# Phèdre

by Jean Racine

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## PHAEDRA

## By Jean Baptiste Racine

**Translated by Robert Bruce Boswell**

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# INTRODUCTORY NOTE

JEAN BAPTISTE RACINE, the younger contemporary of Corneille, and his rival for supremacy in French classical tragedy, was born at Ferte-Milon, December 21, 1639. He was educated at the College of Beauvais, at the great Jansenist school at Port Royal, and at the College d'Harcourt. He attracted notice by an ode written for the marriage of Louis XIV in 1660, and made his first really great dramatic success with his "Andromaque." His tragic masterpieces include "Britannicus," "Berenice," "Bajazet," "Mithridate," "Iphigenie," and "Phaedre," all written between 1669 and 1677. Then for some years he gave up dramatic composition, disgusted by the intrigues of enemies who sought to injure his career by exalting above him an unworthy rival. In 1689 he resumed his work under the persuasion of Mme. de Maintenon, and produced "Esther" and "Athalie," the latter ranking among his finest productions, although it did not receive public recognition until some time after his death in 1699. Besides his tragedies, Racine wrote one comedy, "Les Plaideurs," four hymns of great beauty, and a history of Port Royal.

The external conventions of classical tragedy which had been established by Corneille, Racine did not attempt to modify. His study of the Greek tragedians and his own taste led him to submit willingly to the rigor and simplicity of form which were the fundamental marks of the classical ideal. It was in his treatment of character that he differed most from his predecessor; for whereas, as we have seen, Corneille represented his leading figures as heroically subduing passion by force of will, Racine represents his as driven by almost uncontrollable passion. Thus his creations appeal to the modern reader as more warmly human; their speech, if less exalted, is simpler and more natural; and he succeeds more brilliantly with his portraits of women than with those of men.

All these characteristics are exemplified in "Phaedre," the tragedy of Racine which has made an appeal to the widest audience. To the legend as treated by Euripides, Racine added the love of Hippolytus for Aricia, and thus supplied a motive for Phaedra's jealousy, and at the same time he made the nurse instead of Phaedra the calumniator of his son to Theseus.

# PHAEDRA

CHARACTERS THESEUS, son of Aegeus and King of Athens. PHAEDRA, wife of Theseus and Daughter of Minos and Pasiphae. HIPPOLYTUS, son of Theseus and Antiope, Queen of the Amazons. ARICIA, Princess of the Blood Royal of Athens. OENONE, nurse of Phaedra. THERAMENES, tutor of Hippolytus. ISMENE, bosom friend of Aricia. PANOPE, waiting-woman of Phaedra. GUARDS.

The scene is laid at Troezen, a town of the Peloponnesus.

## ACT I

SCENE I HIPPOLYTUS, THERAMENES

HIPPOLYTUS My mind is settled, dear Theramenes, And I can stay no more in lovely Troezen. In doubt that racks my soul with mortal anguish, I grow ashamed of such long idleness. Six months and more my father has been gone, And what may have befallen one so dear I know not, nor what corner of the earth Hides him. THERAMENES And where, prince, will you look for him? Already, to content your just alarm, Have I not cross'd the seas on either side Of Corinth, ask'd if aught were known of Theseus Where Acheron is lost among the Shades, Visited Elis, doubled Toenarus, And sail'd into the sea that saw the fall Of Icarus? Inspired with what new hope, Under what favour'd skies think you to trace His footsteps? Who knows if the King, your father, Wishes the secret of his absence known? Perchance, while we are trembling for his life, The hero calmly plots some fresh intrigue, And only waits till the deluded fair— HIPPOLYTUS Cease, dear Theramenes, respect the name Of Theseus. Youthful errors have been left Behind, and no unworthy obstacle Detains him. Phaedra long has fix'd a heart Inconstant once, nor need she fear a rival. In seeking him I shall but do my duty, And leave a place I dare no longer see. THERAMENES Indeed! When, prince, did you begin to dread These peaceful haunts, so dear to happy childhood, Where I have seen you oft prefer to stay, Rather than meet the tumult and the pomp Of Athens and the court? What danger shun you, Or shall I say what grief? HIPPOLYTUS That happy time Is gone, and all is changed, since to these shores The gods sent Phaedra. THERAMENES I perceive the cause Of your distress. It is the queen whose sight Offends you. With a step-dame's spite she schemed Your exile soon as she set eyes on you. But if her hatred is not wholly vanish'd, It has at least taken a milder aspect. Besides, what danger can a dying woman, One too who longs for death, bring on your head? Can Phaedra, sick'ning of a dire disease Of which she will not speak, weary of life And of herself, form any plots against you? HIPPOLYTUS It is not her vain enmity I fear, Another foe alarms Hippolytus. I fly, it must be own'd, from young Aricia, The sole survivor of an impious race. THERAMENES What! You become her

persecutor too! The gentle sister of the cruel sons Of Pallas shared not in their perfidy; Why should you hate such charming innocence? HIPPOLYTUS I should not need to fly, if it were hatred. THERAMENES May I, then, learn the meaning of your flight? Is this the proud Hippolytus I see, Than whom there breathed no fiercer foe to love And to that yoke which Theseus has so oft Endured? And can it be that Venus, scorn'd So long, will justify your sire at last? Has she, then, setting you with other mortals, Forced e'en Hippolytus to offer incense Before her? Can you love? HIPPOLYTUS Friend, ask me not. You, who have known my heart from infancy And all its feelings of disdainful pride, Spare me the shame of disavowing all That I profess'd. Born of an Amazon, The wildness that you wonder at I suck'd With mother's milk. When come to riper age, Reason approved what Nature had implanted. Sincerely bound to me by zealous service, You told me then the story of my sire, And know how oft, attentive to your voice, I kindled when I heard his noble acts, As you described him bringing consolation To mortals for the absence of Alcides, The highways clear'd of monsters and of robbers, Procrustes, Cercyon, Sciro, Sinnis slain, The Epidaurian giant's bones dispersed, Crete reeking with the blood of Minotaur. But when you told me of less glorious deeds, Troth plighted here and there and everywhere, Young Helen stolen from her home at Sparta, And Periboea's tears in Salamis, With many another trusting heart deceived Whose very names have 'scaped his memory, Forsaken Ariadne to the rocks Complaining, last this Phaedra, bound to him By better ties,—you know with what regret I heard and urged you to cut short the tale, Happy had I been able to erase From my remembrance that unworthy part Of such a splendid record. I, in turn, Am I too made the slave of love, and brought To stoop so low? The more contemptible That no renown is mine such as exalts The name of Theseus, that no monsters quell'd Have given me a right to share his weakness. And if my pride of heart must needs be humbled, Aricia should have been the last to tame it. Was I beside myself to have forgotten Eternal barriers of separation Between us? By my father's stern command

Her brethren's blood must ne'er be reinforced By sons of hers; he dreads a single shoot From stock so guilty, and would fain with her Bury their name, that, even to the tomb Content to be his ward, for her no torch Of Hymen may be lit. Shall I espouse Her rights against my sire, rashly provoke His wrath, and launch upon a mad career— THERAMENES The gods, dear prince, if once your hour is come, Care little for the reasons that should guide us. Wishing to shut your eyes, Theseus unseals them; His hatred, stirring a rebellious flame Within you, lends his enemy new charms. And, after all, why should a guiltless passion Alarm you? Dare you not essay its sweetness, But follow rather a fastidious scruple? Fear you to stray where Hercules has wander'd? What heart so stout that Venus has not vanquish'd? Where would you be yourself, so long her foe, Had your own mother, constant in her scorn Of love, ne'er glowed with tenderness for Theseus? What boots it to affect a pride you feel not? Confess it, all is changed; for some time past You have been seldom seen with wild delight Urging the rapid car along the strand, Or, skilful in the art that Neptune taught, Making th' unbroken steed obey the bit; Less often have the woods return'd our shouts; A secret burden on your spirits cast Has dimm'd your eye. How can I doubt you love? Vainly would you conceal the fatal wound. Has not the fair Aricia touch'd your heart? HIPPOLYTUS Theramenes, I go to find my father. THERAMENES Will you not see the queen before you start, My prince? HIPPOLYTUS That is my purpose: you can tell her. Yes, I will see her; duty bids me do it. But what new ill vexes her dear Oenone?

SCENE II HIPPOLYTUS, OENONE, THERAMENES

OENONE Alas, my lord, what grief was e'er like mine? The queen has almost touch'd the gates of death. Vainly close watch I keep by day and night, E'en in my arms a secret malady Slays her, and all her senses are disorder'd. Weary yet restless from her couch she rises, Pants for the outer air, but bids me see That no one on her misery intrudes. She comes. HIPPOLYTUS Enough. She shall not be disturb'd, Nor be confronted with a face she hates.

