

Hippolytus

By Euripides

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Before the royal palace at Trozen. A statue of Aphrodite stands on one side; a statue of Artemis on the other. The goddess Aphrodite appears alone.

Aphrodite

Powerful among mortals am I and not without reputation, I am called the goddess Kypris even in heaven. And those who dwell within the limits of the *pontos* and the bounds of Atlas **5** and who behold the light of the sun, whoever of those respects my power, to them I pay special honor; but I bring to ruin whoever has little regard for my greatness. For this feeling exists by nature even among the gods: they find pleasure when they are given *tīmē* by humans. I will soon prove the truth [*alētheia*] of my words [*mūthoi*]. **10** For the son of Theseus and an Amazon, Hippolytus, who was raised by Pittheus, alone among the citizens of Trozen, says that I am the most *kakē* of the *daimones*. He scorns the nuptial bed and takes no notice of marriage, **15** but to Artemis, the sister of Phoebus and daughter of Zeus, he gives *tīmē* and believes that she is the greatest of the *daimones*. Through the green wood he always joins with his virgin goddess and clears wild animals from the land with the help of his swift hounds, since he has come upon company which is beyond mortal. **20** But I don't begrudge him these things just now, since what concern are they to me? However, for the errors he has committed against me I will have vengeance on Hippolytus on this very day, and since I accomplished many things some time ago I don't need to go to much effort [*ponos*]. ²⁴ When he [= Hippolytus] went, once upon a time, from the palace of Pittheus [in Trozen] ²⁵ [to the territory of Athens] for the vision and rituals [*telos* plural] of the revered Mysteries [*mustērion* plural], ²⁶ to the land of Pandion [= to Athens], then it was that the noble wife of the father [of Hippolytus] ²⁷ saw him, yes, Phaedra saw him, and she was possessed in her heart ²⁸ by a passionate love [*erōs*] that was terrifying—all because of the plans I planned. ²⁹ And before she [= Phaedra] came to this land of Trozen, ³⁰ she established—on a side of the Rock of Pallas [= Athena], from where one could see a view ³¹ of this land [of Trozen] here, [she established]—a shrine [*nāos*] of Kypris [= Aphrodite], ³² since she loved [*erân*] a love [*erōs*], a passionate love, a love alien to the population [*ek-dēmos*]. In compensation for [*epi*] Hippolytus ³³—she gave that name, which will last for all time to come—that is why, she said, the goddess has been installed there: "Our Lady of Horses Unbridled [*hippo-luto-*]." But now Theseus has left the Kekropian land, **35** fleeing the pollution for the blood of the sons of Pallas, and he has sailed here with his wife since he consented to a yearlong exile abroad. Here she mourns and is struck by pangs of passion and, wretched, she perishes in silence, **40** and none of her servants shares the knowledge of her affliction. But her secret passion ought not to end up in this way, for I will point out the matter to Theseus and everything will become clear. And this young man, who is hostile to me, his own father will kill with the curse which Poseidon, **45** the lord of the sea [*pontos*], granted as a prize to Theseus, that he might pray three times to the god and not pray in vain; but Phaedra shall perish, although with good *kleos*, since I shall not give *tīmē* to her misery before I take such

dikē against my enemies **50** as to have satisfaction. But now I see Hippolytus, the son of Theseus, on his way here straight from the labors of the hunt; I will get out of the way. A great reveling band [*kōmos*] of his attendants are following behind **55** and singing joyously with him, and they give *tīmē* to the goddess Artemis with hymns. He does not know that the gates of Hādēs are standing open, and that he is looking on his final daylight.

Aphrodite vanishes. Hippolytus and his hunting attendants enter, singing. They move to the altar of Artemis.

Hippolytus

Come here, come singing to the heavenly daughter of Zeus, **60** Artemis, whose concern we are.

Hippolytus and Attendants

Lady, most revered lady, daughter of Zeus, welcome, Artemis, welcome, **65** daughter of Leto and Zeus, you who are the most beautiful by far among the virgins, and in mighty heaven you dwell in the richly-gilded palace of Zeus. **70** Welcome most beautiful, most beautiful throughout Olympus!

Hippolytus

⁷³ For you this plaited garland [*stephanos*] culled from an unspoiled ⁷⁴ meadow [*leimōn*], O my lady [= Artemis], do I [= Hippolytus] bring, arranging [*kosmeîn*] it properly. ⁷⁵ It is from a place where it is not fit for the shepherd to pasture his flocks, ⁷⁶ nor has iron yet come there, but it is unspoiled, ⁷⁷ this meadow [*leimōn*], and the bee in springtime goes through and through. ⁷⁸ The goddess named Modesty [*Aidōs*] tends this place with pure river water, ⁷⁹ and those who do not have to be taught but by their own nature [*phusis*] ⁸⁰ are endowed with moderation [*sōphrosunē*] always in all things, ⁸¹ they are allowed by divine sanction to pick flowers there, but it is not sanctioned [*themis*] for those who are bad. So, my lady near and dear [*philē*], for your golden locks of hair ⁸³ accept this headband from my properly worshipful hand. ⁸⁴ For I alone among mortals have this privilege [*geras*]: ⁸⁵ I keep company with you and I exchange words with you, ⁸⁶ hearing your voice though not looking you in the eye. ⁸⁷ That is the same way I should go round the turning post, heading toward the end [*telos*] of life just as I began it.

Attendant [*therapōn*]

Lord, since we ought to call upon the gods as our lords, would you accept some well-meant advice from me?

Hippolytus

90 Surely, for otherwise I should not appear to be *sophos*.

Attendant

Do you know the law [*nomos*] which is established among mortals?

Hippolytus

I don't know; but what are you getting at?

Attendant

The law is to hate what is proud and not *philon* to all.

Hippolytus

And rightly, too, for is not the proud among mortals oppressive?

Attendant

95 But there is a certain grace [*kharis*] in courtesy?

Hippolytus

Very much, and also profit with little cost.

Attendant

Do you think the same holds among the gods as well?

Hippolytus

I suppose so, since we mortals draw our laws [*nomoi*] from the gods.

Attendant

Why then do you neglect to address a proud *daimōn*?

Hippolytus

100 Whom do you mean? Watch that your tongue doesn't trip.

Attendant

Kypris herself, who is stationed above your gates.

Hippolytus

I greet her from afar, since I am pure.

Attendant

Yet she is a holy goddess far renowned [*epi-sēmos*] on earth.

Hippolytus

No god who is miraculous by night pleases me.

Attendant

105 My son, we ought to avail ourselves of the *tīmai* which *daimones* confer.

Hippolytus

Each, among gods and humans alike, has his own concern.

Attendant

I wish you happiness [*eudaimonia*] and as much *noos* as you need.

Hippolytus

Go in, attendants, and within the house prepare food, since after the hunt **110** a full table is always a delight. You ought also to rub down the horses, so that I may yoke them to the chariot and give them proper exercise when I have had my fill, and to your goddess Kypris I bid a long farewell.

Hippolytus goes into the palace, followed by all the attendants except the leader, who prays before the statue of Aphrodite.

Attendant

Since we ought not to imitate the young, **115** with sober mind and as is fitting for a slave to speak, I will offer up my prayer to your image, mistress Kypris. You should have forgiveness for all, even for one who in the eager spirit of youth utters vain words against you; pretend that you don't hear him, **120** since the gods must be more *sophoi* than mortals.

He goes into the palace. The chorus of Trozenian women enter.

