sorts of nasty things.

Pylades:

It's a very different story when their leaders are wise, though...

Orestes:

So be it. It looks like we must speak to them. Talk to the Argives in the assembly.

Pylades:

Must? Why must we? Where's the need for us to speak to them?

Orestes:

Well, I can stand in front of them and tell them –

Pylades:

Tell them what, Orestes? That you've done something noble and just?

Orestes:

But isn't that the truth? Have I not simply sought justice for my father's death?

Pylades:
Forget it, Orestes. They won't accept that with too much pleasure.
Orestes:
So, what should I do? Die in silence? Die a coward?
Pylades:
No, I am not talking about cowardice.
Orestes:
So what should I do then?
Pylades:
Is there no hope at all of escaping death if you stayed here?
Orestes:
No, none at all!
Pylades:
So you think that if you did face the public you might escape it?
780
Orestes:
I might, if Fate helps.
Pylades:
Well, it seems this is a better course of action to take than simply sitting and waiting.
Orestes:
So, you think I should go to them, then?
Pylades:
In any case, my friend, if they do kill you, you will die a more noble death.
Orestes:
Of course because my deed was just.
Pylades:
You must hope then that that's how the people will see it, too.
Orestes:
Quite right. By fronting up to them I will avoid looking like a coward.
Pylades:
Better than if you stayed here, in silence.
Orestes:
Perhaps someone might feel sorry for me...
Pylades:
Then there is your noble birth. That should work to your advantage.
Orestes:
...when I remind them of my father's death.
Pylades:
Yes, I can see that as a possibility.
Orestes: *Turns to leave*
So I must go.
I won't stay here and die a coward!
Pylades:
Yes, I agree.
Orestes:
Should we tell Elektra?
Pylades:
Heavens, no!
Orestes:
She would shed some tears –
Pylades:
Which would definitely be a bad omen!
Orestes:
We better not tell her then.
Pylades:
It will save us quite some time, as well.
790
Orestes:
There's one thing that still bothers me.

Pylades:

What?

Orestes:

I'm afraid that the goddesses might send me into a fit of madness again.

Pylades:

I'll look after you if that happens.

Orestes:

It would be horrible for you, my friend.

Pylades:

No, not for me it won't be.

Orestes:

But you may catch my disease as well.

Pylades:

I don't care about that.

Orestes:

Well, are you sure then? Not concerned about anything?

Pylades:

Concerns among friends are an awful impediment.

Orestes:

Well then, Captain, lead me on!

Pylades:

I shall, indeed!

Orestes:

Lead me on to my father's grave first.

Pylades:

Why there?

Orestes:

I want to ask him to save me.

Pylades:

And so he should!

Orestes:

But keep me away from my mother's grave. Don't let me see her grave!

Pylades:

No, I won't. I know she hated you.

Well then, hurry. The Argives will conduct their voting without you and they'll sentence you to death.

800

Come, lean your sick shoulder against mine and together we'll go through the city.

Pay no attention to the crowd and feel no shame.

I want to show the world I am your friend and that I have come to help you in your most dire hour.

Orestes:

And this is the proof of it!

Friends are closer! Friends are more reliable than blood relatives! Friends are better than family!

Friends, men outside your family, strangers who understand your pain and sympathise with it. Give me a friend before you give me family!

Exit Orestes and Pylades SL

Chorus:

Gone are the riches!

Chorus:

Gone, too the virtue!

Chorus:

Gone is the pride that shone throughout Greece!

810

Chorus:

All the way up to the waters of the river Simois!

Chorus:

Vanished from the grand house of Atreus!

Chorus:

It was the ancient curse, born out of an ancient dispute about a golden lamb!

Chorus:

To which of Tantalus' grandsons did it belong?

Chorus:
Did it belong to Thyestes or to Atreus?
Chorus:
The atrocious feast!
Chorus:
Atrocious slaughter of the children of nobles!
Chorus:
This is the fountain of the curse: Pain for pain!
Unending, unconquerable circle of pain that runs its violent course through the veins of the two sons of Atreus!

820

Chorus:
An evil practice, through and through to slaughter a parent.
Chorus:
To cut his flesh with murderous violence
Chorus:
With the forged steel of a sword and then raise it high with impudent pride
Chorus:
And let the sun's rays fall upon the dark and bloody gore!
Chorus:
It's not a virtue but a sin to do such impious deeds.
These are the deeds of maddened fools and criminals.
Chorus:
And so, Tyndareus' daughter, luckless Klytaemestra, cried out, with death's inspiration, at her son:
Don't, my son!
Chorus:
Don't kill me, my son! The deed you dare to do now is steeped in sin!
Don't kill your mother!

830

Chorus:
Don't shroud yourself in eternal shame by honouring your father!
Chorus:
What sin is heavier?
Chorus:
What can cause a greater flood of tears and groans of pity than the shedding of a mother's blood?
Chorus:
It is this crime that Orestes, Agamemnon's son is hunted by the Furies and pricked with fits of insanity.
Chorus:
His eyes!
Chorus:
They roll with fear!
Chorus:
What sight is more pitiful?

840

Chorus:
Than when his mother tore her golden robe asunder and Orestes saw her breast before he slaughtered her?
Chorus:
A pain to his mother for the pain she gave his father.
Enter Elektra from the Palace. She looks around for Orestes and becomes distressed when she can't find him.
Elektra:
Friends, where is Orestes?
Have his fits driven him away from the palace?
Chorus:
No, Elektra. He's gone to the city to speak at the trial which will determine whether you two will live or die.
Elektra:
Oh, no! What made him do a thing like that? Who told him to do that?

850

Chorus:

Pylades did.

Enter Messenger SL

Chorus:

Hang on, it looks like this messenger has some news to do with your brother.

Messenger:

Ah! What sad news I have for you, you unfortunate woman!

Poor, Elektra! Poor daughter of the general Agamemnon!

What a sad tale I must tell you!

Elektra:

Ah!

We are dead!

Your words made that clear!

We are dead!

The news you carry are horrible! I know it, horrible!

Messenger:

The Pelasgians have just cast their vote.

Both of you are to die, this very day!

859

Elektra:

Ah!

Ah!

My worst fears have been realised! The floods of tears I have shed all this time were for this very reason.

Tell me, old sir, what reasons did the Pelasgians give for the death sentence they served upon us?

And tell me also, sir, will I die alongside my brother by stoning or by the sword?

Messenger:

It so happened, my lady that I had just gone to town to see if I could find out news about you and your brother.

I was always a loyal subject to your father, my lady. My household survived upon his generosity. Yes, I am but a poor farmer but that doesn't mean that I can't also be a loyal friend to my king.