SCENE III PHAEDRA, OENONE

PHAEDRA We have gone far enough. Stay, dear Oenone; Strength fails me, and I needs must rest awhile. My eyes are dazzled with this glaring light So long unseen, my trembling knees refuse Support. Ah me! OENONE Would Heaven that our tears Might bring relief! PHAEDRA Ah, how these cumbrous gauds, These veils oppress me! What officious hand Has tied these knots, and gather'd o'er my brow These clustering coils? How all conspires to add To my distress! OENONE What is one moment wish'd, The next, is irksome. Did you not just now, Sick of inaction, bid us deck you out, And, with your former energy recall'd, Desire to go abroad, and see the light Of day once more? You see it, and would fain Be hidden from the sunshine that you sought. PHAEDRA Thou glorious author of a hapless race, Whose daughter 'twas my mother's boast to be, Who well may'st blush to see me in such plight, For the last time I come to look on thee, O Sun! OENONE What! Still are you in love with death? Shall I ne'er see you, reconciled to life, Forego these cruel accents of despair? PHAEDRA Would I were seated in the forest's shade! When may I follow with delighted eye, Thro' glorious dust flying in full career, A chariot— OENONE Madam? PHAEDRA Have I lost my senses? What said I? and where am I? Whither stray Vain wishes? Ah! The gods have made me mad. I blush, Oenone, and confusion covers My face, for I have let you see too clearly The shame of grief that, in my own despite, O'erflows these eyes of mine. OENONE If you must blush, Blush at a silence that inflames your woes. Resisting all my care, deaf to my voice, Will you have no compassion on yourself, But let your life be ended in mid course? What evil spell has drain'd its fountain dry? Thrice have the shades of night obscured the heav'ns Since sleep has enter'd thro' your eyes, and thrice The dawn has chased the darkness thence, since food Pass'd your wan lips, and you are faint and languid. To what dread purpose is your heart inclined? How dare you make attempts upon your life, And so offend the gods who gave it you, Prove false to Theseus and your marriage vows, Ay, and betray your most unhappy children, Bending their

necks yourself beneath the yoke? That day, be sure, which robs them of their mother, Will give high hopes back to the stranger's son, To that proud enemy of you and yours, To whom an Amazon gave birth, I mean Hippolytus— PHAEDRA Ye gods! OENONE Ah, this reproach Moves you! PHAEDRA Unhappy woman, to what name Gave your mouth utterance? OENONE Your wrath is just. 'Tis well that that ill-omen'd name can rouse Such rage. Then live. Let love and duty urge Their claims. Live, suffer not this son of Scythia, Crushing your children 'neath his odious sway, To rule the noble offspring of the gods, The purest blood of Greece. Make no delay; Each moment threatens death; quickly restore Your shatter'd strength, while yet the torch of life Holds out, and can be fann'd into a flame. PHAEDRA Too long have I endured its guilt and shame! OENONE Why? What remorse gnaws at your heart? What crime Can have disturb'd you thus? Your hands are not Polluted with the blood of innocence? PHAEDRA Thanks be to Heav'n, my hands are free from stain. Would that my soul were innocent as they! OENONE What awful project have you then conceived, Whereat your conscience should be still alarm'd? PHAEDRA Have I not said enough? Spare me the rest. I die to save myself a full confession. OENONE Die then, and keep a silence so inhuman; But seek some other hand to close your eyes. Tho' but a spark of life remains within you, My soul shall go before you to the Shades. A thousand roads are always open thither; Pain'd at your want of confidence, I'll choose The shortest. Cruel one, when has my faith Deceived you! Think how in my arms you lay New born. For you, my country and my children I have forsaken. Do you thus repay My faithful service? PHAEDRA What do you expect From words so bitter? Were I to break silence Horror would freeze your blood. OENONE What can you say To horrify me more than to behold You die before my eyes? PHAEDRA When you shall know My crime, my death will follow none the less, But with the added stain of guilt. OENONE Dear Madam, By all the tears that I have shed for you, By these weak knees I clasp, relieve my mind From torturing doubt. PHAEDRA It is your wish. Then rise. OENONE I hear

you. Speak. PHAEDRA Heav'ns! How shall I begin? OENONE Dismiss vain fears, you wound me with distrust. PHAEDRA O fatal animosity of Venus! Into what wild distractions did she cast My mother! OENONE Be they blotted from remembrance, And for all time to come buried in silence. PHAEDRA My sister Ariadne, by what love Were you betray'd to death, on lonely shores Forsaken! OENONE Madam, what deep-seated pain Prompts these reproaches against all your kin? PHAEDRA It is the will of Venus, and I perish, Last, most unhappy of a family Where all were wretched. OENONE Do you love? PHAEDRA I feel All its mad fever. OENONE Ah! For whom? PHAEDRA Hear now The crowning horror. Yes, I love—my lips Tremble to say his name. OENONE Whom? PHAEDRA Know you him, Son of the Amazon, whom I've oppress'd So long? OENONE Hippolytus? Great gods! PHAEDRA 'Tis you Have named him. OENONE All my blood within my veins Seems frozen. O despair! O cursed race! Ill-omen'd journey! Land of misery! Why did we ever reach thy dangerous shores? PHAEDRA My wound is not so recent. Scarcely had I Been bound to Theseus by the marriage yoke, And happiness and peace seem'd well secured, When Athens show'd me my proud enemy. I look'd, alternately turn'd pale and blush'd To see him, and my soul grew all distraught; A mist obscured my vision, and my voice Falter'd, my blood ran cold, then burn'd like fire; Venus I felt in all my fever'd frame, Whose fury had so many of my race Pursued. With fervent vows I sought to shun Her torments, built and deck'd for her a shrine, And there, 'mid countless victims did I seek The reason I had lost; but all for naught, No remedy could cure the wounds of love! In vain I offer'd incense on her altars; When I invoked her name my heart adored Hippolytus, before me constantly; And when I made her altars smoke with victims, 'Twas for a god whose name I dared not utter. I fled his presence everywhere, but found him— O crowning horror!—in his father's features. Against myself, at last, I raised revolt, And stirr'd my courage up to persecute The enemy I loved. To banish him I wore a step—dame's harsh and jealous carriage, With ceaseless cries I clamour'd for his

exile, Till I had torn him from his father's arms. I breathed once more, Oenone; in his absence My days flow'd on less troubled than before, And innocent. Submissive to my husband, I hid my grief, and of our fatal marriage Cherish'd the fruits. Vain caution! Cruel Fate! Brought hither by my spouse himself, I saw Again the enemy whom I had banish'd, And the old wound too quickly bled afresh. No longer is it love hid in my heart, But Venus in her might seizing her prey. I have conceived just terror for my crime; I hate my life, and hold my love in horror. Dying I wish'd to keep my fame unsullied, And bury in the grave a guilty passion; But I have been unable to withstand Tears and entreaties, I have told you all; Content, if only, as my end draws near, You do not vex me with unjust reproaches, Nor with vain efforts seek to snatch from death The last faint lingering sparks of vital breath.

SCENE IV PHAEDRA, OENONE, PANOPE

PANOPE Fain would I hide from you tidings so sad, But 'tis my duty, Madam, to reveal them. The hand of death has seized your peerless husband, And you are last to hear of this disaster. OENONE What say you, Panope? PANOPE The queen, deceived By a vain trust in Heav'n, begs safe return For Theseus, while Hippolytus his son Learns of his death from vessels that are now In port. PHAEDRA Ye gods! PANOPE Divided counsels sway The choice of Athens; some would have the prince, Your child, for master; others, disregarding The laws, dare to support the stranger's son. 'Tis even said that a presumptuous faction Would crown Aricia and the house of Pallas. I deem'd it right to warn you of this danger. Hippolytus already is prepared To start, and should he show himself at Athens, 'Tis to be fear'd the fickle crowd will all Follow his lead. OENONE Enough. The queen, who hears you, By no means will neglect this timely warning.

SCENE V PHAEDRA, OENONE

OENONE Dear lady, I had almost ceased to urge The wish that you should live, thinking to follow My mistress to the tomb, from which my voice Had fail'd to turn

you; but this new misfortune Alters the aspect of affairs, and prompts Fresh measures. Madam, Theseus is no more, You must supply his place. He leaves a son, A slave, if you should die, but, if you live, A King. On whom has he to lean but you? No hand but yours will dry his tears. Then live For him, or else the tears of innocence Will move the gods, his ancestors, to wrath Against his mother. Live, your guilt is gone, No blame attaches to your passion now. The King's decease has freed you from the bonds That made the crime and horror of your love. Hippolytus no longer need be dreaded, Him you may see henceforth without reproach. It may be, that, convinced of your aversion, He means to head the rebels. Undeceive him, Soften his callous heart, and bend his pride. King of this fertile land, in Troezen here His portion lies; but as he knows, the laws Give to your son the ramparts that Minerva Built and protects. A common enemy Threatens you both, unite them to oppose Aricia. PHAEDRA To your counsel I consent. Yes, I will live, if life can be restored, If my affection for a son has pow'r To rouse my sinking heart at such a dangerous hour.