Chorus

strophe 1

¹²¹⁻¹²⁴ There is a rock that is said to drip fresh water from the stream of Okeanos, sending forth from the crags above a steady flow for us to scoop up in our jars. ¹²⁵ It was there that my friend [*philē*] was washing ¹²⁶ purple robes ¹²⁷ in the flowing stream, ¹²⁸ washing them, and then, on the face of a rock warmed ¹²⁹ by the kindly sunlight did she throw them. From there ¹³⁰ the rumor first came to me about the lady of the house,

antistrophe 1

¹³¹⁻¹³⁴ how she is wasting away on her sickbed, keeping herself indoors, and a thin veil shadows her blond head. **135** This is the third day, I hear, that her lips have not touched food, and she keeps her body pure from the grain of Demeter, **140** eager to hide her sorrow [*penthos*] and to put into the cheerless harbor of death.

strophe 2

Dear Phaedra, are you possessed either by Pan or Hekatē, or do you wander because of the devoted Korybantes or the mountain mother? **145** Have you committed an error offending Artemis of Diktyнна, with her wild beasts, and are wasting for neglect of her unoffered sacrifices? For she ranges through the sea, as well as over the islands of the sea, **150** upon the watery eddies of the brine.

antistrophe 2

Or your husband, the well-born ruler of the sons of Erekhtheus, does someone in the palace cherish him in a union hidden from your bed? **155** Or has someone sailing from Crete reached the harbor most welcome to sailors, bringing a report to the queen, and in distress over her sufferings [*pathos* pl.] **160** her *psūkhē* is tied down to her bed?

epode

¹⁶¹ Often, in women's badly modulated [*dus-tropos*] ¹⁶² tuning [*harmonia*],¹ a bad and ¹⁶³ wretched sort of helplessness [*amēkhaniā*] dwells, ¹⁶⁴ arising both from the pains of labor and from lack of sensibility [*aphrosunē*]. ¹⁶⁵ Right through my womb I once felt a rush of this ¹⁶⁶ burst of wind [*aurā*] here, and, calling upon the one who helps in the labor of childbirth, the one who is the sky-dweller, ¹⁶⁷ the one who has power over the arrows, I shouted out her name, ¹⁶⁸ Artemis, and she, very much sought after, always ¹⁶⁹ comes to me, if the gods are willing. ¹⁷⁰ But look, the aged Nurse before the palace doors ¹⁷¹ is bringing this one [Phaedra] from the palace, ¹⁷² and on her [= Phaedra's] brow a gloomy cloud gathers. ¹⁷³ To know what on earth is happening—my soul [*psūkhē*] passionately desires [*erāsthai*] to know this. ¹⁷⁴ Why has she become completely undone? ¹⁷⁵ Why has the complexion of the queen turned so strangely pale?

The Nurse and Phaedra enter from the palace.

Nurse

The woes and the hateful illnesses of mortals! What shall I do? What not do? Here is your sunlight, here the bright air. Now outside of the palace **180** is your sickbed, for

your every word was to come here, but soon enough you will be eager for your bedroom again, since, taking pleasure in nothing, you will quickly become helpless. Whatever is present does not please you, but that which is absent you think more dear. **185** It is better to be ill than to care for the ill, for one is a single trouble, but to the other is attached both heartsickness and labor [*ponos*] with one's hands. The whole of human life is full of pain, **190** and there is no rest from trouble [*ponoi*]. But if there is anything more *philon* than life, darkness hides it in the clouds in its embrace, and we show ourselves to be wretchedly in love with that thing which glistens on the earth, **195** because of inexperience of any other life, and the things which lie below the earth are unrevealed. On tales [*mūthoi*] we vainly drift.

Phaedra

Lift my body, keep my head up. ¹⁹⁹ The fastenings [*sun-desma*] of my dear [*phila*] limbs [*melea*] have come apart [*le-lū-tai*]. ²⁰⁰ Hold on to my shapely arms, attendants. ²⁰¹ My hair all done up on top of my head is a heavy load to bear. ²⁰² Take out my hair pinnings, let the curls of my hair cascade over my shoulders.

Nurse

Be brave, child, do not toss your body so harshly; **205** you will bear your sickness more easily in peace [*hēsukhiā*] and with noble will. It is necessary for mortals to suffer.

Phaedra

²⁰⁸ I only wish I could, from a dewy spring, ²⁰⁹ scoop up a drink of pure water, ²¹⁰ and, lying down beneath the poplars in a grassy ²¹¹ meadow [*leimōn*], I could find relief.

Nurse

My child, what are you saying? Will you not say such things in public, casting out words borne on madness?

Phaedra

²¹⁵ Take me to the mountains—I will go to the woods, ²¹⁶ to the pine trees, where the beast-killing ²¹⁷ hounds track their prey, ²¹⁸ getting closer and closer to the dappled deer. ²¹⁹ I swear by the gods, I have a passionate desire [*erâsthai*] to give a hunter's shout to the hounds, ²²⁰ and, with my blond hair and all, to throw ²²¹ a Thessalian javelin, holding the barbed ²²² dart in my hand.

Nurse

²²³ Why on earth, my child, are you sick at heart about these things? ²²⁴ Why is the hunt your concern [*meletē*]? ²²⁵ And why do you feel a passionate desire [*erâsthai*] for streams flowing from craggy heights ²²⁶ when nearby, next to these towers, there is a moist ²²⁷ hillside with a fountain? You could get your drink from here.

Phaedra

²²⁸ My lady Artemis! You who preside over the lagoon by the sea! ²²⁹ You are where the place is for exercising, and it thunders with horses' hooves! ²³⁰ Oh, if only I could be there, on your grounds, ²³¹ masterfully driving Venetian horses!

Nurse

²³² Why in your madness have you hurled out of your mouth this wording here? ²³³ One moment you were going up the mountain to hunt ²³⁴ - you were getting all set, in your

longing [*pothos*], to do that, and then, the next moment, you were heading for the beach ²³⁵ sheltered from the splashing waves, in your passionate desire [*erâsthai*] for the horses. ²³⁶ These things are worth a lot of consultation with seers: ²³⁷ which one of the gods is steering you off course ²³⁸ and deflects your thinking [*phrenes*], child?

Phaedra

Wretched me, what have I done? **240** Where have I strayed from good sense? I have gone mad and fallen by derangement [*atē*] from a *daimōn*. Woe is me! Nurse, cover my head again; I feel shame [*aidōs*] for what I have said. **245** Hide me! Tears fall from my eyes, and for shame my face is turned away. Although it is painful to come to one's senses, to be mad is evil; dying in ignorance rules.

Nurse

250 I cover you, but when will death cover my body? Long life teaches me much, that mortals ought to pledge themselves to moderate ties of *philia*, **255** and not that which goes to the core of the *psūkhē*, easy to be loosed from one's *phrenes*, either to be pushed away or drawn tight, since for one *psūkhē* to grieve for two is a heavy burden, **260** just as I feel pain for her. To pursue a strict course in life, men say, causes disappointment more than pleasure and is more at odds with health. Therefore I recommend "Nothing in excess" more than "Too much." **265** And wise people [*sophoi*] will agree with me.

Chorus

Old woman, faithful nurse of our queen, we see the sorry plight of Phaedra, but her distress is a thing without a clue [*sēma*] to us; **270** we would like to learn and hear of it from you.

Nurse

I don't know, although I question her, for she does not want to say.

Chorus

Not even what the source of these sorrows are?

Nurse

The answer is the same, since she is silent on all things.

Chorus

How weak and wasted her body is.

Nurse

275 Why not? It is the third day she has gone without food.

Chorus

Is it because of some derangement [*atē*], or is she trying to die?

Nurse

I don't know, but surely fasting will lead to the end of her life.

Chorus

It is remarkable that this satisfies her husband.

Nurse

She hides her sorrow from him and says that she is not ill.

Chorus

280 Can he not judge from seeing her face?

Nurse

He happens to be away from this country now.

Chorus

Why not press her, in an effort to learn her disease and the straying of her *phrenes*?

Nurse

I have tried everything and accomplished nothing. **285** Yet not even now will I relax my zeal, so that if you stay, you too will witness how devoted I am by nature to an unhappy mistress. Come, *philē* child, let us both forget our former words, and you be more mild, **290** smoothing your sullen brow and your current of thought, and I, if in some way I have not understood you, will change my way and will find some better course. If you are sick with ills that cannot be named, there are women here to set your sickness straight. **295** But if your trouble can be made known to males, speak, so that it can be told to doctors. Come then, why so silent? You ought not to remain quiet, child, but scold me, if I say something amiss, or agree if these things are spoken well. **300** One word, one look this way. Ah me! Women, we toil at these labors [*ponos*] in vain, we are as far away as ever, for she was not softened by my arguments before, and now she is not persuaded either. Be more stubborn than the sea, **305** but know that if you die you are a traitor to your sons, for they will not have a share of their father's estate. By the horse-riding Amazon queen, who bore a son to be master to yours, a bastard, though he believes himself to be noble, you know him well: Hippolytus.

Phaedra

Oh! Oh!

Nurse

310 Does this touch you?

Phaedra

You destroy me, Nurse. By the gods, I beg you not to mention this man's name again.

Nurse

There now. You are yourself, but although sensible, you still do not wish to help your children and save your life.

Phaedra

315 I love my children, but I am tossed by another storm of fate.

Nurse

Child, are your hands pure of bloodshed?

Phaedra

My hands are pure, it is my *phrenes* that are polluted.

Nurse

Through a wrong done by some enemy [*ekhthros*]?

Phaedra

One who is *philos* destroys me, one unwilling as myself.

Nurse

320 Has Theseus wronged you somehow?

Phaedra

Never may I be seen doing him harm.