871

So, anyway, I saw a crowd rushing up to Danaus' Hill. The hill which, people say, was where Danaus had first gathered all the people to hold a hearing for Aegyptus.

So, when I got there I approached one of the men and asked him, "What's going on? Have we received some news from our enemies that's got the whole city all anxious?"

The man pointed into the distance and said, "can't you see Orestes over there? He's hurrying towards us to enter the trial of his life!"

880

And so I looked in his direction and saw a sight that I wish the gods had never let me see! An unbearable sight!

There was your brother with his friend, Pylades heading our way. The first, a distressing sight of a man, succumbed by an illness and the second, behaving like a brother who's trying to ease his friend's misery and calm his agony, just like children do with each other.

When all the Argives gathered around, a herald stood up and asked if there was anyone who had anything to say and that this was a meeting to decide whether the matricide, Orestes was to live or die. After him stood up Talthybius who, together with your father had destroyed Troy.

889

But Talthybius always only agrees with whoever is in power, so, what we got from him was a garbled speech, praising Agamemnon one minute but then, with sickening smiles at the followers of Aigisthus, disparaging Orestes the next, saying that the son has given children a new and dreadful precedent for sons to use against their parents.

That's what his lot is like. In fact, that's what all heralds are like: always ready to jump up to defence and friendship of the most powerful in the city.

Then the king, Diomedes got up to speak.

899

His view was that the city shouldn't kill you or your brother but that justice would be served if they were to punish you by sending you into exile.

Some agreed with him, others didn't.

After him, a man with the loudest, most undisciplined tongue got up and started mouthing off all sorts of bluster and cockiness. Arrogant man. An Argive but not a local, you know? He just loved the sound of his own voice that one and, of course, also loved anyone who'd pay him the right price for his loudness and his vulgar fancy words. Fancy words that can cause great mischief to a city!

Sweet speeches, speeches that lack wisdom may persuade the people but they are also a great menace to the whole city whereas speeches which carry good, intelligent advice are always of benefit to the city; a benefit that one can't see straight away but will see it in the long run.

911

And that's how we should judge the leaders of our cities, as well, because, both, leaders and public speakers have the same role.

In any case, this man, with his fancy and loud speech, was urging the people to kill you and Orestes by stoning.

Anyhow, the man got up and spoke his nonsense but in the end, it was your uncle, Tyndareus, who also got up and supported him with the arguments to make his speech -in favour of your murder- stick.

But then another man got up and his speech had the opposite direction. Now this man wasn't as much to look at as were the previous speakers but, nevertheless, he was a brave man to do that. He hardly ever entered any of the debates concerning the affairs of the city or had ever much to do with what went on in the market place and the public speakers' quarters.

920

He was just a farmer. One of those men who used his own hands to work the land, alone. Protect it from neglect. No, he wasn't some public orator or anything like that but he was honest enough and clever enough to enter this debate.

Now this man got up and proposed that Orestes should be awarded the prize of an athlete. He should be given the garland of victory because he was brave enough to avenge the murder of his father, Agamemnon, by killing his evil and sinful mother, Klytaemestra.

Because, he said, it's this sort of woman who made it impossible for men to pick up their swords and spears and go off to a distant campaign. How could the soldiers leave their home, knowing that some of the men left behind, would destroy the good order of their homes and their cities by shamelessly seducing their wives?

The better sort of people in the crowd were convinced by his words but no one else got up to speak after him.

930

Except your brother who stepped up and made this speech:

"Pelagian gentlemen, " he said, "owners Inachus' land. Danaus' precinct! By killing my mother I have not only served the needs of my father but also your needs!

Is it not true that if women were excused in killing their husbands then all of you men should go now and kill yourselves!

Either that, or make yourselves their slaves, which is absolutely the wrong thing to do.

939

We now have the woman who has betrayed my father's bed, lying in her grave, dead but if you also put me to death, then you'll topple our established laws and, well, no one will escape his murder and such disgrace will not be too rare a sight."

I thought it was a good speech but the crowd wasn't convinced and when the hands were counted, it was that arrogant loud mouth who had won the vote. The one who had proposed to have you and your brother stoned to death.

Then, Orestes, with great difficulty, managed to convince them all not to have you two killed by stoning but to accept his promise that by the end of this day you will both die by his own hand.

950

Pylades, tears flooding from his eyes, lead him away from the meeting and now, accompanied by their friends who are groaning with grief and despair, are heading this way.

In a few minutes your eyes will see a truly bitter and miserable sight.

So, Elektra, prepare the sword, or the noose because you must soon abandon the light of day. Neither your noble birth, nor Apollo who sits upon his tripod will be of any help to you now. Apollo has destroyed your lives.

Exit Messenger. SL

Chorus:

Ah! Look at the poor girl!

Chorus:

How miserable she must feel!

Chorus:

Silent, dumbfounded, head slumped.

Chorus:

Ah!

She's about to burst into tears!

960

Elektra: *Scratches her face with her nails*

Ah!

Land of the Pelasgians!

I cry and, with my nails, I tear open my white cheeks!

Let the blood run!

Ah!

I beat my head, in praise of beautiful Persephone,

I beat my head in honour of the young goddess who rules the world below!

Ah!

City, whose walls are built by the great Cyclopes, cry!

Tell of the young girl whose tresses have been shorn by the iron sword!

Tell of the endless troubles of this house!

Ah!

Cry my land, cry!

Cry for those who must now die!

Cry for those who once led the armies of Greece!

971

Ah!

They've all gone!

Gone is the whole house of Pelops!

Gone is the whole race of people that once filled this happy palace!

Destroyed by the envy of the gods

Destroyed by the hateful, the murderous will of the Argives!

Ah!

Wretched mortals!

Ever-suffering race of men!

See how Fate works against your dreams, against your expectations!

One pain rushes to follow another filling all your days with pain!

980

Ever-changing pains.

Ever-changing, uncertain life.

Ah!

If only!

If only I could throw myself upon that rock!

The rock that tore itself from Mount Olympus!

The rock that swings and spins from golden chains between the Heavens and Earth!

Ah!

Then I could tell my sorrows to Tantalus himself!

Father of our generation,

Father of our race,

Founder of our House!

Tantalus, who saw untold disasters!

990

Ah!

The four flying steeds yoked to a chariot!

The reins held by Pelops!

A race!

Pelops hurls Myrtilus into the surging waves of the ocean below!

And there! Look there!

Pelops lands his chariot on the frothy shores of Gerastus!

And that's when the seed of groaning curses is sown into my house!

There the flocks of the sheep of Hermes, son of Maia, Myrtilus' father.

And there, look there!

Among them, the lamb with the golden fleece!

1000

Atreus' lamb, on Atreus' horse-pasturing land, a portent of Atreus' curse.