## ACT II

SCENE I ARICIA, ISMENE

ARICIA Hippolytus request to see me here! Hippolytus desire to bid farewell! Is't true, Ismene? Are you not deceived? ISMENE This is the first result of Theseus' death. Prepare yourself to see from every side. Hearts turn towards you that were kept away By Theseus. Mistress of her lot at last, Aricia soon shall find all Greece fall low, To do her homage. ARICIA 'Tis not then, Ismene, An idle tale? Am I no more a slave? Have I no enemies? ISMENE The gods oppose Your peace no longer, and the soul of Theseus Is with your brothers. ARICIA Does the voice of fame Tell how he died? ISMENE Rumours incredible Are spread. Some say that, seizing a new bride, The faithless husband by the waves was swallow'd. Others affirm, and

this report prevails, That with Pirithous to the world below He went, and saw the shores of dark Cocytus, Showing himself alive to the pale ghosts; But that he could not leave those gloomy realms, Which whoso enters there abides for ever. ARICIA Shall I believe that ere his destined hour A mortal may descend into the gulf Of Hades? What attraction could o'ercome Its terrors? ISMENE He is dead, and you alone Doubt it. The men of Athens mourn his loss. Troezen already hails Hippolytus As King. And Phaedra, fearing for her son, Asks counsel of the friends who share her trouble, Here in this palace. ARICIA Will Hippolytus, Think you, prove kinder than his sire, make light My chains, and pity my misfortunes? ISMENE Yes, I think so, Madam. ARICIA Ah, you know him not Or you would never deem so hard a heart Can pity feel, or me alone except From the contempt in which he holds our sex. Has he not long avoided every spot Where we resort? ISMENE I know what tales are told Of proud Hippolytus, but I have seen Him near you, and have watch'd with curious eye How one esteem'd so cold would bear himself. Little did his behavior correspond With what I look'd for; in his face confusion Appear'd at your first glance, he could not turn His languid eyes away, but gazed on you. Love is a word that may offend his pride, But what the tongue disowns, looks can betray. ARICIA How eagerly my heart hears what you say, Tho' it may be delusion, dear Ismene! Did it seem possible to you, who know me, That I, sad sport of a relentless Fate, Fed upon bitter tears by night and day, Could ever taste the maddening draught of love? The last frail offspring of a royal race, Children of Earth, I only have survived War's fury. Cut off in the flow'r of youth, Mown by the sword, six brothers have I lost, The hope of an illustrious house, whose blood Earth drank with sorrow, near akin to his Whom she herself produced. Since then, you know How thro' all Greece no heart has been allow'd To sigh for me, lest by a sister's flame The brothers' ashes be perchance rekindled. You know, besides, with what disdain I view'd My conqueror's suspicions and precautions, And how, oppos'd as I have ever been To love, I often thank'd the King's injustice Which happily confirm'd my

inclination. But then I never had beheld his son. Not that, attracted merely by the eye, I love him for his beauty and his grace, Endowments which he owes to Nature's bounty, Charms which he seems to know not or to scorn. I love and prize in him riches more rare, The virtues of his sire, without his faults. I love, as I must own, that generous pride Which ne'er has stoop'd beneath the amorous yoke. Phaedra reaps little glory from a lover So lavish of his sighs; I am too proud To share devotion with a thousand others, Or enter where the door is always open. But to make one who ne'er has stoop'd before Bend his proud neck, to pierce a heart of stone, To bind a captive whom his chains astonish, Who vainly 'gainst a pleasing yoke rebels,— That piques my ardour, and I long for that. 'Twas easier to disarm the god of strength Than this Hippolytus, for Hercules Yielded so often to the eyes of beauty, As to make triumph cheap. But, dear Ismene, I take too little heed of opposition Beyond my pow'r to quell, and you may hear me, Humbled by sore defeat, upbraid the pride I now admire. What! Can he love? and I Have had the happiness to bend— ISMENE He comes Yourself shall hear him.

SCENE II HIPPOLYTUS, ARICIA, ISMENE

HIPPOLYTUS Lady, ere I go My duty bids me tell you of your change Of fortune. My worst fears are realized; My sire is dead. Yes, his protracted absence Was caused as I foreboded. Death alone, Ending his toils, could keep him from the world Conceal'd so long. The gods at last have doom'd Alcides' friend, companion, and successor. I think your hatred, tender to his virtues, Can hear such terms of praise without resentment, Knowing them due. One hope have I that soothes My sorrow: I can free you from restraint. Lo, I revoke the laws whose rigour moved My pity; you are at your own disposal, Both heart and hand; here, in my heritage, In Troezen, where my grandsire Pittheus reign'd Of yore and I am now acknowledged King, I leave you free, free as myself,—and more. ARICIA Your kindness is too great, 'tis overwhelming. Such generosity, that pays disgrace With honour, lends more force than you can think To those harsh laws from which you would release me.

HIPPOLYTUS Athens, uncertain how to fill the throne Of Theseus, speaks of you, anon of me, And then of Phaedra's son. ARICIA Of me, my lord? HIPPOLYTUS I know myself excluded by strict law: Greece turns to my reproach a foreign mother. But if my brother were my only rival, My rights prevail o'er his clearly enough To make me careless of the law's caprice. My forwardness is check'd by juster claims: To you I yield my place, or, rather, own That it is yours by right, and yours the sceptre, As handed down from Earth's great son, Erechtheus. Adoption placed it in the hands of Aegeus: Athens, by him protected and increased, Welcomed a king so generous as my sire, And left your hapless brothers in oblivion. Now she invites you back within her walls; Protracted strife has cost her groans enough, Her fields are glutted with your kinsmen's blood Fatt'ning the furrows out of which it sprung At first. I rule this Troezen; while the son Of Phaedra has in Crete a rich domain. Athens is yours. I will do all I can To join for you the votes divided now Between us. ARICIA Stunn'd at all I hear, my lord, I fear, I almost fear a dream deceives me. Am I indeed awake? Can I believe Such generosity? What god has put it Into your heart? Well is the fame deserved That you enjoy! That fame falls short of truth! Would you for me prove traitor to yourself? Was it not boon enough never to hate me, So long to have abstain'd from harbouring The enmity— HIPPOLYTUS To hate you? I, to hate you? However darkly my fierce pride was painted, Do you suppose a monster gave me birth? What savage temper, what envenom'd hatred Would not be mollified at sight of you? Could I resist the soul-bewitching charm— ARICIA Why, what is this, Sir? HIPPOLYTUS I have said too much Not to say more. Prudence in vain resists The violence of passion. I have broken Silence at last, and I must tell you now The secret that my heart can hold no longer. You see before you an unhappy instance Of hasty pride, a prince who claims compassion I, who, so long the enemy of Love, Mock'd at his fetters and despised his captives, Who, pitying poor mortals that were shipwreck'd, In seeming safety view'd the storms from land, Now find myself to the same fate exposed, Toss'd to and fro upon a sea

of troubles! My boldness has been vanquish'd in a moment, And humbled is the pride wherein I boasted. For nearly six months past, ashamed, despairing, Bearing where'er I go the shaft that rends My heart, I struggle vainly to be free From you and from myself; I shun you, present; Absent, I find you near; I see your form In the dark forest depths; the shades of night, Nor less broad daylight, bring back to my view The charms that I avoid; all things conspire To make Hippolytus your slave. For fruit Of all my bootless sighs, I fail to find My former self. My bow and javelins Please me no more, my chariot is forgotten, With all the Sea God's lessons; and the woods Echo my groans instead of joyous shouts Urging my fiery steeds. Hearing this tale Of passion so uncouth, you blush perchance At your own handiwork. With what wild words I offer you my heart, strange captive held By silken jess! But dearer in your eyes Should be the offering, that this language comes Strange to my lips; reject not vows express'd So ill, which but for you had ne'er been form'd.

SCENE III HIPPOLYTUS, ARICIA, THERAMENES, ISMENE

THERAMENES Prince, the Queen comes. I herald her approach. 'Tis you she seeks. HIPPOLYTUS Me? THERAMENES What her thought may be I know not. But I speak on her behalf. She would converse with you ere you go hence. HIPPOLYTUS What shall I say to her? Can she expect— ARICIA You cannot, noble Prince, refuse to hear her, Howe'er convinced she is your enemy, Some shade of pity to her tears is due. HIPPOLYTUS Shall we part thus? and will you let me go, Not knowing if my boldness has offended The goddess I adore? Whether this heart, Left in your hands— ARICIA Go, Prince, pursue the schemes Your generous soul dictates, make Athens own My sceptre. All the gifts you offer me Will I accept, but this high throne of empire Is not the one most precious in my sight.

SCENE IV HIPPOLYTUS, THERAMENES

HIPPOLYTUS Friend, is all ready? But the Queen approaches. Go, see the vessel in fit trim to sail. Haste, bid the crew aboard, and hoist the signal: Then soon return,

and so deliver me From interview most irksome.