Nurse

Then what strange thing is it that drives you to your death?

Phaedra

Leave me alone to make my mistakes, since my error is not against you.

Nurse

Never willingly. But if I fail, it will be at your door.

Phaedra

325 What are you doing? Are you trying force in clasping my hand?

Nurse

Yes, and also your knees, nor will I loose my hold.

Phaedra

Alas, for you these things would also be evil, if you should learn them.

Nurse

What is a greater evil for me than failing to win you?

Phaedra

You would perish. But this matter brings me *tīmē*.

Nurse

330 Even so you conceal it, though what I beg to know is something good.

Phaedra

I do, since out of disgraceful things I am devising noble [*esthla*].

Nurse

By speaking of it, then you would appear with even more *tīmē*.

Phaedra

Go away, by the gods, and let go of my hand.

Nurse

I will not, since the gift which is mine you deny.

Phaedra

335 I will give it, since I feel respect [*aidōs*] for your reverent hand.

Nurse

From now on I will be quiet, and instead it will be for you to speak.

Phaedra

O, wretched mother, what a love was yours!

Nurse

Her love for the bull,² child, is that what you mean?

Phaedra

And you, my wretched sister, wife of Dionysus!³

Nurse

340 Child, what troubles you? Why do you speak ill of your family?

Phaedra

I am third to suffer, and in the same way I am also undone.

Nurse

I am amazed by you, where will this history lead?

Phaedra

Since long ago we are unfortunate, it is not new.

Nurse

I have learned nothing more of what I want to hear.

Phaedra

345 Ah, would that you could say what I have to tell!

Nurse

I am no prophet to judge for sure what is unclear.

Phaedra

What is it they mean when they talk of people being in love?

Nurse

At once the sweetest and bitterest thing, my child.

Phaedra

I will only find the latter half.

Nurse

350 What are you saying, my child? Are you in love with some man?

Phaedra

The Amazon's son, whoever he may be.

Nurse

Hippolytus, you mean?

Phaedra

It was you, not I, that said his name.

Nurse

Ah me! What are you saying, my child? You destroy me. Women, this is unbearable, I cannot bear to live. **355** Hateful is the day, hateful the light I see. I give up this body, I will cast it off, and in dying I will cease from living. Farewell, I am no longer. Although unwilling, those who are balanced [*sōphrones*] have passions for evils. Kypris is no goddess, **360** but something far greater than a god, for she has been the ruin of this woman, and of me, and of this whole house.

Chorus

O, did you take note, did you hear our queen [*turannos*] crying out her unhappy and unheard-of suffering? Would that I might perish, *philē*, **365** before I reach your state of mind! O horrible woe for these miseries, and woe for the troubles [*ponoi*] on which mortals feed! You are destroyed, now that you have brought your evils to light. What awaits you during the hours of this day? **370** Some strange event will come to pass in

this house. There is no longer any clue [*sēma*] where your fortunes from Kypris will set, unhappy daughter of Crete.

Phaedra

Women of Trozen, who dwell here in the extreme front of Pelops' land, **375** often before now in the long hours of the night I used to wonder why the life of mortals is spoiled. And it seems to me that it is not by the mind's nature that they do wrong, for there are many who have good sense. We must view it in this light: **380** we understand and we can discern what is right, but we don't always accomplish it, some from sloth, others from preferring pleasure of some kind or other to duty. There are many pleasures in life, long talks and leisure, a base enjoyment, **385** and *aidōs*, of which there are two kinds: one not evil, the other a curse to families. But if the proper time for each were clearly known, then these two would not have the same letters. So then, since I have made up my mind on these points, I am not about to change it because of some drug, **390** to reach a contrary point of view. And I will tell you, too, the way my judgment went. When love wounded me, I considered how I might bear it best. So from that day on, I began to hide in silence what I suffered. **395** For there is no trusting the tongue, or the alien thoughts of men who know how to admonish yet have countless miseries of their own. Next I strove to bear my folly nobly in an effort to master it by self-control [*sōphroneîn*]. **400** Finally when I failed by these means to subdue Kypris, it seemed best to die, and none could speak against my plan. For just as I would not have my good acts escape notice, so I would not have many to witness the disgraceful ones. **405** I knew the deed and the malady were of poor *kleos*, and in addition to these things I knew that I was a woman, an object of hate to all. Curses on the wife, whoever was the first to shame her marriage bed with other men. It was from noble families **410** that all this evil began to spread among women. For when shameful things appear right to those who are noble [*esthloi*], then surely it seems good to the *kakoi* as well. I hate those women who are moderate [*sōphrones*] when they talk, while in secret they carry on reckless deeds. **415** How then, lady Kypris, my mistress, do these women look their husbands in the face without fearing that the night, their accomplice, or the walls of the house may find a voice? It is this thing which causes me to die, *philai*, **420** so that I may never be found to disgrace my husband nor the children I bore. But let them grow up, free to speak and act, and let them dwell in glorious Athens, with good *kleos* from their mother. It would enslave a man, even one who was stouthearted, **425** if he should learn the evils of his mother or father. This alone they say can stand to compete in life: a good and just mind, in whomever these are found. For time reveals the *kakoi* among men, just as a mirror set before a young maid; **430** among these may I never be seen.

Chorus

Ah, how good equilibrium [*sōphron*] is, wherever it is found, which bears as fruit noble repute among mortals.

Nurse

Mistress, your misfortune, just now told, struck me at first with dreadful fear, **435** but now I consider that I was rash; among mortals second thoughts are somehow more *sophoi*. What you have suffered is not unusual nor unreasonable; the passion of Kypris has struck you. You are in love, what wonder? So are many more. **440** Do you then because of love destroy your *psūkhē*? There is little gain then for those who are in love and those yet to love, if they must die. For Kypris in her might is more than men can bear; peacefully she seeks those who are yielding, **445** but when she finds

someone arrogant and proud, she takes him and insults him unbelievably. Her path is in the sky and on the ocean's surges; from her all nature springs. She is the one who sows the seeds of love and grants desire, **450** to which all of us on earth owe our being. Those who have writings of old, or who are themselves inspired by the Muses, know how Zeus once was in love with Semele, **455** and they know how once the beautiful, shining goddess of Dawn stole Kephalos to heaven because of love; and yet in heaven they still dwell and so do not avoid the god of love; they are content, I imagine, to yield to their misfortune. But you, why not yield? It ought to have been on special terms **460** that your father begat you, or with different gods for masters, if you will not content yourself with these laws. How many sensible people do you think, when they see their marriage-bed sullied, pretend they do not see? How many fathers, when their sons have gone astray, **465** assist them in love? Among the *sophoi*, unattractive things go unnoticed. Mortals should not excessively perfect their lives, for not even the roof with which a house is covered would you complete precisely. **470** Now since you have fallen into such a plight, how can you best escape it? If you have more good than misery, being human, you should be doing fairly well. Cease, *philē* child, from your evil thoughts. Cease having *hubris*, for it is nothing else but *hubris*, **475** your wish to be better than the *daimones*. Face your love, this is the god's will. Though you are ailing, somehow turn your ill to good. There are charms and spells which soothe, some cure for your disease will be found, **480** but men would surely seek it out for a long time unless we women find the means.

Chorus

Phaedra, although she speaks more aptly in your present misfortune, still I praise [*aineîn*] you; yet this praise [*ainos*] may sound more harsh to you **485** and more painful than her advice.

Phaedra

This is what destroys well-run cities and the homes of men, words too well put; we should not speak to please the ear but to find what leads to good *kleos*.

Nurse

490 Why do you make solemn speeches? It is not well-worded phrases that you need, but a man. Immediately he must learn and he should be frankly told. If you were not in such a crisis, or were in balance [*sōphrōn*], **495** never for the sake of the bed and its pleasures would I have urged you on this course; but now there is a great *agōn* to save your life, so this is not blameworthy.

Phaedra

What you propose evokes awe! Keep quiet and never utter those disgraceful words again.

Nurse

500 Disgraceful, maybe, but better for you than fine words. Better this deed, if it will save your life, than a mere name, which you take pride in and die for.

Phaedra

Oh, I beseech you by the gods! You speak well, but what you say is disgraceful. Go no further, since through my desire I am made ready in my *psūkhē*, **505** and if you should use specious words for these disgraceful matters, I will give way to the very thing I am trying to escape.