And so,

Eris, the goddess of strife changed the heavenly course of Apollo's chariot,
From East to West to Dawn with her snow-white horses

And so,

Zeus changed the course of the Pleiades, all seven stars,

And so,

Eris then sends death in pursuit of death to the generations of Atreus

And

The Thyesteian feast

And

The deceitful Aerope's false bed of love, the Cretan Aerope, Atreus' treacherous wife!

And

Here, now, the groaning curse has arrived to destroy me

And

My brother!

1013

Chorus:

Elektra look!

Here's your brother!

Chorus:

Sentenced to death!

Chorus:

His loyal friend, Pylades, like a devoted brother, walks beside him, supporting his ailing body.

Enter Orestes supported by Pylades. SL

Elektra:

Ah!

Ah!

My brother!

My brother! My brother!

I see you in front of your tomb, my brother!

I see you in front of death's pyre, my brother!

Ah!

Ah!

My brother! Oh, my brother!

This is the last time my eyes see you, my brother!

I am losing my mind!

1021

Orestes:

Enough, Elektra!

Enough of this womanish crying!

Now be silent! We must accept our Fate, pitiful though it is!

Elektra:

Be silent? How can I be silent, my brother?

How can I control my tears?

Our Fate will take us away from the god's light!

Orestes:

Woman, you're adding another death upon the death the Argives have given me!

Enough moaning about our troubles!

Elektra:

What a terrible Fate you must endure, my brother, Orestes!

Your youth, my brother!

Your death, my brother, has cut your life so short!

Now is the time you should be living, my brother but now is the time you must die!

1031

Orestes:

For gods' sake, woman! You're draining me of courage!

You are making me cry with this sad litany of my troubles!

Elektra:

How can I not cry, Orestes? We are about to die!
Life is dear to everyone and everyone cries when they're about to lose it!

Orestes:

Our master is this day's Fate.
Today we must die by our own hand.
Let us either prepare the ropes or sharpen a sword!

Elektra:

It's best then that you kill me, my brother, rather than some other Argive.
That would be an insult to the house of Agamemnon!

Orestes:

No! I have done enough killing!
I cannot kill you.
It is enough that I have killed my own mother!
You must kill yourself, Elektra, by your own hand and by any means you choose.

1041

Elektra:

So be it, then!
The work of your sword will serve me well enough!
But let me first put my arms around your neck, my brother!

Orestes:

Come then, my sister.
If it gives you pleasure to embrace those close to their death, come, embrace me!

They embrace

Elektra:

O, my beloved brother!
My own beloved brother,
My only, my deepest, my sweetest joy!
My soul!

Orestes:

Sister, now you will make me cry, as well!
Ah!
Let me return your embrace. In the depths of such despair, why should I hold back?
O, dear sister! The dearest embrace!
In this misery, our words replace our children and our marriage bed!

They separate

1052

Elektra:

If only the same sword killed us both!
If only both of our bodies were buried in the same coffin, made of cedar!

Orestes:

That would be a great joy but, my dear sister, you can see how few of our family are left. There's no one to bury us in the same tomb.

Elektra:

Had not our uncle, Menelaos, stood up to say anything on our behalf?
The coward, who has betrayed our father?

Orestes:

Menelaos had not even turned up at the meeting.
Obviously he's got hopes set on becoming the king of this land as well. That's why he doesn't want to save us, his family.

1060

But now, sister, let us die honourably, worthy of our father, Agamemnon!
I will display to the city my honourable blood by plunging the sword through my heart and you must act just as bravely.

Pylades, you must take care of what needs to be done after our death.

See to it that our bodies are covered with the shroud and then carried to our father's tomb. Bury us there, together.

Fair well!

I am going now to perform the deed.

He turns to enter the palace

Pylades:

Stop!

I must make my first ever complaint to you, Orestes.

Do you suppose I want to go on living after you die?

1071

Orestes:

But, Pylades, why should you die along with me?

Pylades:

You ask this question of me?

How could I possibly live without your friendship?

Orestes:

You, Pylades did not murder your mother, like I, the poor fool, have done!

Pylades:

But I have! I was with you. We performed the deed together.

I should suffer the same consequences as you.

Orestes:

Take your living body back to your father, Pylades. Don't kill it with mine.

You have a country, my friend, I have none. You have a house, your father's house with a harbour full of wealth.

And though it's true, you will lose out on the marriage of my ill-fated sister, here, whom I have promised you, in honour of our friendship but marry another woman and have children with her.

1081

There are no marriage ties between us, now, my friend.

For now, my friend, farewell. You may well, fare well because for us, who are about to die, there is no faring well.

Pylades:

Your thinking is far from mine, Orestes!

Let the fertile earth refuse my blood and let the bright air refuse my spirit if, like disloyal friend abandon you and let you die and I don't!

1090

I was in with you on the murder from the start. I had my hand in it, alongside yours, in all its planning. It is the deed for which you are now being punished.

That is something you cannot deny, so I, too, now should die with both of you two.

As well, since I have agreed to marry her, I feel that she is my wife.

How would I excuse myself at Delphi? What could I say to the Phocians that would support this action of mine? The action that shows that I am your friend only when you are free of misfortune but not one when misfortune strikes you?

This cannot be. Your misfortunes are also mine.

Well then, since die we must, then let us find some way to make Menelaos suffer the same misfortune.

1100

Orestes:

Ah! If only!

If only I could see this, my dear friend, then I would die a happy man!

Pylades:

In that case, do as I say.

Adjourn the thrust of the sword for a bit.

Orestes:

I shall adjourn it, if it means the punishment of my enemy.

Pylades looks at the chorus with suspicion and draws Orestes a little away from them.

Pylades:

Quietly then. I don't trust women very much.

Orestes:

O, have no fear of these women, Pylades. They are all friends of mine.

Pylades:

Let us kill Helen. That will certainly give Menelaos something to grieve about!

Orestes:

Yes! If that were possible I'd do it! How do you suggest we do this?

Pylades:

She's hiding inside the palace. Let us go in and cut her throat.

Orestes:

Oh, yes, she's in there, all right. Putting her seal on every one of our possessions!

Pylades:

Not for much longer. She is now betrothed to Hades!

1110

Orestes:

But how can we do it? She's got Trojan slaves everywhere!

Pylades:

Trojan slaves? Where? I'm not afraid of any Trojan slaves!

Orestes:

She's got them all in there, holding her scent jars and mirrors!

Pylades:

So, she's returned from Troy with all the barbarian luxuries, ey?

Orestes:

But of course. Greece is just too small a place for her!

Pylades:

My friend, slaves mean nothing to free men!

Orestes:

If this could be done then I wouldn't mind dying twice!

Pylades:

If I could avenge you, Orestes, nor would I!