SCENE V PHAEDRA, HIPPOLYTUS, OENONE

PHAEDRA (to OENONE) There I see him! My blood forgets to flow, my tongue to speak What I am come to say. OENONE Think of your son, How all his hopes depend on you. PHAEDRA I hear You leave us, and in haste. I come to add My tears to your distress, and for a son Plead my alarm. No more has he a father, And at no distant day my son must witness My death. Already do a thousand foes Threaten his youth. You only can defend him But in my secret heart remorse awakes, And fear lest I have shut your ears against His cries. I tremble lest your righteous anger Visit on him ere long the hatred earn'd By me, his mother. HIPPOLYTUS No such base resentment, Madam, is mine. PHAEDRA I could not blame you, Prince, If you should hate me. I have injured you: So much you know, but could not read my heart. T' incur your enmity has been mine aim. The self-same borders could not hold us both; In public and in private I declared Myself your foe, and found no peace till seas Parted us from each other. I forbade Your very name to be pronounced before me. And yet if punishment should be proportion'd To the offence, if only hatred draws Your hatred, never woman merited More pity, less deserved your enmity. HIPPOLYTUS A mother jealous of her children's rights Seldom forgives the offspring of a wife Who reign'd before her. Harassing suspicions Are common sequels of a second marriage. Of me would any other have been jealous No less than you, perhaps more violent. PHAEDRA Ah, Prince, how Heav'n has from the general law Made me exempt, be that same Heav'n my witness! Far different is the trouble that devours me! HIPPOLYTUS This is no time for self-reproaches, Madam. It may be that your husband still beholds The light, and Heav'n may grant him safe return, In answer to our prayers. His guardian god Is Neptune, ne'er by him invoked in vain. PHAEDRA He who has seen the mansions of the dead Returns not thence. Since to those gloomy shores Theseus is gone, 'tis vain to hope that Heav'n May send him back. Prince, there is no release From Acheron's greedy maw. And yet, methinks, He

lives, and breathes in you. I see him still Before me, and to him I seem to speak; My heart— Oh! I am mad; do what I will, I cannot hide my passion. HIPPOLYTUS Yes, I see The strange effects of love. Theseus, tho' dead, Seems present to your eyes, for in your soul There burns a constant flame. PHAEDRA Ah, yes for Theseus I languish and I long, not as the Shades Have seen him, of a thousand different forms The fickle lover, and of Pluto's bride The would-be ravisher, but faithful, proud E'en to a slight disdain, with youthful charms Attracting every heart, as gods are painted, Or like yourself. He had your mien, your eyes, Spoke and could blush like you, when to the isle Of Crete, my childhood's home, he cross'd the waves, Worthy to win the love of Minos' daughters. What were you doing then? Why did he gather The flow'r of Greece, and leave Hippolytus? Oh, why were you too young to have embark'd On board the ship that brought thy sire to Crete? At your hands would the monster then have perish'd, Despite the windings of his vast retreat. To guide your doubtful steps within the maze My sister would have arm'd you with the clue. But no, therein would Phaedra have forestall'd her, Love would have first inspired me with the thought; And I it would have been whose timely aid Had taught you all the labyrinth's crooked ways. What anxious care a life so dear had cost me! No thread had satisfied your lover's fears: I would myself have wish'd to lead the way, And share the peril you were bound to face; Phaedra with you would have explored the maze, With you emerged in safety, or have perish'd. HIPPOLYTUS Gods! What is this I hear? Have you forgotten That Theseus is my father and your husband? PHAEDRA Why should you fancy I have lost remembrance Thereof, and am regardless of mine honour? HIPPOLYTUS Forgive me, Madam. With a blush I own That I misconstrued words of innocence. For very shame I cannot bear your sight Longer. I go— PHAEDRA Ah! cruel Prince, too well You understood me. I have said enough To save you from mistake. I love. But think not That at the moment when I love you most I do not feel my guilt; no weak compliance Has fed the poison that infects my brain. The ill-starr'd object of celestial vengeance, I am

not so detestable to you As to myself. The gods will bear me witness, Who have within my veins kindled this fire, The gods, who take a barbarous delight In leading a poor mortal's heart astray. Do you yourself recall to mind the past: 'Twas not enough for me to fly, I chased you Out of the country, wishing to appear Inhuman, odious; to resist you better, I sought to make you hate me. All in vain! Hating me more I loved you none the less: New charms were lent to you by your misfortunes. I have been drown'd in tears, and scorch'd by fire; Your own eyes might convince you of the truth, If for one moment you could look at me. What is't I say? Think you this vile confession That I have made is what I meant to utter? Not daring to betray a son for whom I trembled, 'twas to beg you not to hate him I came. Weak purpose of a heart too full Of love for you to speak of aught besides! Take your revenge, punish my odious passion; Prove yourself worthy of your valiant sire, And rid the world of an offensive monster! Does Theseus' widow dare to love his son? The frightful monster! Let her not escape you! Here is my heart. This is the place to strike. Already prompt to expiate its guilt, I feel it leap impatiently to meet Your arm. Strike home. Or, if it would disgrace you To steep your hand in such polluted blood, If that were punishment too mild to slake Your hatred, lend me then your sword, if not Your arm. Quick, give't. OENONE What, Madam, will you do? Just gods! But someone comes. Go, fly from shame, You cannot 'scape if seen by any thus.

SCENE VI HIPPOLYTUS, THERAMENES

THERAMENES Is that the form of Phaedra that I see Hurried away? What mean these signs of sorrow? Where is your sword? Why are you pale, confused? HIPPOLYTUS Friend, let us fly. I am, indeed, confounded With horror and astonishment extreme. Phaedra—but no; gods, let this dreadful secret Remain for ever buried in oblivion. THERAMENES The ship is ready if you wish to sail. But Athens has already giv'n her vote; Their leaders have consulted all her tribes; Your brother is elected, Phaedra wins. HIPPOLYTUS Phaedra? THERAMENES A herald, charged with a commission From Athens, has arrived to place the reins Of

power in her hands. Her son is King. HIPPOLYTUS Ye gods, who know her, do ye thus reward Her virtue? THERAMENES A faint rumour meanwhile whispers That Theseus is not dead, but in Epirus Has shown himself. But, after all my search, I know too well— HIPPOLYTUS Let nothing be neglected. This rumour must be traced back to its source. If it be found unworthy of belief, Let us set sail, and cost whate'er it may, To hands deserving trust the sceptre's sway.

## ACT III

Scene I PHAEDRA, OENONE

PHAEDRA Ah! Let them take elsewhere the worthless honours They bring me. Why so urgent I should see them? What flattering balm can soothe my wounded heart? Far rather hide me: I have said too much. My madness has burst forth like streams in flood, And I have utter'd what should ne'er have reach'd His ear. Gods! How he heard me! How reluctant To catch my meaning, dull and cold as marble, And eager only for a quick retreat! How oft his blushes made my shame the deeper! Why did you turn me from the death I sought? Ah! When his sword was pointed to my bosom, Did he grow pale, or try to snatch it from me? That I had touch'd it was enough for him To render it for ever horrible, Leaving defilement on the hand that holds it. OENONE Thus brooding on your bitter disappointment, You only fan a fire that must be stifled. Would it not be more worthy of the blood Of Minos to find peace in nobler cares, And, in defiance of a wretch who flies From what he hates, reign, mount the proffer'd throne? PHAEDRA I reign! Shall I the rod of empire sway, When reason reigns no longer o'er myself? When I have lost control of all my senses? When 'neath a shameful yoke I scarce can breathe? When I am dying? OENONE Fly. PHAEDRA I cannot leave him. OENONE Dare you not fly from him you dared to banish? PHAEDRA The time for that is past. He knows my frenzy. I have o'erstepp'd the bounds of modesty, And blazon'd forth my shame before his

eyes. Hope stole into my heart against my will. Did you not rally my declining pow'rs? Was it not you yourself recall'd my soul When fluttering on my lips, and with your counsel, Lent me fresh life, and told me I might love him? OENONE Blame me or blame me not for your misfortunes, Of what was I incapable, to save you? But if your indignation e'er was roused By insult, can you pardon his contempt? How cruelly his eyes, severely fix'd, Survey'd you almost prostrate at his feet! How hateful then appear'd his savage pride! Why did not Phaedra see him then as I Beheld him? PHAEDRA This proud mood that you resent May yield to time. The rudeness of the forests Where he was bred, inured to rigorous laws, Clings to him still; love is a word he ne'er Had heard before. It may be his surprise Stunn'd him, and too much vehemence was shown In all I said. OENONE Remember that his mother Was a barbarian. PHAEDRA Scythian tho' she was, She learned to love. OENONE He has for all the sex Hatred intense. PHAEDRA Then in his heart no rival Shall ever reign. Your counsel comes too late Oenone, serve my madness, not my reason. His heart is inaccessible to love. Let us attack him where he has more feeling. The charms of sovereignty appear'd to touch him; He could not hide that he was drawn to Athens; His vessels' prows were thither turn'd already, All sail was set to scud before the breeze. Go you on my behalf, to his ambition Appeal, and let the prospect of the crown Dazzle his eyes. The sacred diadem Shall deck his brow, no higher honour mine Than there to bind it. His shall be the pow'r I cannot keep; and he shall teach my son How to rule men. It may be he will deign To be to him a father. Son and mother He shall control. Try ev'ry means to move him; Your words will find more favour than can mine. Urge him with groans and tears; show Phaedra dying. Nor blush to use the voice of supplication. In you is my last hope; I'll sanction all You say; and on the issue hangs my fate.