Nurse

If this is how it seems to you, it is best not to have erred; but as it is, hear me, for that is second best. I have in the house charms to soothe your love; **510** I only just now thought of it. These will cure you of your malady, on no disgraceful terms and with your *phrenes* unhurt, if you will not be cowardly [*kakē*]. But from the one desired it is necessary to take some token, either a lock of hair or piece of clothing, **515** and from the two to unite them as one pleasure [*kharis*].

Phaedra

Is your drug a salve or a potion?

Nurse

I cannot tell; be content, my child, to profit by it and ask no questions.

Phaedra

I am afraid that you will prove too *sophē* for me.

Nurse

You would be afraid of anything. But what scares you?

Phaedra

520 That you may indicate something to Theseus' son.

Nurse

Leave it to me child, I will set everything aright.

Lady Kypris, my mistress, you alone be my accomplice. For the rest of my purpose it will be enough to speak to my *philoī* inside.

The Nurse goes into the palace.

Chorus

strophe 1

525 Love, Love, who drips desire upon the eyes, and brings sweet grace [*kharis*] into the *psūkhē* against whom he camps, never appear to me with evil, nor come without measure. **530** Neither fire nor meteor hurls a mightier bolt than Aphrodite's shaft shot by the hands of Love, the child of Zeus.

antistrophe 1

535 In vain by the banks of Alpheus, in vain within the Pythian shrines of Phoebus, does Hellas heap up slaughtered steers, while we neglect to worship Love, the *turannos* of men, **540** who holds the key to Aphrodite's sweetest chamber, but when he comes, he lays waste to mortals and casts them through all sorts of misfortune.

strophe 2

545 There was that maiden in Oikhalia, a filly unwed, a husbandless virgin still, whom, unyoking from Eurytos' house **550** like some running Naiad or Bacchant, amidst blood and smoke and murderous marital vows, Kypris gave as bride to Hēraklēs, the son of Alkmene.⁴ What a wretched wedding hymn!

antistrophe 2

555 O sacred walls of Thebes, O mouth of the fountain of Dirke, you could testify what course Kypris follows. **560** For in an engulfing lightning-bolt she lay the mother of twice-born Dionysus to rest in murderous death, though she was still a bride. The

dread goddess inspires all things, flying about like a bee.

Phaedra stands listening at the door of the palace.

Phaedra

565 Be quiet, women, I am undone.

Chorus

What is it, Phaedra, that scares you within the house?

Phaedra

Hold still, let me hear what they are saying inside.

Chorus

I am quiet. This is surely the prelude to evil.

Phaedra

570 Oh my! How awful are my sufferings [*pathos*]!

Chorus

What cry do you make? What are you shouting? Say what frightens you, woman, overwhelming your *phrenes*.

Phaedra

575 I am destroyed. Stand here at the door and listen to the noise spreading through the house.

Chorus

You are by the door, it is for you to note the talk conveyed within the house. **580** Then tell me, tell me what evil has arisen.

Phaedra

It is the son of the horse-loving Amazon, Hippolytus, uttering terrible, evil words on my servant.

Chorus

585 I hear the cry, but I cannot tell clearly; it is through the door that the sound reached you.

Phaedra

Yes, yes, he plainly calls her a matchmaker of evil, **590** and says that she betrays her master's bed.

Chorus

Woe is me for these evils! You are betrayed, *philē*. What counsel will I give you? Your secrets have been revealed, you are utterly destroyed. **595** Alas, betrayed by a *philos*!

Phaedra

She has destroyed me in speaking of my misfortune; it was meant kindly, since she was trying to cure my illness, but it was not right.

Chorus

What now? What will you do, having suffered [*paskhein*] this state of helplessness [*amēkhania*]?

Phaedra

I know but one way: to die as soon as possible, **600** this is the only cure for my present woes.

Hippolytus bursts out of the palace, followed closely by the nurse.

Hippolytus

O mother earth and sun's expanse! What words unfit for speech I have heard!

Nurse

Be quiet, child, before someone hears your shouting.

Hippolytus

I cannot hear such awful words and keep quiet.

Nurse

605 I implore you by your strong right arm.

Hippolytus

Let go of my hand and don't touch my clothes!

Nurse

By your knees I beg you, don't destroy me utterly.

Hippolytus

Why, if, as you say, you have said nothing wrong?

Nurse

This tale [*mūthos*], child, was not for everyone to hear.

Hippolytus

610 Surely fair words are fairer when told to many.

Nurse

You would not dishonor your oath.

Hippolytus

My tongue did swear an oath, but not my *phrenes*.

Nurse

Child, what will you do? Destroy your *philoī*?

Hippolytus

No one without *dikē* is *philos* to me.

Nurse

615 Forgive, child; to err is human nature.

Hippolytus

Zeus, why did you set women to dwell in the light of the sun to be a false evil to the human race? If you wished to multiply the mortal race [*genos*], you need not accomplish it by means of women, **620** but instead in your temples mortals should lay down bronze or silver or a sum of gold to buy their sons, each man in proportion to his wealth, and so in independence they would live at home, free from women. **625** It is clear from the following how great an evil a woman is: the very father who begot and nurtured her then pays a dowry and settles her elsewhere to be rid of the trouble. **630** Then the husband who takes the plant of doom [*atē*] into his house happily lavishes a fine display on his sorry idol and struggles to keep her in dresses, poor

fellow, squandering his house's wealth [*olbos*]. **635** It is easiest for him to have a ciphers as a wife, except that a simple woman set up in a house is no benefit. **640** But it is the *sophē* woman I hate, for I would not have in my house a woman who knew more than she need, since Kypris breeds more mischief-making in *sophai* women, while the resourceless [*amēkhanos*] woman is kept from folly by her shallow intelligence. **645** It ought to be that servants have no access to women; wild beasts should live with them, who bite, not talk, so that they could not speak to anyone, nor be answered back by them. But as it is, evil women [*kakai*] plot evils within the house, **650** and their servants broadcast it outside. So you, *kakē*, have come to invite me to my father's untouchable bed. I will wash away your words in running streams, dashing the water in my ears. How could I be so *kakos*, **655** when just hearing of it I feel myself polluted? Rest assured, woman, that it is my piety alone which saves you. For if I had not been taken unawares by oaths before the gods, I would not have been able to keep myself from telling all to my father. Now I will keep away from the house while Theseus is abroad, **660** and I will keep my tongue quiet. But when my father returns I will watch how you face him, both you and your mistress. May you perish! I can never satisfy my hatred for women, **665** even though some say that I always speak of it, for somehow they are always *kakai*. Either let someone prove them balanced [*sōphrones*], or let me still trample on them forever.

Hippolytus exits.

Phaedra

Oh, the cruel, unhappy fate of women! **670** What craft, what argument have we to untie the knot of a word, when we have slipped? I have met with *dikē*. O earth and light of day, how can I escape fate? How will I conceal my misfortunes, *philai*? **675** What god will appear to help me, what mortal will take my part or help me in unrighteousness? The present *pathos* moves across my life, and there is no escape. I am the most wretched of all women.

Chorus

680 Alas, it is done, your servant's schemes have gone awry, mistress, and it bodes poorly.

Phaedra

Worst in all ways, destroyer of your *philoī*, what you have done to me! May Zeus, my ancestor, strike you with his bolt and uproot you utterly! **685** Didn't I tell you, foreseeing your intent [*phrenes*], to keep quiet on the very matter which is now bringing me the name of *kakē*? But you would not be still, and thus I will not be buried with good *kleos*. Now I need to plan anew. In the keenness of his fury, **690** he will tell his father of my error and the aged Pittheus of my misfortune, and fill the whole land with stories to my great disgrace. May you perish, and whoever else is eager to do service for unwilling *philoī* in ways not good!

Nurse

695 Mistress, you may blame my bad works, for sorrow's sting overpowers your judgment. Yet I can answer you in the face of this, if you will accept what I have to say. I raised you and have good *noos* for you, but in seeking to find a cure for your illness I found what I did not want. **700** Had I succeeded, I would have been considered *sophē*; for the credit we get for *phrenes* is measured by our success.

Phaedra

Are these things just [*dikaia*] or sufficient—to wound me and then come to terms in words?

Nurse

We dwell on this too long. I did not show moderation [*sōphrosunē*], **705** but it is still possible to be saved [*sōzein*] from your troubles, my child.

Phaedra

Be *euphēmos*!⁵ Even before you did not advise me well, and your attempted scheme was evil. Now get out of my way and see to your own affairs. I will take care of myself well enough.

The nurse goes into the palace.

710 But you, noble daughters of Trozen, promise me what I ask: hide in silence what you have heard today.

Chorus

I swear, by holy Artemis, never to bring your woes to the light of day.