Orestes:

Well, then, explain what we need to do.

Pylades:

Let us go into the palace pretending that we will kill ourselves in there.

1120

Orestes:

Yes, I see, what then?

Pylades:

We will stand before her and grieve for our Fate.

Orestes:

To which she'll pretend to grieve with us, though, in her heart, she'd be very happy.

Pylades:

We'll be feeling exactly as she will be!

Orestes:

What then? How do we achieve our goal?

Pylades:

We will go inside with swords hidden under our cloaks.

Orestes:

And the slaves? What will we do with them?

Pylades:

We'll lock them up in different rooms throughout the palace.

Orestes:

Right! And those who won't be silent, we'll kill!

Pylades:

After that, we'll act according to how things unfold.

1130

Orestes:

To murder Helen! I understand your thinking there.

Pylades:

Good.

Now listen why my plan is good.

Had we raised our sword against some woman more virtuous than Helen, the murder would be deemed disgraceful but by punishing her, we are doing the whole of Greece a service in justice. Justice for all the father she has killed and for all the fathers who have lost their sons and for all the women whose lives she has destroyed by killing their husbands.

The whole of Greece will celebrate this death and they will conduct sacrifices to the gods, praying to them to send us joy because we have killed an evil woman!

1140

As well, if you killed her, they won't be calling you a mother-killer but they will replace this name

with a far better one. They'll be calling you, "Helen's Killer," the killer of the woman who has caused the deaths of many!

No, It's not at all right that Menelaos' life prospers while your father's, yours and your sister's lives are put to death unjustly.

And then there's your mother – but no, I won't speak of her because the gods consider that improper...

And then, is it right that Menelaos should take over your palace when it was with your father's spear that he regained his wife?

I shall cut her up myself, with my black sword or else, let me live no longer!

And if we don't manage to kill Helen, then let us burn along with this house when we set it alight! One of these plans will succeed and glory will follow us for one of two reasons, Orestes: either we will die as men should die, with honour, or we shall save our lives honourably.

1153

Chorus:

Yes!

Tyndareus' daughter has earned the hatred of all the women!

Chorus:

She has disgraced her sex!

Orestes:

There's nothing more valuable than a firm friend! Neither wealth nor the power of a king matches it and it would be sheer foolishness to prefer the friendship of the masses to that of a single true and solid friend.

My friend, you have helped me when I sought justice from Aegisthus and you have remind by my side even when danger was all around me. You are helping me even now that I am seeking justice from my enemies.

1160

You have never left my side!

But I better stop praising you because excess praise is excess burden for the person praised.

So, the time for my last breaths is near!

But before I take those last breaths I want to see that my enemies pay for their betrayal. I want those of my enemies who have killed me, die with me and those who have made me suffer, repay me with equal suffering.

I am the son of Agamemnon. The son of the man who was given the leadership of the whole of Greece, not because he was king but because Greece thought him to be worthy of that honour.

He ruled Greece as if with some divine power.

1170

I will not shame my father by dying the death of a slave.

No, I will die the death of a free man by exacting justice from Menelaos.

I will think myself a fortunate man if I can achieve even one of my aims but if I can manage to escape death while I perform these killings, then, well, that will be the answer of all my prayers.

Ah!

Just uttering these thoughts of mine, even in such fleeting words, is a great joy!

Elektra:

Orestes!

I believe I have the answer to our escape!

Orestes:

You're hoping for Divine Providence, my sister but where?

Where can your wise head see this Providence?

1180

Elektra:

Well, listen then. You too, Pylades.

Orestes:

I'm listening. Talk, sister. Let's not delay our good fortune!

Elektra:

Of course, you do know Helen's daughter, don't you?

Orestes:

Hermione, yes. Our mother brought her up, while Helen was in Troy.

Elektra:

That's right. She has just gone off to our mother's grave.

Orestes:

To do what?

Elektra, what hope do you see in that?

Elektra:

Her mother, Helen, sent her there to pour libations, on her behalf.

Orestes:

Yes, but what has this got to do with our affair?

Elektra:

Orestes, you must seize Hermione when she returns.

1190

Orestes:

And how will that help us three?

Elektra:

Once you've killed Helen, Menelaos will try to kill you –and me, and Pylades, we're all family- but if you have his daughter, you could threaten him with her life by putting your sword at the girl's neck.

By then, Menelaos would have seen his wife's blood-soaked corpse so he might think about letting us go. If he does, then you let him have his daughter alive.

1200

But if he can't control his rage and charges at you, begin to cut Hermione's throat.

He'll soon soften his rage. Menelaos is neither bold nor brave.

I think that's the full extent of my thinking.

Orestes:

The heart of a real man in the body of the most beautiful of all women!

Sister, you certainly deserve the rewards of life rather than those of death.

My poor friend, Pylades, this is the woman you will be deprived of, if we die, or, if we live, this is the woman who will be a blessing to your bed.

Pylades:

I wish then that we live and that she comes with me to Phocis, honoured in a wedding procession.

1211

Orestes:

Where is Hermione, then?

She's taking a long time at the tomb.

Your plan is good in every respect, Elektra but we do need to catch this traitor's cub!

Elektra:

I don't think she'll be much longer now. She's left a long time ago.

Orestes:

Good.

Right, then, my dear sister. You stay in front of the palace door and wait for her.

And keep an eye out, in case Menelaos or any of his friends turns up before we two have committed the murder.

1220

If they do, then let us know, either by pounding loudly at the door or by yelling through it.

Taking his sword out

Pylades, since you're coming with me, let's get our swords ready for the deed.

Prays

Agamemnon, help your son, help those in need of you!

You inhabit the world of the Dark Night, father but I have suffered much injustice because of you, because I have committed a deed of virtue. Help me! Even your own brother has betrayed me.

Come help me. I want to grab his wife and kill her!

Help us to perform this deed.

1231

Elektra: *Also praying*

Father, if you can hear our pleas, down below, the pleas of your own children who are being killed for your sake, come and help them!

Pylades: *Joins them*

Agamemnon, kinsman to my father, hear my pleas also and save your children!

Orestes:

I pour a libation of tears to you, my father!

Elektra:

And from me a libation of pains.

1240

Pylades:

That will do now.

If prayers are heard by those below, Agamemnon will hear them.

But you Zeus! You, father of our ancestors and you, holy Justice who sit by his throne, grant us a happy outcome to our efforts.

We, three kinsmen are facing a single battle and a single justice. All three of us, must either live or die.

Exit Orestes and Pylades into the palace

Elektra:

Noble women of Pelasgian Mycenae...

Chorus:

Yes my Lady.

1250

Chorus:

Of course, we can still call you "Lady," in this city of the Danaans!

Elektra:

Friends, some of you watch the road on this side and the others look down that road.