Scene II

PHAEDRA (alone) Venus implacable, who seest me shamed And sore confounded, have I not enough Been humbled? How can cruelty be stretch'd Farther? Thy shafts

have all gone home, and thou Hast triumph'd. Would'st thou win a new renown? Attack an enemy more contumacious: Hippolytus neglects thee, braves thy wrath, Nor ever at thine altars bow'd the knee. Thy name offends his proud, disdainful ears. Our interests are alike: avenge thyself, Force him to love— But what is this? Oenone Return'd already? He detests me then, And will not hear you.

SCENE III PHAEDRA, OENONE

OENONE Madam, you must stifle A fruitless love. Recall your former virtue: The king who was thought dead will soon appear Before your eyes, Theseus has just arrived, Theseus is here. The people flock to see him With eager haste. I went by your command To find the prince, when with a thousand shouts The air was rent— PHAEDRA My husband is alive, That is enough, Oenone. I have own'd A passion that dishonours him. He lives: I ask to know no more. OENONE What? PHAEDRA I foretold it, But you refused to hear. Your tears prevail'd Over my just remorse. Dying this morn, I had deserved compassion; your advice I took, and die dishonour'd. OENONE Die? PHAEDRA Just Heav'ns! What have I done to-day? My husband comes, With him his son: and I shall see the witness Of my adulterous flame watch with what face I greet his father, while my heart is big With sighs he scorn'd, and tears that could not move him Moisten mine eyes. Think you that his respect For Theseus will induce him to conceal My madness, nor disgrace his sire and king? Will he be able to keep back the horror He has for me? His silence would be vain. I know my treason, and I lack the boldness Of those abandon'd women who can taste Tranquillity in crime, and show a forehead All unabash'd. I recognize my madness, Recall it all. These vaulted roofs, methinks, These walls can speak, and, ready to accuse me, Wait but my husband's presence to reveal My perfidy. Death only can remove This weight of horror. Is it such misfortune To cease to live? Death causes no alarm To misery. I only fear the name That I shall leave behind me. For my sons How sad a heritage! The blood of Jove Might justly swell the pride that boasts descent From Heav'n, but heavy weighs a mother's guilt Upon her offspring.

Yes, I dread the scorn That will be cast on them, with too much truth, For my disgrace. I tremble when I think That, crush'd beneath that curse, they'll never dare To raise their eyes. OENONE Doubt not I pity both; Never was fear more just than yours. Why, then, Expose them to this ignominy? Why Will you accuse yourself? You thus destroy The only hope that's left; it will be said That Phaedra, conscious of her perfidy, Fled from her husband's sight. Hippolytus Will be rejoiced that, dying, you should lend His charge support. What can I answer him? He'll find it easy to confute my tale, And I shall hear him with an air of triumph To every open ear repeat your shame. Sooner than that may fire from heav'n consume me! Deceive me not. Say, do you love him still? How look you now on this contemptuous prince? PHAEDRA As on a monster frightful to mine eyes. OENONE Why yield him, then, an easy victory? You fear him? Venture to accuse him first, As guilty of the charge which he may bring This day against you. Who can say 'tis false? All tells against him: in your hands his sword Happily left behind, your present trouble, Your past distress, your warnings to his father, His exile which your earnest pray'rs obtain'd. PHAEDRA What! Would you have me slander innocence? OENONE My zeal has need of naught from you but silence. Like you I tremble, and am loath to do it; More willingly I'd face a thousand deaths, But since without this bitter remedy I lose you, and to me your life outweighs All else, I'll speak. Theseus, howe'er enraged Will do no worse than banish him again. A father, when he punishes, remains A father, and his ire is satisfied With a light sentence. But if guiltless blood Should flow, is not your honour of more moment? A treasure far too precious to be risk'd? You must submit, whatever it dictates; For, when our reputation is at stake, All must be sacrificed, conscience itself. But someone comes. 'Tis Theseus. PHAEDRA And I see Hippolytus, my ruin plainly written In his stern eyes. Do what you will; I trust My fate to you. I cannot help myself.

SCENE IV THESEUS, HIPPOLYTUS, PHAEDRA, OENONE, THERAMENES

THESEUS Fortune no longer fights against my wishes, Madam, and to your arms

restores— PHAEDRA Stay, Theseus! Do not profane endearments that were once So sweet, but which I am unworthy now To taste. You have been wrong'd. Fortune has proved Spiteful, nor in your absence spared your wife. I am unfit to meet your fond caress, How I may bear my shame my only care Henceforth.

Scene V THESEUS, HIPPOLYTUS, THERAMENES

THESEUS Strange welcome for your father, this! What does it mean, my son? HIPPOLYTUS Phaedra alone Can solve this mystery. But if my wish Can move you, let me never see her more; Suffer Hippolytus to disappear For ever from the home that holds your wife. THESEUS You, my son! Leave me? HIPPOLYTUS 'Twas not I who sought her: 'Twas you who led her footsteps to these shores. At your departure you thought meet, my lord, To trust Aricia and the Queen to this Troezenian land, and I myself was charged With their protection. But what cares henceforth Need keep me here? My youth of idleness Has shown its skill enough o'er paltry foes That range the woods. May I not quit a life Of such inglorious ease, and dip my spear In nobler blood? Ere you had reach'd my age More than one tyrant, monster more than one Had felt the weight of your stout arm. Already, Successful in attacking insolence, You had removed all dangers that infested Our coasts to east and west. The traveller fear'd Outrage no longer. Hearing of your deeds, Already Hercules relied on you, And rested from his toils. While I, unknown Son of so brave a sire, am far behind Even my mother's footsteps. Let my courage Have scope to act, and if some monster yet Has 'scaped you, let me lay the glorious spoils Down at your feet; or let the memory Of death faced nobly keep my name alive, And prove to all the world I was your son. THESEUS Why, what is this? What terror has possess'd My family to make them fly before me? If I return to find myself so fear'd, So little welcome, why did Heav'n release me From prison? My sole friend, misled by passion, Was bent on robbing of his wife the tyrant Who ruled Epirus. With regret I lent The lover aid, but Fate had made us blind, Myself as well as him. The tyrant seized me Defenceless and unarm'd. Pirithous I saw with tears cast forth to be

devour'd By savage beasts that lapp'd the blood of men. Myself in gloomy caverns he inclosed, Deep in the bowels of the earth, and nigh To Pluto's realms. Six months I lay ere Heav'n Had pity, and I 'scaped the watchful eyes That guarded me. Then did I purge the world Of a foul foe, and he himself has fed His monsters. But when with expectant joy To all that is most precious I draw near Of what the gods have left me, when my soul Looks for full satisfaction in a sight So dear, my only welcome is a shudder, Embrace rejected, and a hasty flight. Inspiring, as I clearly do, such terror, Would I were still a prisoner in Epirus! Phaedra complains that I have suffer'd outrage. Who has betray'd me? Speak. Why was I not Avenged? Has Greece, to whom mine arm so oft Brought useful aid, shelter'd the criminal? You make no answer. Is my son, mine own Dear son, confederate with mine enemies? I'll enter. This suspense is overwhelming. I'll learn at once the culprit and the crime, And Phaedra must explain her troubled state.

Scene VI HIPPOLYTUS, THERAMENES

HIPPOLYTUS What do these words portend, which seem'd to freeze My very blood? Will Phaedra, in her frenzy Accuse herself, and seal her own destruction? What will the King say? Gods! What fatal poison Has love spread over all his house! Myself, Full of a fire his hatred disapproves, How changed he finds me from the son he knew! With dark forebodings in my mind alarm'd, But innocence has surely naught to fear. Come, let us go, and in some other place Consider how I best may move my sire To tenderness, and tell him of a flame Vex'd but not vanquish'd by a father's blame.

## ACT IV

Scene I THESEUS, OENONE

THESEUS Ah! What is this I hear? Presumptuous traitor! And would he have disgraced his father's honour? With what relentless footsteps Fate pursues me!