Phaedra

715 You have spoken well. But I, with all my thought, have only one remedy for my misfortune, so that I can give a life of *kleos* to my children and find myself some help as matters stand. I will never bring shame on my Cretan home, **720** nor will I, to save one poor *psūkhē*, face Theseus after my disgrace.

Chorus

What irreparable evil are you planning?

Phaedra

To die—but in what way I must still consider.

Chorus

Don't speak ill-omened words.

Phaedra

You also advise me well. **725** Today I will gladden Kypris, my destroyer, by giving up my *psūkhē*, and so I will be vanquished by bitter love. But in dying I will be a misery to someone else, **730** that he may learn not to exult at my misfortunes; when he comes to share my suffering, he will learn to be moderate [*sōphrōn*].

Phaedra enters the palace.

Chorus

strophe 1

⁷³² Oh if only I could be down under the steep heights in deep cavernous spaces, ⁷³³ where I could become a winged bird ⁷³⁴ —a god would make me into that, and I would become one of a whole flock of birds in flight, yes, a god would make me that. ⁷³⁵ And if only I could then lift off in flight and fly away, soaring over the waves of the sea [*pontos*] ⁷³⁶ marked by the Adriatic ⁷³⁷ headland, and then over the waters of the river Eridanos ⁷³⁸ where into the purple swirl comes ⁷³⁹ a cascade from unhappy ⁷⁴⁰ girls in their grief for Phaethon⁶—a cascade of tears that pour down ⁷⁴¹ their amber radiance.

antistrophe 1

⁷⁴² Then to the apple-bearing headland of the Hesperides ⁷⁴³ would I finally arrive, to the land of those singers of songs ⁷⁴⁴ where the ruler of the sea [*pontos*], with its seething purple stretches of water, ⁷⁴⁵ no longer gives a path for sailors to proceed any further, ⁷⁴⁶ and there I would find the revered limit ⁷⁴⁷ of the sky, which Atlas holds, ⁷⁴⁸ and there the immortalizing [*ambrosiai*] spring waters flow ⁷⁴⁹ right next to the place where Zeus goes to lie down, ⁷⁵⁰ and where she who gives blessedness [*olbos*] makes things grow. She is the most fertile one. ⁷⁵¹ She is the Earth, the one who makes the good blessing of superhuman powers [*eudaimoniā*] keep growing for the gods.

strophe 2

White-winged Cretan boat, which brought my queen through the roaring ocean waves **755** from her prosperous [*olbios*] home, to have the joy of a most *kakos* marriage; surely evil omens from either port were with that ship both from Crete, when she winged her way to glorious Athens, **760** and when the crew made fast its twisted cable ends upon the beach of Mounikhos, and stepped out onto the land.

antistrophe 2

So it was that her *phrenes* were crushed **765** by the cruel affliction of unholy passion sent by Aphrodite, and overwhelmed by bitter grief; **770** she will tie a noose around her white neck from the rafters of her bridal chamber, since she feels *aidōs* for her hateful fate [*daimōn*], and choosing instead the report of good reputation, **775** she strives in this way to rid her *phrenes* of passion's sting.

Within the palace.

Nurse

O, help! Come quick, help, whoever is near the palace—our mistress has hanged herself, Theseus' wife!

Chorus

Alas, the deed is done. The royal woman is no more, she is hung in a dangling noose.

Nurse

780 Why don't you hurry? Someone bring a two-edged knife to cut this from her neck.

Chorus

Philai, what shall we do? Do you think we should go into the house and loose the queen from the tight-drawn noose? Why should we? Aren't there young menservants here? **785** It is not safe in life to do too much.

Nurse

Lay out the sorry corpse, straighten the limbs; this was surely a bitter way to keep my master's house.

Chorus

She is dead, poor lady, so it seems. Already they are laying out her corpse.

Theseus and his retinue have entered unnoticed.

Theseus

790 Women, can you tell me what the uproar in the palace means, since a mournful sound from the servants reached my hearing? None of my household thought it

worthwhile to open the palace gates in welcome to receive me, though I have just come from being a witness [*theōros*] to what the oracle said. Nothing has suddenly happened to old Pittheus? **795** He is well advanced in years, yet I would still be mournful should he leave this house.

Chorus

It is not the fate of the old which concerns you; it is the young whose death will bring you pain.

Theseus

Oh no! I am not robbed of the life of one of my children?

Chorus

800 They live; but cruelest of all for you, their mother is dead.

Theseus

What, my wife dead? By what fate?

Chorus

She fastened a strangling noose around her neck.

Theseus

Was she chilled by grief or some misfortune?

Chorus

I know only this, Theseus, for I have just arrived at your house **805** to express grief [*penthos*] over your misfortunes.

Theseus

Oh, why have I crowned my head with woven garlands when my being witness [*theōros*] to the oracle has meant such misfortune? Unbar the doors of the gates, servants, unloose their fastenings, so that I can see the bitter sight of my wife **810** whose death is death to me.

The doors of the palace open, revealing the corpse.

Chorus

Oh, how wretched are the woes that you suffered [*paskhein*!] What you have done is enough to overthrow this family. Ah, the daring of it! Dying violently and by unnatural means, **815** the desperate effort of your own poor hand. Who cast this shadow over your life, poor woman?

Theseus

Oh, I am full of pain. I have suffered [*paskhein*] the greatest of my miseries. Fate, how heavily you have settled on me and my house, **820** inflicting from some avenging god a nameless stain. It is the destruction of my life, making it unlivable. I see such a wide sea of troubles that I can never swim to shore again, nor get through the tide of my misfortune. **825** With what words will I come to address the fate of your deep suffering, poor wife? You are like a bird vanished from my hand, so swiftly did you leap from me to Hādēs. **830** Alas, this is surely a bitter, bitter sight. It must be a fate sent by the *daimones* for the errors of an ancestor, which I bring on myself from some far source.

Chorus

These sufferings [*pathos* pl.] do not come to you alone, lord; **835** you have lost a

cherished wife just like many others.

Theseus

Below the earth, below the darkness, in the shadow of death, I long to make my home, now that I am robbed of your most *philē* company. You have destroyed me more than yourself. **840** Where did it come from, the fatal stroke that reached your heart? Who will say what happened, or does the palace merely shelter a useless crowd of my servants? Your death is such grief to me, **845** such is the pain that I now see in my house, intolerable beyond words. I am ruined, my house is desolate, and my children orphaned. You have left us, left us, *philē*, best [*aristē*] of all women **850** who behold the light of the sun and the starry moon.

Chorus

Poor man, so great is the misfortune of your house. My eyes are wet with streams of tears to see your fate. **855** But the grief on top of this one has long been making me shudder.

Theseus

Look, what is this? There is some tablet here hanging from her *philē* wrist. Does it have something new to signal [*sēmainein*] for me? Surely she has written a message bidding me to care for our marriage and children. **860** Take heart, poor wife, no woman will come into the bed or house of Theseus as a wife. Seeing the stamp of my dead wife's golden seal warms my heart; untwisting the seal **865** I will see what the tablet has to say.

Chorus

Alas, here is yet another evil in the succession which the god sends. Seeing what has happened, my life is no longer livable, **870** for I declare that the house of my *turannoi* is ruined; it no longer exists. O *daimōn*, if it be at all possible, I pray that you not overthrow the household! Hear me as I beseech you! For like a seer I see a bird-omen coming from something evil.

Theseus

O horror! Misfortune upon misfortune, **875** and still they come, too deep for words, too heavy to bear.

Chorus

What is it? Speak, if I may share in it.

Theseus

This letter cries out, it cries out insufferable things. Where can I flee this burden of woes? I am gone, destroyed. Such a song I have seen in this writing, **880** giving voice to horror.

Chorus

Your words reveal evils yet to come.

Theseus

I can no longer keep this accursed tale within the gateway of my lips, though it is cruel. Listen, *polis* of Trozen: **885** Hippolytus has dared to enter my bed by force, and so to treat without *tīmē* the august eye of Zeus. Therefore, Poseidon my father, of the three prayers which you once promised to me, answer one of them against my son: do not let him escape this day, **890** if in fact these prayers were truly offered.

Chorus

My lord, by the gods, I beg you to take back your words, for in future you will know your error. Believe me.

Theseus

It cannot be. Furthermore I will banish him from this land, so that he will be struck down by one of these two fates: **895** either Poseidon, out of respect for my prayer, will cast his dead body into the house of Hādēs; or, exiled from this land, wandering as a stranger, upon some foreign land he will live out his sorry life.

Chorus

Here comes your son Hippolytus now, just in time; **900** dismiss your evil anger, and consider what is best for your house.