We must guard the palace.

Chorus:

Why, dear Lady?

Chorus:

What do we watch out for?

Elektra:

I have this awful fear that someone might see my brother in the process of performing the bloody deed and add to our troubles.

Chorus:

Come then, friends, let's hurry!

The chorus splits into two groups, each guarding one side of the stage

Chorus:

I'll guard this side here. The East.

1260

Chorus:

And I'll stand here, on the West side.

Elektra:

Look all around you, ladies.

Chorus:

Yes, we'll watch out in all directions.

Chorus:

We'll do as you say, Elektra.

Elektra:

That's it. Look carefully in every direction. Brush your hair from your eyes.

1269

Chorus: *Indicating within*

Ah! There's someone coming this way, girls.

Watch out, some peasant coming towards the palace.

Elektra:

Oh, no!

That's it then!

He'll alert the our enemies, girls. He'll tell them about our hidden swords!

Chorus: *Relieved*

Oh, no, don't be afraid, Elektra. I was wrong. There's no one on the road.

A few moments of tense waiting

Elektra: *To the other group*

You, girls?

Anyone approaching from your side?

I hope there's no one there.

Chorus:

No, no one coming this way. *To the other group.* What about you lot? Any Danaans coming your way?

Chorus:

No, no one. All's clear.

After a few more moments of tense waiting.

Elektra:

I think I'll see if I can hear anything through the door.

She hears nothing and gets angry. She shouts inside.

Come on, you men!

Now is the time for you to perform your bloody sacrifice! It's all quiet out here. No one will hear you if you do it now.

They all listen for a few moments

No, they can't hear us!

Oh, gods, what terrible luck!

Obviously, the woman's beauty has blunted their swords!

I wouldn't be at all surprised if suddenly we don't get a visit from some Argive man, armed to the teeth, ready to barge in there and rescue her.

1290

Watch the roads carefully, girls.

This is no time to relax, girls. You too, there! Look all around you, everywhere!

The chorus moves about searching the roads

Chorus:

We are watching, Elektra!

Chorus:

We're moving all about and watching the roads carefully.

Suddenly a great deal of noise indicating a scuffle within.

Helen: *Within*

Ah!

Ah!

Help me Argives!

Pelasgian Argives, they are murdering me!

Ah!

Ah!

Elektra:

Did you hear that?

That's Helen's voice! The men are doing their work!

I know, it's Helen's voice.

Chorus:

Oh, Zeus!

1300

Chorus:

Almighty Zeus, help our friends!

Helen: *Within*

Menelaos!

Menelaos where are you? They are murdering me!

Final gasp

Ah –

Elektra:

Murder her, men!

Kill her, men!

Plunge your swords into her, men!

Hit her again and again, men!

This is the whore who has betrayed her husband and her land!

This is the whore who has killed thousands of Greek men!

Killed them and maimed them by the roaring waters of the Trojan river, Scamander!

By the battlefields where iron let loose tears upon tears!

Kill her, men, kill her!

1311

Chorus:

Hold it!

Be silent!

I think I've heard someone coming along that path there.

Chorus:

He's coming towards us!

Elektra:

It's Hermione, my dear friends!

She's coming right when the murder is happening!

Don't make a sound. Let her fall right into our nets and if we capture her she'll be an awesome catch!

Now look sharp and don't let your expression betray what's going on inside the palace. I'll put on a sad face and pretend as if I know nothing.

Enter Hermione SR carrying the empty libation basket

1321

Oh, darling girl!

Have you poured the libations upon Klytaemestra's grave?

Have you adorned it with flowers?

Hermione:

I have, indeed!

She is now happy with me... but I'm a bit anxious.

I've heard someone cry out just now. From inside the palace...

Elektra:

Of course you did, dear girl, of course you did!

The things we must endure, my dear, call for some loud grief!

Hermione:

What is it, Elektra? Some new troubles?

Elektra:

Argos has decided to kill Orestes and me!

Hermione:

Oh, no! But, you are related to me! They can't do that!

Elektra:

They can my dear and they did.

We are in the grips of Necessity's yoke.

Hermione:

Is that what the shouting in the palace was about?

Elektra:

Yes. The men had fallen before Helen's knees and are begging her, crying out...

Hermione:

What men, Elektra?

I know nothing of this. Tell me, who was crying out?

Elektra:

Orestes. He was begging Helen that he and I be saved.

Hermione:

No wonder the whole house is wailing with grief, then!

Elektra:

No wonder!

My darling girl! Why don't you add your voice to that of my brother? Beg your mother, the luckiest of all mothers, fall at her feet and beg her not to allow Menelaos to kill us. Let him see to it that we don't die!

1340

Do that for us, my dear girl. After all, my own mother raised you, darling.

Take pity on us and save us!

Come, let me take you inside so you can join our battle! You are our very last hope.

Hermione:

Yes, I shall do that. Let's hurry.

I shall do what ever is in my power to save you.

Elektra opens the palace door and leads Hermione inside. As soon as Hermione enters, she shuts the door firmly and shouts to those inside.

Elektra:

Grab her my dear friends!

Raise your swords to her!

Hermione: *Within*

Ah!

Ah!

What men are these here?

Help me!

Elektra:
Shut up, girl!
You are not here to save your life but ours!
Grab her, men, grab her!

1350

Your swords against her throat men!
Courage, my friends!
Let Menelaos see that he's dealing with some real men, not some Trojan cowards!
Let him suffer what cowards suffer!
Exit Elektra into the palace. A few seconds later the sounds of a violent conflict emanate and stir the chorus into action.

Chorus:

Ah!
Girls scream! Make noise! Raise a loud shout!
Drown out the murder in the palace!

Chorus:

Ah!
Don't let the Argives hear the screaming cries!

Chorus:

They'll come to the women's rescue!

Chorus:

Don't let them come before I see Helen's bloody corpse lying on the palace floor!

Chorus:

Or before some Trojan slave of theirs comes and tells us the full story!

1360

Chorus:

The gods have delivered the Justice due to Helen.

Chorus:

Vengeance has been exacted from Helen!

Chorus:

Helen is dead!

Chorus:

Helen has killed!

Chorus:

Helen has let loose the tears of all of Greece!

Chorus:

Helen has betrayed husband and country for that cursed man from Troy!

Chorus:

A bitter curse upon Paris!

Chorus:

Paris, who dragged all Hellas to Troy!

From the Palace we hear the sound of a door-bolt being pulled back and the creaking of the door opening

Chorus:

Listen!

Chorus:

The bolt of the door is being pulled!

Chorus:

Look!

Enter a Trojan Slave.

He has just witnessed Helen's murder so he is terrified

Chorus:

A Trojan slave!

Chorus:

He'll tell us what is going on inside.