Whither I go I know not, nor where know I am. O kind affection ill repaid! Audacious scheme! Abominable thought! To reach the object of his foul desire The wretch disdain'd not to use violence. I know this sword that served him in his fury, The sword I gave him for a nobler use. Could not the sacred ties of blood restrain him? And Phaedra,—was she loath to have him punish'd? She held her tongue. Was that to spare the culprit? OENONE Nay, but to spare a most unhappy father. O'erwhelm'd with shame that her eyes should have kindled So infamous a flame and prompted him To crime so heinous, Phaedra would have died. I saw her raise her arm, and ran to save her. To me alone you owe it that she lives; And, in my pity both for her and you, Have I against my will interpreted Her tears. THESEUS The traitor! He might well turn pale. 'Twas fear that made him tremble when he saw me. I was astonish'd that he show'd no pleasure; His frigid greeting chill'd my tenderness. But was this guilty passion that devours him Declared already ere I banish'd him From Athens? OENONE Sire, remember how the Queen Urged you. Illicit love caused all her hatred. THESEUS And then this fire broke out again at Troezen? OENONE Sire, I have told you all. Too long the Queen Has been allow'd to bear her grief alone Let me now leave you and attend to her.

Scene II THESEUS, HIPPOLYTUS

THESEUS Ah! There he is. Great gods! That noble mien Might well deceive an eye less fond than mine! Why should the sacred stamp of virtue gleam Upon the forehead of an impious wretch? Ought not the blackness of a traitor's heart To show itself by sure and certain signs? HIPPOLYTUS My father, may I ask what fatal cloud Has troubled your majestic countenance? Dare you not trust this secret to your son? THESEUS Traitor, how dare you show yourself before me? Monster, whom Heaven's bolts have spared too long! Survivor of that robber crew whereof I cleansed the earth. After your brutal lust Scorn'd even to respect my marriage bed, You venture—you, my hated foe—to come Into my presence, here, where all is full Of your foul infamy, instead of seeking Some unknown land that never heard my

name. Fly, traitor, fly! Stay not to tempt the wrath That I can scarce restrain, nor brave my hatred. Disgrace enough have I incurr'd for ever In being father of so vile a son, Without your death staining indelibly The glorious record of my noble deeds. Fly, and unless you wish quick punishment To add you to the criminals cut off By me, take heed this sun that lights us now Ne'er sees you more set foot upon this soil. I tell you once again,—fly, haste, return not, Rid all my realms of your atrocious presence. To thee, to thee, great Neptune, I appeal If erst I clear'd thy shores of foul assassins Recall thy promise to reward those efforts, Crown'd with success, by granting my first pray'r. Confined for long in close captivity, I have not yet call'd on thy pow'rful aid, Sparing to use the valued privilege Till at mine utmost need. The time is come I ask thee now. Avenge a wretched father! I leave this traitor to thy wrath; in blood Quench his outrageous fires, and by thy fury Theseus will estimate thy favour tow'rds him. HIPPOLYTUS Phaedra accuses me of lawless passion! This crowning horror all my soul confounds; Such unexpected blows, falling at once, O'erwhelm me, choke my utterance, strike me dumb. THESEUS Traitor, you reckon'd that in timid silence Phaedra would bury your brutality. You should not have abandon'd in your flight The sword that in her hands helps to condemn you; Or rather, to complete your perfidy, You should have robb'd her both of speech and life. HIPPOLYTUS Justly indignant at a lie so black I might be pardon'd if I told the truth; But it concerns your honour to conceal it. Approve the reverence that shuts my mouth; And, without wishing to increase your woes, Examine closely what my life has been. Great crimes are never single, they are link'd To former faults. He who has once transgress'd May violate at last all that men hold Most sacred; vice, like virtue, has degrees Of progress; innocence was never seen To sink at once into the lowest depths Of guilt. No virtuous man can in a day Turn traitor, murderer, an incestuous wretch. The nursling of a chaste, heroic mother, I have not proved unworthy of my birth. Pittheus, whose wisdom is by all esteem'd, Deign'd to instruct me when I left her hands. It is no wish of mine to vaunt my merits, But, if I may lay claim to any

virtue, I think beyond all else I have display'd Abhorrence of those sins with which I'm charged. For this Hippolytus is known in Greece, So continent that he is deem'd austere. All know my abstinence inflexible: The daylight is not purer than my heart. How, then, could I, burning with fire profane— THESEUS Yes, dastard, 'tis that very pride condemns you. I see the odious reason of your coldness Phaedra alone bewitch'd your shameless eyes; Your soul, to others' charms indifferent, Disdain'd the blameless fires of lawful love. HIPPOLYTUS No, father, I have hidden it too long, This heart has not disdain'd a sacred flame. Here at your feet I own my real offence: I love, and love in truth where you forbid me; Bound to Aricia by my heart's devotion, The child of Pallas has subdued your son. A rebel to your laws, her I adore, And breathe forth ardent sighs for her alone. THESEUS You love her? Heav'ns! But no, I see the trick. You feign a crime to justify yourself. HIPPOLYTUS Sir, I have shunn'd her for six months, and still Love her. To you yourself I came to tell it, Trembling the while. Can nothing clear your mind Of your mistake? What oath can reassure you? By heav'n and earth and all the pow'rs of nature— THESEUS The wicked never shrink from perjury. Cease, cease, and spare me irksome protestations, If your false virtue has no other aid. HIPPOLYTUS Tho' it to you seem false and insincere, Phaedra has secret cause to know it true. THESEUS Ah! how your shamelessness excites my wrath! HIPPOLYTUS What is my term and place of banishment? THESEUS Were you beyond the Pillars of Alcides, Your perjured presence were too near me yet. HIPPOLYTUS What friends will pity me, when you forsake And think me guilty of a crime so vile? THESEUS Go, look you out for friends who hold in honour Adultery and clap their hands at incest, Low, lawless traitors, steep'd in infamy, The fit protectors of a knave like you. HIPPOLYTUS Are incest and adultery the words You cast at me? I hold my tongue. Yet think What mother Phaedra had; too well you know Her blood, not mine, is tainted with those horrors. THESEUS What! Does your rage before my eyes lose all Restraint? For the last time,—out of my sight! Hence, traitor! Wait not

till a father's wrath Force thee away 'mid general execration.

Scene III

THESEUS (alone) Wretch! Thou must meet inevitable ruin. Neptune has sworn by Styx—to gods themselves A dreadful oath,—and he will execute His promise. Thou canst not escape his vengeance. I loved thee; and, in spite of thine offence, My heart is troubled by anticipation For thee. But thou hast earn'd thy doom too well. Had father ever greater cause for rage? Just gods, who see the grief that overwhelms me, Why was I cursed with such a wicked son?

SCENE IV PHAEDRA, THESEUS

PHAEDRA My lord, I come to you, fill'd with just dread. Your voice raised high in anger reach'd mine ears, And much I fear that deeds have follow'd threats. Oh, if there yet is time, spare your own offspring. Respect your race and blood, I do beseech you. Let me not hear that blood cry from the ground; Save me the horror and perpetual pain Of having caused his father's hand to shed it. THESEUS No, Madam, from that stain my hand is free. But, for all that, the wretch has not escaped me. The hand of an Immortal now is charged With his destruction. 'Tis a debt that Neptune Owes me, and you shall be avenged. PHAEDRA A debt Owed you? Pray'rs made in anger— THESEUS Never fear That they will fail. Rather join yours to mine In all their blackness paint for me his crimes, And fan my tardy passion to white heat. But yet you know not all his infamy; His rage against you overflows in slanders; Your mouth, he says, is full of all deceit, He says Aricia has his heart and soul, That her alone he loves. PHAEDRA Aricia? THESEUS Aye, He said it to my face! an idle pretext! A trick that gulls me not! Let us hope Neptune Will do him speedy justice. To his altars I go, to urge performance of his oaths.

SCENE V

PHAEDRA (alone) Ah, he is gone! What tidings struck mine ears? What fire, half smother'd, in my heart revives? What fatal stroke falls like a thunderbolt? Stung by

remorse that would not let me rest, I tore myself out of Oenone's arms, And flew to help Hippolytus with all My soul and strength. Who knows if that repentance Might not have moved me to accuse myself? And, if my voice had not been choked with shame, Perhaps I had confess'd the frightful truth. Hippolytus can feel, but not for me! Aricia has his heart, his plighted troth. Ye gods, when, deaf to all my sighs and tears, He arm'd his eye with scorn, his brow with threats, I deem'd his heart, impregnable to love, Was fortified 'gainst all my sex alike. And yet another has prevail'd to tame His pride, another has secured his favour. Perhaps he has a heart easily melted; I am the only one he cannot bear! And shall I charge myself with his defence?