Hippolytus enters.

Hippolytus

I have come with haste, father, since I heard your cry. I don't know the reason for your call, but I would like to hear of it.

905 Ah! What is this? Your wife is dead. How strange this is. I only just left her, it was but a moment ago that she looked upon the light. How did she come to suffer [*paskhein*] this? In what way did she die? **910** Father, I want to learn of this from you. Do you still remain quiet? Silence does no good in a time of evils. **915** It is not just [*dikaion*] to conceal your misfortunes from your *philoī*, and even more than *philoī*, father.

Theseus

Humans, many are the errors you commit in vain. Why teach your countless crafts, why scheme and seek to find a way for everything, while one thing you don't know nor have you made your own: **920** a way to teach those without *noos* to have *phrenes*.

Hippolytus

You speak of a very master in his craft, a man who can force to think well people who don't think at all. But this is not the time to speak in subtleties, father; I fear your tongue runs wild because of your misery.

Theseus

925 There ought to be some token for people to test their *philoī*, a touchstone of their *phrenes*, for the ascertaining [*diagnōsis*] of which *philos* is true [*alēthēs*] and which is not; and everyone should have two voices, a just [*dikaios*] one in addition to whatever he should happen to have, **930** so that the honest voice could refute its opposite, and then we would not be deceived.

Hippolytus

Surely some *philos* who slanders me now holds your attention, so I am now accused, although guiltless. I am amazed, for your words astound me; **935** surely you are out of your *phrenes*.

Theseus

Oh, the *phrēn* of mortals, to what lengths it will go! What limit will its bold assurance have? If it goes on growing as man's life advances, and if each successor outdoes his predecessor in villainy, **940** then it will be necessary for the gods to add another

sphere to the world, which will have room for the *kakoi* and not *dikaioi*. Look at this man, my own son, who has disgraced my bed **945** and is clearly proven to be most *kakos* by my dead wife. Since I am already polluted by you, look your father in the face. Are you the man who joins with the gods, as though superior? You are moderate [*sōphrōn*] and uncontaminated by evil? **950** I would not believe your claims and be guilty then of attributing ignorance to the gods. Go and boast now, advertise your *psūkhē*-less foods,⁷ and with Orpheus as your leader enjoy Bacchic revels in honor of those elusive writings. Now you are caught. **955** I warn everyone to avoid such men; they hunt with fine words and all the while are scheming villainy. She is dead; do you think that this will save you? By this you are condemned most of all, most *kakos*. **960** What oaths, what words are better than this letter, that might acquit you? You will say that she hated you, and that the bastard is by nature at odds with the freeborn. You would say then that she was a bad bargainer with her life, **965** if to satisfy her hate for you she lost what was most *phila* to her. And might you say that stupidity is not found in men but exists by nature in women? Yet young men in their prime are no more secure than women when Kypris stirs their *phrenes*, **970** but their male sex comes as a benefit to them. Yet why now do I struggle with words when the corpse that lies here is the surest witness? Begone from this land at once, and never set foot again in god-built Athens, **975** nor anywhere in the boundaries of my rule. If I submit to you, having suffered your outrage, then Sinis, the robber of the Isthmus, will no longer bear witness that I killed him but say that my boasts are idle; nor will the Skironian rocks,⁸ which fringe the sea, **980** say what a burden I was to *kakoi*.

Chorus

I don't think that I can call any mortal fortunate, for the first has turned and now is last.

Hippolytus

Father, your *menos* and the intensity of your *phrenes* are terrible. Although your arguments are well put, if one lays them bare, your charge is no good. I have little skill in speaking before a crowd; I am more *sophos* with my own contemporaries and small groups. But this is fate: those whom the *sophoi* dislike are more skilled in addressing a crowd. **990** Yet it is necessary in the present circumstance to break my silence. First I will speak of the point which you used at first to undermine me so that I might not respond. You see this sunlight and earth? There is no man here, **995** though you may now say otherwise, who is more moderate [*sōphrōn*] than I. First, I know how to reverence the gods, and to adopt as *philoï* those who do not attempt injustices, and who have *aidōs* of suggesting anything base or of returning kindness with disgrace. **1000** To mock my *philoï*, father, is not my way either: I am the same behind their backs as to their face. The crime in which you think to have caught me I am up to this moment untouched by, for my body is still pure of sexual love. I know nothing of its practice except what I have heard or seen in pictures. **1005** I am not even eager to look at these since my *psūkhē* is virginal. My moderation [*sōphrosunē*] may not persuade you; well then, it is necessary for you to show how I was corrupted. Was Phaedra the most beautiful woman? **1010** Or did I hope to have your house by taking your wife in marriage and so have your possessions? I would surely then have been a fool and out of my *phrenes*. Then will you say that being *turannos* is sweet to men who are balanced [*sōphrones*]? I say not, **1015** since monarchy is only pleasing to those whose *phrenes* are impure. I would rather be first at all the games [*agōnes*] in Hellas, but second in the *polis*, and in this way to enjoy always good fortune among my most noble [*aristoi*] *philoï*. There it is possible to be happy, and the absence of

danger **1020** gives a more powerful pleasure [*kharis*] than tyranny. There is one more thing I have not said, but the rest you have heard. If there were a witness to my worth, or if I were contesting Phaedra still alive, you would see who is evil by reviewing the facts. **1025** But as it is, I swear by Zeus, the god of oaths, and by the ground on which we stand, that I never touched your wife, nor would I wish to, nor would I conceive the thought. May I die without *kleos* and nameless, **1030** and let neither sea [*pontos*] nor land receive my flesh when I am dead, if I am a *kakos* man. I don't know if she destroyed herself through fear, but more than this it is not lawful [*themis*] for me to say. She remained in balance [*sōphrōn*], although she was not balanced [*sōphrōn*] by nature; **1035** I am in balance [*sōphrosunē*], but I have not used it well.

Chorus

The oath you speak by the gods sufficiently refutes the charge; it is a strong pledge.

Theseus

Does he think he is some sorcerer or enchanter, to think he can first treat his father without *tīmē*, **1040** and then by his cool talk master my *psūkhē*?

Hippolytus

These same things amaze me in you too, father. For if you were my son and I your father, I would have killed you and not punished you with banishment, if you saw fit to lay hands on my wife.

Theseus

1045 Your remark is worthy of you. No, you will not die in this way that you pronounce for yourself, for a swift death is an easy end for wretchedness. Exiled from your fatherland, you will live out your miserable life wandering in a foreign land.

Hippolytus

1050 Oh, what will you do? Banish me without even waiting for the evidence of time on my behalf?

Theseus

Indeed, beyond the *pontos*, beyond the bounds of Atlas, if I could, so much do I despise the sight of you.

Hippolytus

1055 What! Banish me untried, without even testing my oath, the pledge I offer, the voice of seers?

Theseus

This letter here, though it bears no seers' signs, denounces your pledges; as for birds that fly over head, I bid them a long farewell.

Hippolytus

1060 Oh gods, why don't I unlock my lips, since I am ruined by you though I still reverence you? No, I won't, since not even then would I persuade those whom I must, and in vain I would break the oath I swore.

Theseus

Your righteousness is more than I can bear. **1065** Get out of this land as soon as possible.

Hippolytus

Where, in my misery, can I turn? What house can I enter as guest [*xenos*], exiled on such a grave charge?

Theseus

Whoever enjoys receiving as guests [*xenoi*] corrupters of wives and partners in evil.

Hippolytus

1070 This wounds my heart and brings me close to tears, that I should appear so *kakos* and you believe me so.

Theseus

Your cries and forethought should have come before you dared to bring *hubris* to your father's wife.

Hippolytus

Oh house! Would that you could find a voice **1075** to testify for me, if I were a *kakos* man.

Theseus

Wisely you run to a voiceless witness; this deed here is voiceless too, but it clearly proves your guilt.

Hippolytus

If only I could stand outside myself and look; then I would weep to see the evil I suffer [*paskhein*].

Theseus

1080 It is your character to honor yourself far more than your parents, as it would be right [*dikaios*] for you to do.

Hippolytus

Unhappy mother! Bitter birth! Let none of my *philoï* suffer to be born a bastard.

Theseus

Why don't you drag him away, servants? **1085** Didn't you hear me proclaim his exile long ago?

Hippolytus

Whoever lays a hand on me will regret it. If this is what your *thūmos* desires, force me from this land yourself.

Theseus

I will, if you don't obey my words. I feel no pity come over me for your exile.

Hippolytus

1090 It is fixed then, so it seems. I am wretched, for although I know well these things here, I know no way to indicate them.

