

IPHIGENIA

Mother, listen to me.

I see how angry you are with your husband.

It's all useless.

But I understand that it is hard to face the inevitable. 1370

We should thank this soldier for his eagerness to help.

He must not be harmed by the army.

That wouldn't help *us*, and it could be terrible for *him*.

Listen to what I have to say, mother. I am ready to die.

I want to do this in a way that wins me honor and recognition.

I will no longer do anything that is not worthy of me.

If you listen to me, mother, you'll agree that I'm right.

All of Greece looks to me now. It is in my hands

that they sail in their ships to Troy

and destroy the city, so that barbarians 1380

will no longer drag Greek women from their beds

and destroy Greece's prosperity. The Greeks will avenge

the crime Paris committed when he stole Helen.

My death will make all this possible.

I will be celebrated as the one who liberated Greece!

People will sing my praises for eternity.

I mustn't cling desperately to life.

You gave birth to me for the sake of Greece,

not simply for yourself.

Thousands of men have armed themselves,

and thousands sit at their oars,

because they want to fight for what they believe is right.

They are ready to give their lives for Greece.

Should concern for one life prevent this? 1390

What in all justice can we tell these brave men?

And this soldier here, it is not fair that he

fight all the Argives and die for the sake of one woman.

I've been taught that *one* man's life

is worth more than a thousand lives of women.

If the goddess Artemis wants me to die, should I, a mortal, say no?

That's unthinkable. I offer Greece my life.  
Sacrifice me, and sack Troy. This will be my immortal memory.  
It will be my marriage, my children, and my fame.  
This is so that Greeks can rule barbarians, 1400  
not barbarians, Greeks. Barbarians are inferior slaves,  
but the Greeks are honorable free men.

#### CHORUS

What you have said is noble and right!  
I blame fate and the gods: they are sick.

#### ACHILLES

Child of Agamemnon, the gods would have made  
me very happy, if I could have had you as my wife.  
I am jealous that Greece claims you, and I also am  
jealous of the honor that you will win from Greece.  
You have spoken well of our country. And you no longer  
fight against the gods but you have chosen  
what is both good and inevitable.  
When I see what a brave and noble girl you are,  
I want you all the more for my bride. 1410  
See - I want to help you and bring you home  
with me at the end of the war.  
I swear by my goddess mother, Thetis,  
I want to save you, even if it means fighting the entire army.  
I'm at your service. Think again. Death is terrible.

#### IPHIGENIA

It is enough for men to die for Helen.  
You must not die for me, or kill anyone for my sake.  
Let me save Greece: let me do what I can. 1420

#### ACHILLES

What a brave noble spirit! I am speechless.

I see you have made up your mind,  
and what you have decided is worthy of you.  
No one can deny that.  
But you might change your mind.  
You know what I have said.  
I'll be standing next to the altar,  
with all my weapons,  
not to assist the sacrifice, but to prevent your death.  
This is my promise. I'll be ready to help you  
even when the knife is at your throat.  
I don't want you to die because of some impulse,  
1430  
only if you have truly made up your mind.  
I'll be standing, armed, next to the altar,  
and watch out for you.

*Exit Achilles.*

IPHIGENIA

Mother, why are you quiet, shedding silent tears?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Don't I have pain enough?

IPHIGENIA

Stop. I won't be able to keep my courage up. Please help me.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Tell me what to do. I want to help you any way I can.

IPHIGENIA

Don't cut your hair for my sake after I'm dead, and  
don't wear dark clothes.

CLYTEMNESTRA

How can you ask that? After you're gone?

IPHIGENIA

Not gone. Transformed. People will celebrate me. I'll be famous,  
and so will you, for what I've done. 1440

CLYTEMNESTRA

I can't even mourn for you?

IPHIGENIA

No. And don't make a tomb for me.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Isn't that what we do when someone dies?

IPHIGENIA

The goddess' altar will be tomb enough for me.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I'll do whatever you want, child.

IPHIGENIA

I deserve this as the savior and benefactor of Greece.

CLYTEMNESTRA

What shall I tell your sisters?

IPHIGENIA

Don't put mourning clothes on them either.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Do you have some last word for them?

IPHIGENIA

Just goodbye.

Raise our little Orestes to be a man for my sake.

1450

CLYTEMNESTRA

Kiss him for the last time.

IPHIGENIA, *she kisses him,*

Dear one, you helped me as much as you could.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Can I do anything for you when I do back to Argos?

IPHIGENIA

Don't hate my father, your husband.

CLYTEMNESTRA

He must pay for the terrible things he did.

IPHIGENIA

He didn't want to kill me.

CLYTEMNESTRA

He lied and cheated. His actions weren't worthy of his ancestors.

IPHIGENIA

Who will take me to the altar? Who will drag me off?

CLYTEMNESTRA

I'll come with you.

IPHIGENIA

No. You can't.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Hold your robe...

IPHIGENIA

Listen to me, mother.

1460

It would be better for both of us if you stay here.  
Let one of my father's soldiers take me to  
Artemis' field, where I'll be slaughtered.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Child, are you really going now?

IPHIGENIA

I won't be back.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Leaving your mother?

IPHIGENIA

It's unfair.....

CLYTEMNESTRA

Stay. Don't leave me.

IPHIGENIA

Stop. Don't cry.

Sing, you women, sing a hymn to  
Artemis the maiden, for all I suffer.  
Let the Greeks keep a holy silence.  
Take up the sacred basket;  
Throw the purifying grain on the fire  
1470

To make it blaze. My father can circle the altar,  
Clockwise, to win the gods' favor  
To bless my sacrifice, bring salvation for the Greeks,  
And crown them with victory.

Lead me on for the sack of Troy,  
Destruction to the Phrygian city.  
Wreath my head,  
Crown my hair with flowers,  
And sprinkle me with water.  
Circle the shrine,  
Circle the altar  
Of Lady Artemis,  
The blessed one.  
With my bloody gore  
I'll wash clean the oracle.  
The ships will sail!

1480

Dearest mother,  
I weep now; I weep for you,  
But not later.  
By the altar, it is not allowed.

1490

Now you girls, sing to Artemis,  
In her temple, across from Chalcis,  
Here in the narrow straits of Aulis,

Where spears are raised  
In my name,  
Passionate in their lust for war.

Goodbye to Greece,  
And Mycenae my home....

CHORUS

You call on the city of Perseus, 1500  
And the walls built by the hands of the Cyclopes.

IPHIGENIA

You raised me to be a light for Greece.  
I shall not refuse to die for you.

CHORUS

Your memory will be eternal. Your fame will live forever.

IPHIGENIA

*Eeoh! Eeoh!*  
Torch of day,  
Zeus' shining flame,  
I go now,  
Far away.  
Farewell, light that I love.

CHORUS

*Eeoh! Eeoh!* 1510  
See her go  
So Troy can be destroyed  
And Phrygians killed.  
She walks with her head crowned,  
To be sprinkled with water from holy basins,  
Walking to the altar of the demon goddess,  
To drench it with streams of flowing blood

When her lovely neck is cut  
And she is slaughtered.  
Her father waits, and fills the basin,  
With water to purify her,  
Drops of dew for the gods.  
The army waits for her sacrifice  
So that they can sail to Troy. 1520

Hail Artemis  
We sing your praises lady,  
You who set things right,  
And delight in human sacrifice.  
Send this army of Greeks  
To the land of Phrygia  
To punish their city's treachery.  
Crown our soldiers with glory  
And wreath the head of our leader 1530  
With everlasting fame.

Goodbye, son of Atreus.  
Go to Troy, and  
Return in triumph,  
Loaded with your Trojan treasures.

THE END