Phrygian:

Ah!

Death!

Death everywhere!

I have run away from death! I pick up my Trojan slippers and run away!

1370

Big sword! Argive sword. Big!

I run away, fast!

Away from the bedroom with cedar beds!

Away from the Doric triglyphs!

Far away. Quick away!

Oh, my good mother Earth! My very good mother Earth! Take me far away from here!

Ah!

Ah!

Which way, foreign ladies?

Which way I should go now?

To the sky? Fly high up to the sky?

To the sea? I run to the sea? Which sea?

The Ocean? The bull-headed Ocean? Big arms run around earth?

1380

Chorus:

What is it, Trojan?

Chorus:

What is it, Helen's slave?

Phrygian:

Troy... Troy...

Oh, Troy! Oh my beautiful Phrygian city!

Oh, my beautiful holy, holy mountain!

Beautiful earth Ida, Troy!

Now I cry, I cry, I cry the song of the chariot race!

I cry barbary tongue. I cry your destruction, Troy, my barbary city!

You die because of Helen the beautiful woman from egg born. Big feathers, long neck like swan.

Leda's baby. Bad Helen! Bad, bad, terrible bad Helen.

Erinys! Beautiful towers of Troy, down! Apollo's towers, down!

Ah!

Ah!

1390

Bad fortune for beautiful Troy!

I cry, I cry, I cry! The song of Troy, fall down!

Beautiful horses of Ganymede, Zeus' lover.

Chorus:

Stop!

Trojan, tell us slowly what happened in there.

Chorus:

I couldn't understand one word he said!

Phrygian:

Ai, ai, ai!

I cry barbary tongue. Barbary men cry, ai, ai, ai!

Ai, ai, ai!

Barbary blood of my kings, all everywhere on ground.

Iron swords everywhere kill! Everywhere blood on ground!

I tell you for you exactly:

Two lions! Twins lions! Swish, swish!

1400

Greek twins lions come inside house.

One is son of big man General. One other one is son of Strophius. Bad man this one. Sneaky, tricky... like Odysseas... quite, but tricky, very tricky.

Him, other one, is good friend of other one. Swish, swish, fight, fight, fight!

Very brave.

Braver war man. Brave war snake. Planning and planning like quiet snake! Curse to him! Bad snake man!

Lions come to the throne of Helen.

1410

Wife of Paris who shoots arrows good.

And they cry and they cry and face wet with crying and one stand one side of woman and one other the

other side of woman and they touch her here and here and this side and this side and cry for help from Helen.

All the Trojan slaves worry and worry.

1420

Maybe this is no good for Helen. Maybe this is trap for Helen. They run around everywhere and some say no, it's all right, not trap and other men say yes, this is trap for daughter of Tyndareus.

They say, this is tricky trap, catch Helen. Mother killer Orestes make tricky trap!

Chorus:

And you? What were you doing at the time?

Chorus:

I bet he was already running off in fear!

Phrygian:

I was doing like Phrygian people doing. Barbary thing.

Make fresh breeze for Helen. For her beautiful hair.

I have big round circle with many, many feathers and I make cool breeze for her hair and for her beautiful cheeks. Like barbary people make.

1431

Helen spin and spin distaff of linen. Long string. Long string to the floor.

She want to make big cloth with barbary string, for Klytaemestra, for her burial.

Big purple cloth. Beautiful. For Klytaemestra.

1438

But other man, Orestes, tell Helen:

“Daughter of Zeus, put foot down and come! Leave your couch and come here. Here, Pelop’s ancient seat, ancient fireplace, my ancient father. Come and I tell you something.”

That’s what he say to Helen and he take her by the hand.

He first, she after, they go and go and she think nothing bad will happen. So she go.

But his friend, other lion, Phocian lion, did other thing. He shout to us: “Go away,” he say like madman. “Go away! Go away somewhere else! You coward Phrygians!” He shouts to us. Then he pushed them some in this room, some in that room, some in the halls... and then he locked all the doors and we couldn’t go to help Helen, our mistress.

1453

Chorus:

Yes, yes and then what happened?

Phrygian:

Oh, mother! Ai, ai, ai!

Oh, mother of Troy! Ai, ai, ai!

Oh, almighty, mighty, mother!

Oh!

Ah!

Blood! Sin! Evil!

Ai, ai, ai!

I see everything with my eyes in that palace! The palace of the king!

They take out big swords with their hands. They hide before, under their purple cloths, and then they look this way and then that way, everywhere look to see if anyone there, looking to them.

1460

Then, then, they jump to the woman like wild pigs in the mountain and say to her, “Now woman, you will die! Your big evil husband, he kills you now. He left his brother’s son behind to die in Argos city.”

And then she cry and cry loud, “Ah, ah! Oh, oh! No, no!”

Then –ai, ai, ai!

Then she bang and bang her lovely white arms to her chest and to her head, bang, bang! Very sad, very sad noise, she make.

Then she turn fast with her gold sandals and she try to run away, fast, fast.

1470

Then... But Orestes, his big boot, big Mycenaean boot, he run fast to her and pushed fingers inside her hair and pull hard her head. Pull hard back to his shoulder, this one, left one, put his black sword ready to kill, on her neck.

Chorus:

But what happened to all the Phrygian palace guards? They were supposed to be there to protect her.

Phrygian:

When we hear the noise of killing – ai, ai, ai!

We run this way, we run that way, we pick up crowbars and other things and we make doors and windows in the rooms they lock us, make them all fall down. Then we pick up stones and bows, another man a sword swish, swish in his hand and run to save Helen.

But when we got there, Pylades was there.

1480

Him strong just like Hektor. Hektor the Phrygian or just like Ajax too. I saw big Ajax. Very big man. Big helmet with three big plumes. I saw Ajax outside Priam's gates. Big strong man.

Then we swish, swish with the swords and make big fight but it was no good.

The Greeks much better with war than the Phrygians. Born stronger. So, one man run away, another man, fall dead, one other one big wound and one more, fall on the ground and beg for to save his life. We run this way, we run that way, hide in the shadows.

Ai, ai, ai!

Some men falling down, killed, some men nearly falling down killed and some other men killed. Dead.

1490

Then –ai, ai, ai!

Poor little girl Hermione came inside palace. Her mother was falling down, falling down, killed and poor little girl come inside then!

Then –ai, ai, ai!

Then the men run for Hermione! Run like wild mad men, like Dionysus men with no holy wands, they stop with Helen and run for little girl and they take her and run back again for to Helen, to daughter for Zeus but Helen is nowhere!

Helen gone! Not in the house! Not anywhere!

Not here, not there –ai, ai, ai! Gone!

Zeus!

Earth!

Light of Day!

Dark of Night!