Most *philē daimōn* of all to me, daughter of Leto, partner and comrade in the chase, I am exiled from glorious Athens. Farewell, *polis*, and land of Erekhtheus; **1095** farewell, Trozen, you hold the many happinesses [*eudaimoniai*] of youth. Looking at you for the last time I bid farewell. Come, young men, companions of my country, greet me kindly and escort me from this land. **1100** Never will you behold another man so moderate [*sōphrōn*] as I am, even if I seem otherwise to my father.

Hippolytus exits with many followers. Theseus enters the palace.

Chorus

strophe 1

When I consider how much the gods care for human beings, my grief is lessened, **1105** yet, though I cherish a hidden hope for some understanding, I fall short of it when I look at the fortunes and deeds of mortals. For change succeeds change, **1110** and man's life is variable and ever shifting.

antistrophe 1

May fate grant me this prayer from the gods: good fortune followed by prosperity [*olbos*], and a *thūmos* free from pain. **1115** And let me not hold opinions which are too strict nor counterfeit [*para-sēmos*], but lightly changing my ways day by day, let me have good fortune throughout my life.

strophe 2

1120 My *phrenes* are no longer clear, I see things which I never expected, since the bright star of Hellenic Athens **1125** I now see driven to a foreign land because of his father's anger, O sands of the city's shores, O mountain oaks where he used to hunt with his fleet hounds **1130** together with the goddess Diktyнна.

antistrophe 2

No longer will he mount behind his yoke of Venetian steeds, filling the course around Limna with the sound of trained horses' hooves. **1135** And the sleepless music below the strings of the lyre will cease in his father's palace, and the resting places of Artemis will go without garlands throughout the deep green meadow. And by your exile the rivalry for your bridal bed among the unwed girls is lost.

epode

Meanwhile, with tears at your unhappy fate, I will live out my own sad destiny. Poor mother, **1145** who gave you life in vain, I rage at the gods. Linked Graces [*Kharites*], why do you send him from his homeland **1150** innocent of this ruinous damage [*atē*]? Look, I see an attendant of Hippolytus with a troubled expression hastening towards the palace.

A messenger enters.

Messenger

Women, where can I find the king of this land, Theseus? If you know, indicate [*sēmainein*] to me. **1155** Is he inside the palace?

Chorus

Here he is coming out of the palace now.

Theseus enters.

Messenger

Theseus, the news I bring is a matter of concern for you, and for the citizens who dwell in Athens and within the bounds of the land of Trozen.

Theseus

1160 What is it? Has some new calamity overtaken these two neighboring cities?

Messenger

Hippolytus is no more, to speak just a word [*epos*]; although he still sees the light of day, he is in a slender balance.

Theseus

At whose hands? Did some man come to blows with him, **1165** whose wife he disgraced by force, just as his father's?

Messenger

It was his own chariot that killed him, and the curses that you uttered against him, when you prayed to your father Poseidon, lord of the *pontos*, to kill your son.

Theseus

O gods! Poseidon, you are truly my father, **1170** since you heard my curse! How did he perish? Tell me how the hammer of *dikē* fell on him for his crime against me.

Messenger

Hard by the wave-beaten shore we were combing out the horse's manes, and we were weeping, **1175** for a messenger had come to say that Hippolytus was harshly exiled by you and would never set foot on this land again. Then Hippolytus himself came to us on the beach with the same tearful song, and with him was a countless throng of *philoī*, who followed after. **1180** In time he stopped his lament and spoke: "Why do I grieve over this when my father's words must be obeyed? Servants, harness my horses to the chariot, for this *polis* is no longer mine." **1185** Thereupon each one of us hastened, and faster than you could say, the horses were readied and standing by our master's side. Then he caught up the reins from the chariot rail while fitting his feet into place. **1190** But first with outspread hands he called on the gods: "Zeus, let me live no longer if I am *kakos*, and let my father learn how he treats me without *tīmē* once I am dead, if not when I still see the light." By now he had taken up the whip and goaded the horses, **1195** while we attendants, near the reins, kept up with him along the road that leads straight to Argos and Epidauros. Just as we were coming to a lonely spot, a strip of sand beyond the borders of this country, **1200** sloping right to the Saronic gulf, there came a rumbling sound from the earth, like the thunder of Zeus, and a deep roar issued forth that was horrible to hear; the horses raised their heads up to heaven and pricked their ears, and among us there was wild fear to know the source of the sound. **1205** Then, as we gazed toward the wave-beaten shore, we saw a tremendous wave reaching to heaven, so that from our view the cliffs of Skiron vanished, for it hid the Isthmus and the rocks of Asklepios. **1210** The wave swelled and frothed with a crest of foam, and from the raging sea it made its way to shore where the four-horse chariot was. And in the moment that the mighty wave broke, it issued forth a wild bull, **1215** whose bellowing filled the whole land with frightful echoes, a sight too awful, as it seemed to us who witnessed it. A terrible panic seized the horses at once, but our master, who was quite used to the horses' ways, **1220** pulled back as a sailor pulls on an oar, leaning back on the reins with all of his weight; but the horses biting into the forged bits with their jaws wildly bore him on, regardless of their master's guiding hand or rein or jointed car. Whenever he would take the reins and steer for softer ground, the bull would appear in front to turn him back again, making his horses mad with terror, **1230** but if in their frantic rage they ran toward the rocks, the bull would draw near the chariot rail, keeping up with them, until, suddenly dashing the wheel against a stone, he overturned and wrecked the car. Then

there was confusion everywhere, **1235** wheel naves and axle pins were thrown into the air, while poor Hippolytus, entangled in the reins, was dragged along, bound by a stubborn knot, his own head dashed against the rocks, his flesh torn while he cried out terribly: **1240** "Horses reared in my own stables, stop; don't wipe me out! Father, your pitiless curse! Is there anyone who will save a most noble [*aristos*] man?" Many of us wanted to help, but we were left behind. At last he got himself free **1245** and fell from the knot of the reins, I don't know how, and there was still a faint breath of life in him; but the horses disappeared, and that portentous bull, over the rocky ground, I can't say where. I am just a slave in your house, lord, **1250** and yet I will never be able to believe that your son is *kakos*, not even if the whole race [*genos*] of women should hang themselves, or if someone should fill with writing every pine tree grown on Mount Ida. I know that Hippolytus is noble [*esthlos*].

Chorus

1255 Alas, a misfortune of new evils is accomplished; there is no escape from fate and necessity.

Theseus

In my hatred for the man who suffered [*paskhein*] these things, at first I was glad at your words, but now because of respect [*aidōs*] for the gods and for him, since he is my son, **1260** I feel neither joy nor sorrow at his woes.

Messenger

What then? Do we bring him here? What should we do to please your *phrēn*? Consider this, if you will take my advice: don't be harsh to your son in his sorry state.

Theseus

1265 Bring him here, so that I can see him with my own eyes and condemn him with words and with this misfortune from the *daimones*, since he has denied that he abused my wife.

The messenger exits.

Chorus

Kypris, you guide the unyielding *phrenes* of gods and mortals, together with Love, **1270** who on painted wing embraces his victims in swift flight. He flies over the land and over the resounding salty sea [*pontos*], on golden wings, **1275** maddening the hearts and beguiling the senses of all whom he attacks: mountain-bred cubs, creatures of the sea, and whomever else the earth nourishes under the light of the sun, including men. **1280** Kypris, you alone have this royal *tīmē*, to rule them all together.

Artemis herself appears.

Artemis

Noble son of Aegeus, I bid you listen; **1285** it is I, Artemis, the daughter of Leto, who speaks. Theseus, why, poor man, do you rejoice over this news, when you have killed your own son impiously, believing in the false tales [*mūthoi*] of your wife though they were unproven? Clear now is your ruin [*atē*] from this. **1290** Why do you not hide your body in disgrace in the blackness below the earth, or trading this life for wings take off and fly away from your misery? Among *agathoi* men **1295** you now have no share in life. Listen, Theseus, to the state of your misfortune. Although it can do no good, still I wish to pain you, for I came with this intent: to show you your son's just *phrenes* so

that he might die with good *kleos*, **1300** and also the mad passion and, in some sense, the nobleness of your wife. For she was cruelly stung with a passion for your son by that goddess who is most hostile to those who take pleasure in virginity. Though she tried to conquer her passion by resolution, **1305** nevertheless she fell, thanks to the schemes of her nurse, who against her will revealed [*sēmainein*] her malady to your son under oath. But he would have none of her advice, as was right [*dikaïos*], and not even when you abused him did he take back his oath, for he was pious. **1310** But Phaedra, in fear of being found out, wrote that deceitful note and destroyed your son by guile, though you believed her.