SCENE VI PHAEDRA, OENONE

PHAEDRA Know you, dear Nurse, what I have learn'd just now? OENONE No; but I come in truth with trembling limbs. I dreaded with what purpose you went forth, The fear of fatal madness made me pale. PHAEDRA Who would have thought it, Nurse? I had a rival. OENONE A rival? PHAEDRA Yes, he loves. I cannot doubt it. This wild untamable Hippolytus, Who scorn'd to be admired, whom lovers' sighs Wearied, this tiger, whom I fear'd to rouse, Fawns on a hand that has subdued his pride: Aricia has found entrance to his heart. OENONE Aricia? PHAEDRA Ah! anguish as yet untried! For what new tortures am I still reserved? All I have undergone, transports of passion, Longings and fears, the horrors of remorse, The shame of being spurn'd with contumely, Were feeble foretastes of my present torments. They love each other! By what secret charm Have they deceived me? Where, and when, and how Met they? You knew it all. Why was I cozen'd? You never told me of those stolen hours Of amorous converse. Have they oft been seen Talking together? Did they seek the shades Of thickest woods? Alas! full freedom had they To see each other. Heav'n approved their sighs; They loved without the consciousness of guilt; And every morning's sun for them shone clear, While I, an outcast from the face of Nature, Shunn'd the bright day, and sought to hide myself.

Death was the only god whose aid I dared To ask: I waited for the grave's release. Water'd with tears, nourish'd with gall, my woe Was all too closely watch'd; I did not dare To weep without restraint. In mortal dread Tasting this dangerous solace, I disguised My terror 'neath a tranquil countenance, And oft had I to check my tears, and smile. OENONE What fruit will they enjoy of their vain love? They will not see each other more. PHAEDRA That love Will last for ever. Even while I speak, Ah, fatal thought, they laugh to scorn the madness Of my distracted heart. In spite of exile That soon must part them, with a thousand oaths They seal yet closer union. Can I suffer A happiness, Oenone, which insults me? I crave your pity. She must be destroy'd. My husband's wrath against a hateful stock Shall be revived, nor must the punishment Be light: the sister's guilt passes the brothers'. I will entreat him in my jealous rage. What am I saying? Have I lost my senses? Is Phaedra jealous, and will she implore Theseus for help? My husband lives, and yet I burn. For whom? Whose heart is this I claim As mine? At every word I say, my hair Stands up with horror. Guilt henceforth has pass'd All bounds. Hypocrisy and incest breathe At once thro' all. My murderous hands are ready To spill the blood of guileless innocence. Do I yet live, wretch that I am, and dare To face this holy Sun from whom I spring? My father's sire was king of all the gods; My ancestors fill all the universe. Where can I hide? In the dark realms of Pluto? But there my father holds the fatal urn; His hand awards th' irrevocable doom: Minos is judge of all the ghosts in hell. Ah! how his awful shade will start and shudder When he shall see his daughter brought before him, Forced to confess sins of such varied dye, Crimes it may be unknown to hell itself! What wilt thou say, my father, at a sight So dire? I think I see thee drop the urn, And, seeking some unheard-of punishment, Thyself become my executioner. Spare me! A cruel goddess has destroy'd Thy race; and in my madness recognize Her wrath. Alas! My aching heart has reap'd No fruit of pleasure from the frightful crime The shame of which pursues me to the grave, And ends in torment life-long misery. OENONE Ah, Madam, pray dismiss a groundless dread: Look less severely

on a venial error. You love. We cannot conquer destiny. You were drawn on as by a fatal charm. Is that a marvel without precedent Among us? Has love triumph'd over you, And o'er none else? Weakness is natural To man. A mortal, to a mortal's lot Submit. You chafe against a yoke that others Have long since borne. The dwellers in Olympus, The gods themselves, who terrify with threats The sins of men, have burn'd with lawless fires. PHAEDRA What words are these I hear? What counsel this You dare to give me? Will you to the end Pour poison in mine ears? You have destroy'd me. You brought me back when I should else have quitted The light of day, made me forget my duty And see Hippolytus, till then avoided. What hast thou done? Why did your wicked mouth With blackest lies slander his blameless life? Perhaps you've slain him, and the impious pray'r Of an unfeeling father has been answer'd. No, not another word! Go, hateful monster; Away, and leave me to my piteous fate. May Heav'n with justice pay you your deserts! And may your punishment for ever be A terror to all those who would, like you, Nourish with artful wiles the weaknesses Of princes, push them to the brink of ruin To which their heart inclines, and smooth the path Of guilt. Such flatterers doth the wrath of Heav'n Bestow on kings as its most fatal gift. OENONE (alone) O gods! to serve her what have I not done? This is the due reward that I have won.

## ACT V

SCENE I HIPPOLYTUS, ARICIA

ARICIA Can you keep silent in this mortal peril? Your father loves you. Will you leave him thus Deceived? If in your cruel heart you scorn My tears, content to see me nevermore, Go, part from poor Aricia; but at least, Going, secure the safety of your life. Defend your honor from a shameful stain, And force your father to recall his pray'rs. There yet is time. Why out of mere caprice Leave the field free to Phaedra's calumnies? Let Theseus know the truth. HIPPOLYTUS Could I say more,

Without exposing him to dire disgrace? How should I venture, by revealing all, To make a father's brow grow red with shame? The odious mystery to you alone Is known. My heart has been outpour'd to none Save you and Heav'n. I could not hide from you (Judge if I love you), all I fain would hide E'en from myself. But think under what seal I spoke. Forget my words, if that may be; And never let so pure a mouth disclose This dreadful secret. Let us trust to Heav'n My vindication, for the gods are just; For their own honour will they clear the guiltless; Sooner or later punish'd for her crime, Phaedra will not escape the shame she merits. I ask no other favour than your silence; In all besides I give my wrath free scope. Make your escape from this captivity, Be bold to bear me company in flight; Linger not here on this accursed soil, Where virtue breathes a pestilential air. To cover your departure take advantage Of this confusion, caused by my disgrace. The means of flight are ready, be assured; You have as yet no other guards than mine. Pow'rful defenders will maintain our quarrel; Argos spreads open arms, and Sparta calls us. Let us appeal for justice to our friends, Nor suffer Phaedra, in a common ruin Joining us both, to hunt us from the throne, And aggrandise her son by robbing us. Embrace this happy opportunity: What fear restrains? You seem to hesitate. Your interest alone prompts me to urge Boldness. When I am all on fire, how comes it That you are ice? Fear you to follow then A banish'd man? ARICIA Ah, dear to me would be Such exile! With what joy, my fate to yours United, could I live, by all the world Forgotten! but not yet has that sweet tie Bound us together. How then can I steal Away with you? I know the strictest honour Forbids me not out of your father's hands To free myself; this is no parent's home, And flight is lawful when one flies from tyrants. But you, Sir, love me; and my virtue shrinks— HIPPOLYTUS No, no, your reputation is to me As dear as to yourself. A nobler purpose Brings me to you. Fly from your foes, and follow A husband. Heav'n, that sends us these misfortunes, Sets free from human instruments the pledge Between us. Torches do not always light The face of Hymen. At the gates of Troezen, 'Mid ancient tombs where princes

of my race Lie buried, stands a temple, ne'er approach'd By perjurers, where mortals dare not make False oaths, for instant punishment befalls The guilty. Falsehood knows no stronger check Than what is present there—the fear of death That cannot be avoided. Thither then We'll go, if you consent, and swear to love For ever, take the guardian god to witness Our solemn vows, and his paternal care Entreat. I will invoke the name of all The holiest Pow'rs; chaste Dian, and the Queen Of Heav'n, yea all the gods who know my heart Will guarantee my sacred promises. ARICIA The King draws near. Depart,—make no delay. To mask my flight, I linger yet one moment. Go you; and leave with me some trusty guide, To lead my timid footsteps to your side.

SCENE II THESEUS, ARICIA, ISMENE

THESEUS Ye gods, throw light upon my troubled mind, Show me the truth which I am seeking here. ARICIA (aside to ISMENE) Get ready, dear Ismene, for our flight.

SCENE III THESEUS, ARICIA

THESEUS Your colour comes and goes, you seem confused, Madame! What business had my son with you? ARICIA Sire, he was bidding me farewell for ever. THESEUS Your eyes, it seems, can tame that stubborn pride; And the first sighs he breathes are paid to you. ARICIA I can't deny the truth; he has not, Sire, Inherited your hatred and injustice; He did not treat me like a criminal. THESEUS That is to say, he swore eternal love. Do not rely on that inconstant heart; To others has he sworn as much before. ARICIA He, Sire? THESEUS You ought to check his roving taste. How could you bear a partnership so vile? ARICIA And how can you endure that vilest slanders Should make a life so pure as black as pitch? Have you so little knowledge of his heart? Do you so ill distinguish between guilt And innocence? What mist before your eyes Blinds them to virtue so conspicuous? Ah! 'tis too much to let false tongues defame him. Repent; call back your murderous wishes, Sire; Fear, fear lest Heav'n in its severity Hate you enough to hear and grant your pray'rs.