Maybe magic drugs, maybe magic tricks, maybe gods take away, I don't know but she run away!

And then I run away and I don't know what happens after.

My feet run away from the palace, fast, very fast!

Ai, ai, ai!

Oh, poor Menelaos! So much trouble to bring wife back from Troy but Helen gone!

Enter Orestes from the palace, furious, sword in hand

1503

Chorus:

Ah! Look!

One strange thing follows closely upon another!

Here's Orestes! Angry and with his sword high!

He's rushing from the palace.

Chorus:

He's sure angry!

Orestes:

Where's the man who escaped my sword?

Phrygian: *Falls before Orestes' feet*

My Lord!

I kiss your feet like barbary people do.

Orestes:

We're not in Troy, now, Phrygian. This here is Argos!

Phrygian:

Yes, yes, my Lord. Argos, yes but everywhere, everyone more sweet to live than to die, my Lord!

1510

Orestes:

You weren't trying to call Menelaos for help, were you, Phrygian?

Phrygian:

Help? Help? Ah, yes, help!

Help for you, my Lord. Better for you to have help, my Lord!

Orestes:

So, you agree, Helen's disappearance was justified?

Phrygian:

Oh, yes, my Lord. Sure. Very justified. Even if she had three throats to cut!

Orestes:

You are a lying, flattering coward!
Your tongue is not saying what you think!

Phrygian:

My Lord, she has ruined Greece AND Troy! Greeks and Phrygians, too, she killed!

Orestes:

Swear you're not lying to me, Phrygian! Swear or you'll see the sharp end of this!

Phrygian:

By my life, my Lord! I swear my life. That's big swear, not small!

Orestes: *Bring the sword close to the Phrygian's throat*

Zeus, were all the Trojans as afraid of the sword as you?

Phrygian:

My Lord, my Lord, move the sword away a little!

Ai, ai, ai! It's... it's very shiny death to my eyes.

1520

Orestes:

Are you afraid that you'll turn into stone, are you? Like people who see a gorgon?

Phrygian:

No, not into a stone, my Lord but into a corpse.

I don't any gorgon people.

Orestes:

But are a slave, Phrygian and death will release from slavery. Why be afraid of death?

Phrygian:

Because, my Lord. Even a slave feels good to see the light of the sun.

Orestes:

Well said, Phrygian. Your good brain has saved you.

Now go into the palace!

Phrygian:

You, no kill me?

Orestes:

No, I won't. I have spared your life.

Phrygian:

You say good news now.

Orestes:

Perhaps but I could change them!

Phrygian:

Oh, no, no good news now!

Orestes:

Fool!

Do you think I'd dirty my sword with the blood of your throat?

Look at you!

You are neither a woman born nor a man alive!

No, I came out here to stop all your shouting. I don't want the whole of Argos stirred up over this.

Orestes turns to the chorus. The Phrygian sees this as an opportunity to race away into the palace.

1531

But I am not afraid of Menelaos. Let him come within the reach of my sword.

Let him and his pride over his fancy, shoulder length blond hair come!

Let him come!

But if he comes here, to this palace, with an army of Argives seeking vengeance for Helen's death, instead of wanting to save me, my sister and my friend then his eyes will fall upon the corpses of both, his wife as well as his daughter!

Chorus:

Ah!

Ah!

Fate!

Chorus:

Again and again the House of Atreus groans with pain!

Chorus:

What now?

Shall we inform Argos?
Shall we be silent?

1540

Chorus:

Silence is the safer move.

A flame then a puff of smoke rises from the roof of the palace

Chorus:

Look!

Look there!

Fire and smoke rise to the heavens.

Chorus:

The palace sends a new message!

Intermittent flames rise and fall from the roof of the palace

Chorus:

Torches! They want to burn the palace down!

The house of Tantalus is burning!

Chorus:

They will stop at nothing!

Chorus:

No pain is enough for them!

Chorus:

God declares the end of every mortal.

He and only he will do as he pleases with our end.

Chorus:

And Vengeance!

Great is her power!

Chorus:

She has flooded this palace with blood!

Flood the palace in blood!

Chorus:

All because of the sin of Myrtilus!

1550

Chorus: *Indicating behind the screens*

Ah, look! Here's Menelaos!

He's rushing this way.

Chorus:

He must have heard about the goings on inside the palace.

Chorus: *Shouts to the people inside the palace.*

Hey, you, in there!

You, inside the palace, children of Atreus, bolt the doors well.

Menelaos is coming!

Chorus:

A man with luck behind him is dangerous to man with no luck, Orestes!

Enter Menelaos with men.

Menelaos:

I am here because I have heard that dreadful violence has been committed here by... no, I won't call them men, rather, a pair of wild lions!

They tell me that my wife was not killed but, somehow vanished, obviously a stupid story told by someone whose wits have been shattered by fear. It's a trick, a lie, concocted by that mother killer, Orestes. A laughable trick!

1560

Approaches the door of the palace

You in the palace! One of you open this door!

To his men

Men, I order you to smash this door so that I can go inside and, at least rescue my daughter from the hands of these murderers and take one last look at my poor wife.

These hands will murder these murderers and send them to meet my wife in Hades!

Menelaos' men begin to smash the door down when, on the roof of the palace, appear the two men and Elektra, with Hermione. Orestes has his sword at Hermione's throat. Elektra and Pylades are each holding a lit torch.

Orestes:

Menelaos!

The door is shut. Leave it shut!

Yes, you, Menelaos! You and your ever-towering arrogance!

1570

Leave the door or else I'll crush your head with this stone I've ripped off from this ancient building! The bolts across that door are strong. You won't bend them, Menelaos and you won't be able to get inside to rescue anyone.

Menelaos:

Ah!

What is going on here?

Do I see fire on the roof of my house?

Do I see torches all lit up ready to burn the place down?

Is that a tower of men up there?

Is that a sword at my daughter's throat?

Orestes:

Menelaos, do you want to keep asking questions or do you want to listen to me?

Menelaos:

I want neither of the two but you're forcing me to listen to you.

Orestes:

Menelaos, if you truly interested, I am about to kill your daughter!

Menelaos:

You already killed Helen. Do you want to commit yet another murder?

1580

Orestes:

Helen? Oh, I wish I had managed to get that murder done!

If only the gods had not robbed me of the deed!

Menelaos:

Your denial is nothing but trickery!

Orestes:

My denial is, regrettably, authentic!

I wish I could have -

Menelaos:

Could have done what?

Despicable creature!

Orestes:

I wish I could have hurled that woman, that betrayer of Greece into Hades!

Menelaos:

Let me have my wife's body so that I may build a tomb for her.

Orestes:

You'll have to ask the gods for her body.

But I will kill your daughter here!

Menelaos:

So, the mother killer will go on killing!