Theseus

Oh no!

Artemis

Does my story [*mūthos*] hurt you? Be quiet a little longer; hear what follows so that you can lament even more. **1315** Do you know those three prayers from your father which have certain result? You have now used one of them pitifully on your own son instead of against some enemy. Your father of the sea [*pontos*] meant kindly, but he granted what was necessary, since he had promised. **1320** Now you have shown yourself to be *kakos* both to him and me, since you would not wait for proof or the utterances of seers; you did not make inquiries nor did you take time for consideration, but with undue haste you cast curses against your son and killed him.

Theseus

1325 Goddess, let me die.

Artemis

You have done an awful thing, yet it is still possible for you to have forgiveness even for this. For it was Kypris who willed these things to be, in order to satisfy her own *thūmos*. This is law amongst the gods: none is allowed to oppose the will of another, **1330** but we stand ever aloof. Know well that if I did not fear Zeus, I would never have come to the disgrace of allowing the man most *philos* to me of all mortals to die. **1335** As for your mistake, in the first place your ignorance absolves you of its being evil, but also that your wife, when she died, was lavish in her use of arguments to persuade your *phrenes*. On you especially these misfortunes burst, but they are grievous to me as well. The gods take no pleasure when the righteous die, **1340** but the *kakoi* we destroy utterly, their children and their homes.

Chorus

Look, here he comes now, poor thing, his youthful skin and fair head shamefully abused. Oh, the pain [*ponos*] of the household, **1345** what twofold sorrow [*penthos*] has fallen on your halls from the gods!

Hippolytus enters, carried by his attendants.

Hippolytus

Oh, I am wretched, I have been undone by the unjust [*a-dikos*] curses of my unjust [*a-dikos*] father. **1350** I am thoroughly destroyed. Pains shoot through my head, and there is a throbbing against my brain. Enough, let me give up my body. **1355** Pitiful horses, nourished by my own hand, you are my ruin and my death. By the gods, servants, handle my wounded flesh gently. **1360** Who is standing on my right side? Support me carefully and lead me steadily, with a evil *daimōn* and cursed by my mistaken father. Zeus, do you see these things? I am your reverent worshipper, **1365**

the man who surpasses everyone in moderation [*sōphrosunē*]; now I am on my way to Hādēs, and my life is completely lost; in vain did I struggle to respect men piously. **1370** Oh, oh, the pain is on me, let me go, wretched as I am, and let death come to me. Kill me at last and end my sufferings. **1375** I want a two-edged sword to cut with and to lay down my life. Wretched curse of my father! The crimes of bloody kinsmen, **1380** ancestors of old, now come forth without delay and are upon me. But why, since I am not guilty [*aitios*] of any evil? **1385** How will I give up my life without suffering [*pathos*]? I wish dark Hādēs, lord of the night, would lay me in my misery to rest.

Artemis

Poor boy, you are yoked to such misfortune! **1390** The nobility of your *phrenes* has destroyed you.

Hippolytus

O, the divine scent! Even in my misery I sense you and feel relief; she is here, in this very place, my goddess Artemis.

Artemis

She is, poor boy, the goddess most *philē* to you.

Hippolytus

1395 You see me, my mistress, in my suffering?

Artemis

I see you, but it is not *themis* for me to shed a tear.

Hippolytus

There is none to lead the hunt or serve you.

Artemis

None now, yet even in death I love you still.

Hippolytus

There is none to groom your horses nor be the guardian of your image.

Artemis

1400 It was Kypris who devised this evil.

Hippolytus

Ah! Now I know the *daimōn* who has destroyed me.

Artemis

She was jealous of her slighted *tīmē* and angered by your *sōphrosunē*.

Hippolytus

One, I see, has destroyed three.

Artemis

Yes, your father, you, and third, your father's wife.

Hippolytus

1405 Then I mourn the bad luck of my father also.

Artemis

He was deceived by the plotting of the *daimōn*.

Hippolytus

O father, the misery of your misfortune!

Theseus

I am ruined, son, life holds no pleasure [*kharis*] for me.

Hippolytus

I mourn for you, in your mistake, more than for myself.

Theseus

1410 If I could I would die in your place, my son.

Hippolytus

The gifts from your father Poseidon are bitter.

Theseus

I wish my lips had never spoken those words.

Hippolytus

But why? You would have killed me anyway, so enraged were you then.

Theseus

Because of the gods I was mistaken in my resolve.

Hippolytus

1415 Would that the race [*genos*] of mortals were a curse to the *daimones*.

Artemis

Enough! Even when you are under the dark of the earth, the wrath of the goddess Kypris will not, despite her zeal, fall on you unavenged. I give you this as recompense [*kharis*] for your noble and righteous *phrēn*. **1420** By my own hand and with these unerring arrows I will take vengeance against whichever mortal is most *philos* to her.

¹⁴²³ To you, poor sufferer, in compensation for these bad things that have happened to you here, ¹⁴²⁴ the greatest honors [*tīmai*] in the city [*polis*] of Trozen ¹⁴²⁵ I will give to you: unwed girls before they get married ¹⁴²⁶ will cut off their hair for you, and throughout the length of time [*aiōn*] ¹⁴²⁷ you will harvest the very great sorrows [*penthos* plural] of their tears. ¹⁴²⁸ And for all time there will be a thought that comes along with the songmaking directed at you by virgin girls, ¹⁴²⁹ and it will be a troubled thought. The story and the names will not fall aside unremembered ¹⁴³⁰ - the story of the passionate love [*erōs*] of Phaedra for you. No, it will never be passed over in silence. You, son of old Aegeus, take your son in your arms and embrace him, since you have destroyed him against your will. Human beings are bound to commit wrongs when the gods put it in their way. **1435** And Hippolytus, I warn you not to hate your father, for in this death you meet your own fate. Now farewell, since it is not *themis* for me to look on the dying and to pollute my eyes with the last gasps of death; already I see that you are full of this evil.

Artemis vanishes.

Hippolytus

1440 Farewell, blessed [*olbia*] virgin, go now! How easily you leave behind our long association! As you wish, I let go of the quarrel with my father, for even before I used to obey your wishes. Already the darkness is settling on my eyes. **1445** Take me, father, and make straight my body.

Theseus

O my son, what are you doing to me, ill-fated as I am?

Hippolytus

I am lost, even now I see the gates of death.

Theseus

Do you leave me behind with stained hands?

Hippolytus

No, no, I free you of my murder.

Theseus

1450 What are you saying? You release me from your bloodshed?

Hippolytus

Artemis, mistress of the bow, I call as my witness.

Theseus

Most *philos*, how noble you show yourself to be to your father.

Hippolytus

Farewell to you, a long farewell, father.

Theseus

Alas for your reverent and noble *phrēn*!

Hippolytus

1455 Pray that your lawful sons are such men.

Theseus

Don't leave me, son, be strong.

Hippolytus

I have no more strength. I am gone, father; cover my face quickly with my robe.

Theseus

Glorious Athens, land of Athena, **1460** what a man you have lost! Often I will recall your evils, Kypris.

Chorus

This shared *akhos* has come unexpectedly on all our citizens. There will be a great shower of tears, **1465** for reports worthy of *penthos* about great men have a strong hold upon us.

Notes

[[back](#)] **1.** The metaphor is that women are like a stringed instrument, in need of tuning [*harmonia*] or balance.

[[back](#)] **2.** Phaedra's mother was Pasiphae, wife of King Minos of Crete and mother of the Minotaur, a creature half-man and half-bull.

[[back](#)] **3.** Phaedra's sister was Ariadne, who ran away with Theseus after helping him kill the Minotaur in the labyrinth. When Theseus abandoned her on Naxos, she was

rescued by Dionysus. In another version, she was already the wife of Dionysus, and Artemis killed her for running away with Theseus.

[[back](#)] **4.** To win Iole, daughter of Eurytos, Hēraklēs destroyed her city and killed her family.

[[back](#)] **5.** The word *euphēmos* means 'uttering in a proper way' when it is applied in a sacred context; it means 'silent' when it is applied in a non-sacred context.

[[back](#)] **6.** Phaethon was the son of Helios, the sun. He lost control of his father's chariot, so Zeus killed him with a thunderbolt.

[[back](#)] **7.** Devotees of Orpheus practiced vegetarianism.

[[back](#)] **8.** Skiron used to hurl his victims off the cliffs that received his name after he was killed by Theseus.

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