Oft in their wrath the gods accept our victims, And oftentimes chastise us with their gifts. THESEUS No, vainly would you cover up his guilt. Your love is blind to his depravity. But I have witness irreproachable: Tears have I seen, true tears, that may be trusted. ARICIA Take heed, my lord. Your hands invincible Have rid the world of monsters numberless; But all are not destroy'd, one you have left Alive—Your son forbids me to say more. Knowing with what respect he still regards you, I should too much distress him if I dared Complete my sentence. I will imitate His reverence, and, to keep silence, leave you.

SCENE IV

THESEUS (alone) What is there in her mind? What meaning lurks In speech begun but to be broken short? Would both deceive me with a vain pretence? Have they conspired to put me to the torture? And yet, despite my stern severity, What plaintive voice cries deep within my heart? A secret pity troubles and alarms me. Oenone shall be questioned once again, I must have clearer light upon this crime. Guards, bid Oenone come, and come alone.

SCENE V THESEUS, PANOPE

PANOPE I know not what the Queen intends to do, But from her agitation dread the worst. Fatal despair is painted on her features; Death's pallor is already in her face. Oenone, shamed and driven from her sight, Has cast herself into the ocean depths. None knows what prompted her to deed so rash; And now the waves hide her from us for ever. THESEUS What say you? PANOPE Her sad fate seems to have added Fresh trouble to the Queen's tempestuous soul. Sometimes, to soothe her secret pain, she clasps Her children close, and bathes them with her tears; Then suddenly, the mother's love forgotten, She thrusts them from her with a look of horror, She wanders to and fro with doubtful steps; Her vacant eye no longer knows us. Thrice She wrote, and thrice did she, changing her mind, Destroy the letter ere 'twas well begun. Vouchsafe to see her, Sire: vouchsafe to help her. THESEUS Heav'ns! Is

Oenone dead, and Phaedra bent On dying too? Oh, call me back my son! Let him defend himself, and I am ready To hear him. Be not hasty to bestow Thy fatal bounty, Neptune; let my pray'rs Rather remain ever unheard. Too soon I lifted cruel hands, believing lips That may have lied! Ah! What despair may follow!

SCENE VI THESEUS, THERAMENES

THESEUS Theramenes, is't thou? Where is my son? I gave him to thy charge from tenderest childhood. But whence these tears that overflow thine eyes? How is it with my son? THERAMENES Concern too late! Affection vain! Hippolytus is dead. THESEUS Gods! THERAMENES I have seen the flow'r of all mankind Cut off, and I am bold to say that none Deserved it less. THESEUS What! My son dead! When I Was stretching out my arms to him, has Heav'n Hasten'd his end? What was this sudden stroke? THERAMENES Scarce had we pass'd out of the gates of Troezen, He silent in his chariot, and his guards Downcast and silent too, around him ranged; To the Mycenian road he turn'd his steeds, Then, lost in thought, allow'd the reins to lie Loose on their backs. His noble chargers, erst So full of ardour to obey his voice, With head depress'd and melancholy eye Seem'd now to mark his sadness and to share it. A frightful cry, that issues from the deep, With sudden discord rends the troubled air; And from the bosom of the earth a groan Is heard in answer to that voice of terror. Our blood is frozen at our very hearts; With bristling manes the list'ning steeds stand still. Meanwhile upon the watery plain there rises A mountain billow with a mighty crest Of foam, that shoreward rolls, and, as it breaks Before our eyes vomits a furious monster. With formidable horns its brow is arm'd, And all its body clothed with yellow scales, In front a savage bull, behind a dragon Turning and twisting in impatient rage. Its long continued bellowings make the shore Tremble; the sky seems horror-struck to see it; The earth with terror quakes; its poisonous breath Infects the air. The wave that brought it ebbs In fear. All fly, forgetful of the courage That cannot aid, and in a neighbouring temple Take refuge—all save bold Hippolytus. A hero's worthy son, he stays his steeds, Seizes

his darts, and, rushing forward, hurls A missile with sure aim that wounds the monster Deep in the flank. With rage and pain it springs E'en to the horses' feet, and, roaring, falls, Writhes in the dust, and shows a fiery throat That covers them with flames, and blood, and smoke. Fear lends them wings; deaf to his voice for once, And heedless of the curb, they onward fly. Their master wastes his strength in efforts vain; With foam and blood each courser's bit is red. Some say a god, amid this wild disorder, Was seen with goads pricking their dusty flanks. O'er jagged rocks they rush urged on by terror; Crash! goes the axle-tree. Th' intrepid youth Sees his car broken up, flying to pieces; He falls himself entangled in the reins. Pardon my grief. That cruel spectacle Will be for me a source of endless tears. I saw thy hapless son, I saw him, Sire, Drag'd by the horses that his hands had fed, Pow'rless to check their fierce career, his voice But adding to their fright, his body soon One mass of wounds. Our cries of anguish fill The plain. At last they slacken their swift pace, Then stop, not far from those old tombs that mark Where lie the ashes of his royal sires. Panting I thither run, and after me His guard, along the track stain'd with fresh blood That reddens all the rocks; caught in the briers Locks of his hair hang dripping, gory spoils! I come, I call him. Stretching forth his hand, He opens his dying eyes, soon closed again. "The gods have robb'd me of a guiltless life," I hear him say: "Take care of sad Aricia When I am dead. Dear friend, if e'er my father Mourn, undeceived, his son's unhappy fate Falsely accused; to give my spirit peace, Tell him to treat his captive tenderly, And to restore—" With that the hero's breath Fails, and a mangled corpse lies in my arms, A piteous object, trophy of the wrath Of Heav'n—so changed, his father would not know him. THESEUS Alas, my son! Dear hope for ever lost! The ruthless gods have served me but too well. For what a life of anguish and remorse Am I reserved! THERAMENES Aricia at that instant, Flying from you, comes timidly, to take him For husband, there, in presence of the gods. Thus drawing nigh, she sees the grass all red And reeking, sees (sad sight for lover's eye!) Hippolytus stretch'd there, pale and disfigured. But, for a time doubtful

of her misfortune, Unrecognized the hero she adores, She looks, and asks—"Where is Hippolytus?" Only too sure at last that he lies there Before her, with sad eyes that silently Reproach the gods, she shudders, groans, and falls Swooning and all but lifeless, at his feet. Ismene, all in tears, kneels down beside her, And calls her back to life—life that is naught But sense of pain. And I, to whom this light Is darkness now, come to discharge the duty The hero has imposed on me, to tell thee His last request—a melancholy task. But hither comes his mortal enemy.

SCENE VII THESEUS, PHAEDRA, THERAMENES, PANOPE, GUARDS

THESEUS Madame, you've triumph'd, and my son is kill'd! Ah, but what room have I for fear! How justly Suspicion racks me that in blaming him I err'd! But he is dead; accept your victim; Rightly or wrongly slain, let your heart leap For joy. My eyes shall be for ever blind: Since you accuse him, I'll believe him guilty. His death affords me cause enough for tears, Without a foolish search for further light Which, pow'rless to restore him to my grief, Might only serve to make me more unhappy, Far from this shore and far from you I'll fly, For here the image of my mangled son Would haunt my memory and drive me mad. From the whole world I fain would banish me, For all the world seems to rise up in judgment Against me; and my very glory weights My punishment; for, were my name less known 'Twere easier to hide me. All the favours The gods have granted me I mourn and hate, Nor will I importune them with vain pray'rs Henceforth for ever. Give me what they may, What they have taken will all else outweigh. PHAEDRA Theseus, I cannot hear you and keep silence: I must repair the wrong that he has suffer'd— Your son was innocent. THESEUS Unhappy father! And it was on your word that I condemn'd him! Think you such cruelty can be excused— PHAEDRA Moments to me are precious; hear me, Theseus. 'Twas I who cast an eye of lawless passion On chaste and dutiful Hippolytus. Heav'n in my bosom kindled baleful fire, And vile Oenone's cunning did the rest. She fear'd Hippolytus, knowing my madness, Would make that passion known which he regarded With horror; so advantage of my weakness She

took, and hasten'd to accuse him first. For that she has been punish'd, tho' too mildly; Seeking to shun my wrath she cast herself Beneath the waves. The sword ere now had cut My thread of life, but slander'd innocence Made its cry heard, and I resolved to die In a more lingering way, confessing first My penitence to you. A poison, brought To Athens by Medea, runs thro' my veins. Already in my heart the venom works, Infusing there a strange and fatal chill; Already as thro' thickening mists I see The spouse to whom my presence is an outrage; Death, from mine eyes veiling the light of heav'n, Restores its purity that they defiled. PANOPE She dies my lord! THESEUS Would that the memory Of her disgraceful deed could perish with her! Ah, disabused too late! Come, let us go, And with the blood of mine unhappy son Mingle our tears, clasping his dear remains, In deep repentance for a pray'r detested. Let him be honour'd as he well deserves; And, to appease his sore offended ghost, Be her near kinsmen's guilt whate'er it may, Aricia shall be held my daughter from to-day.

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