Orestes:

I killed, seeking vengeance for my father but you! You have abandoned me to murderers!

Menelaos:

Was not the murder of your mother enough for you?

1590

Orestes:

I will never have enough of killing evil women!

Menelaos:

What about you, Pylades?

Are you an accomplice to these murderous deeds?

Pylades does not answer

Orestes:

His silence says "yes." I'll say it for him.

Menelaos:

But, unless you've got wings you won't escape your crime!

Orestes:

No, you're right there. We won't be escaping.
We'll be setting the palace on fire.

Menelaos:

You will burn your own father's house down?

Orestes:

Yes, uncle. I will do that to prevent you from getting it!
And then I'll slaughter this girl over its flames.

Menelaos:

Well, go ahead then. Kill her. You'll pay for her murder to me!

Orestes: *Tightens her grip on Hermione.*

It will happen!

Menelaos:

Ah, no! No, don't do it!

Orestes:

Well, then shut up and take what's coming to you.

1608

Menelaos:

Take your sword away from my daughter's throat!

Orestes:

You are a liar!

Menelaos:

And you? Will you kill my daughter?

Orestes:

That's no lie!

1610

Menelaos: *In despair*

Ah!

What am I supposed to do now?

Orestes:

Go and talk to the Argives.

Menelaos:

Talk to them about what?

Orestes:

Tell them not kill me!

Menelaos:

Or else you'll kill my child?

Orestes:

Exactly.

1600

Menelaos:

Do you have any right to live?

Orestes:

To live and to rule this country!

Menelaos:

The country? What country is that?

Orestes:

This country here! Pelasgian Argos!

Menelaos:

What a man to conduct the holy ceremonies!

Orestes:

Why not?

Menelaos:

As well as to perform the sacrifices!

Orestes:

Why, are you better than me?

Menelaos:

Of course I am. There's no blood in my hands!

Orestes:

Maybe not your hands but there's plenty of blood in your heart!

Menelaos:
But who would ever speak with you?
Orestes:
Anyone who loves his father, would, uncle!
Menelaos:
But no one who loves his mother!
Orestes:
The man who loves his mother is a lucky man.
Menelaos:
Then you are certainly not a lucky man!
Orestes:
No. I hate evil women.
Menelaos:
O, my poor Helen!
Orestes:
What about me?
Menelaos:
Poor Helen!
My poor, Helen I've brought you back all the way from Troy, only to have you slaughtered...
Orestes:
I wish!
Menelaos:
A million pains, heaped upon a million pains!
Orestes:
I know all about pains!
Menelaos:
I have suffered dreadful pains!
Orestes:
You've caused your own suffering by not helping us!
Menelaos:
You have me in your grips now!
Orestes:
You're in the grips of your own cowardice!
Elektra, burn this place down and you, Pylades, my best friend, start burning the parapets!

1621

Menelaos:
Danaans! Argives! Men of horse loving Argos, help!
Pick up your arms and run over here quickly!
Help!
This shameless mother killer is trying to escape his own death by causing totally destruction to your whole city!
A general rush by Agamemnon's men and by the chorus before Apollo appears on the machine, above everyone.

Apollo:

Menelaos!
Soften this anger of yours!
It is I, Phoebus Apollo, son of Leto. I am right here, talking to you from nearby.
And you, too, Orestes! Calm down and stop frightening the poor girl.
All of you listen to my offer.

1629

Orestes, you were extremely angry with Menelaos and you wanted to kill his wife, Helen. She has flown from your hands and now you can see her there *Indicating the sky* deep into the night's ether. She is that star there!
It was I, personally who had saved her from your sword, thanks to her father Zeus' command. Zeus' daughter is immortal and so she will go on living in that sky, along with her brothers, Kastor and Polydeuces, a star that will be of great help to the sailors.
You, Menelaos!
Marry another woman now for your house.

1640

The gods had used Helen's beauty to bring the people of Phrygia and Greece together to a single place

on earth where they would die and thus lighten the burden of the ever-growing population of mortals.
So much for Helen.

As for you, Orestes, you must now leave the borders of Argos and spend the full circle of the next year in the meadows of Parrhasia. Your exile there will change her name and both, Arcadians and Parrhasians will know it henceforth as Oresteum.

At the end of that year go to the city of Athens and submit yourself to the hands of the three Eumenides for your prosecution as a matricide.

1651

There, on the hill of Ares, the judging gods will cast their votes which will be respected by both sides and you will be declared victorious.

Furthermore, Orestes, your Fate declares that you will marry the woman at whose throat you are holding your sword. Hermione. Neoptolemus who thinks that he will marry her will not do so. For him it is written that he must die by the sword of someone from Delphi when Neoptolemus goes there to demand from me satisfaction for the death of Achilles, his father.

You have promised your sister, Elektra to your friend there, Pylades. You must fulfil that promise. His life is destined to be blessed.

1660

Menelaos, you must allow Orestes to be king of Argos and you must go and rule Sparta, your wife's dowry, a land that has caused you immeasurable pain right up to this very minute.

I will reconcile this man with this city since it was I who has forced him to kill his own mother.

Orestes:

Apollo!

God of prophesy!

At the time you forced me to kill my mother I thought I was hearing the voice of some avenging spirit but now, I can see that your prophesies are not false. They are indeed true!

1670

Still, it has all turned out well and I will heed your words.

Look, I am letting Hermione go. I will not kill her and I will accept marriage to her whenever her father will offer her to me.

Menelaos:

Helen!

Daughter of Zeus, joy to you!

You are indeed blessed and you shall live in the home of the blessed gods.

Orestes, Apollo has commanded me to give you my daughter and so I now obey his command.

You are of noble blood and you will be marrying into a house of nobility so, may both of you enjoy your lives.

Apollo:

So, then, depart all of you to the place I have allocated for you and end now your quarrel.

Menelaos:

We shall do so, Apollo.

Orestes:

I agree.

I end my quarrel about everything that has happened before and about your oracles, Apollo.

Orestes, Elektra, Pylades, and Hermione climb down from the roof and reappear on the stage through the palace door.

Apollo:

Go, then, all of you.

Peace is the loveliest of the gods. Honour her.

I will guide Helen through the bright star-filled sky to the chambers of Zeus.

There, she will sit on the throne, next to Hera and Hebe, Herakles' wife and she, too, will be a goddess to be honoured and revered by mortals for ever and worshipped with sacrifices and libations, along with her brothers, sons of Zeus, the Tyndarids, Castor and Polydeuces, guides, all three to the men who sail over the sea's waves.

Chorus:

Oh, goddess Victory!

For ever revered goddess!

Be my life's guide and for ever crown my head!

Exit All
END OF
EURIPIDES'

“ORESTES”