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ANDROMACHE

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# ANDROMACHE



A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

BY GILBERT MURRAY

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PORTLAND MAINE  
THOMAS BIRD MOSHER  
MDCCCCXIII

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## PREFATORY LETTER

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MY DEAR ARCHER,

*The germ of this play sprang into existence on a certain April day in 1896 which you and I spent chiefly in dragging our reluctant bicycles up the great hills that surround Riveaulx Abbey, and discussing, so far as the blinding rain allowed us, the questions whether all sincere comedies are of necessity cynical, and how often we had had tea since the morning, and how far it would be possible to treat a historical subject loyally and unconventionally on a modern stage. Then we struck (as, I fear, is too often the fate of those who converse with me) on the subject of the lost plays of the Greek tragedians. We talked of the extraordinary variety of plot that the Greek dramatist found in his historical tradition, the force, the fire, the depth and richness of character-play. We thought of the marvellous dramatic possibilities of an age in which actual and living heroes and sages were to be seen moving against a background of primitive superstition and blank savagery; in which the soul of man walked more free from trappings than seems ever to have been permitted to it since. But I must stop; I see that I am approaching*

*the common pitfall of playwrights who venture upon prefaces, and am beginning to prove how good my play ought to be!*

*What I want to remind you of is this: that we agreed that a simple historical play, with as little convention as possible, placed in the Greek Heroic Age, and dealing with one of the ordinary heroic stories, ought to be, well, an interesting experiment. Beyond this point, I know, we began to differ. You wanted verse and the Greece of the English poets. I wanted, above all things, a nearer approach to my conception of the real Greece, the Greece of history and even—dare I say it?—of anthropology! I recognise your full right to disapprove of every word and every sentiment of this play from the first to the last, but I hope you will not grudge me the pleasure of associating your name with at least the inception of the experiment, and thanking you at the same time for the many gifts of friendly encouragement and stimulating oburgation which you have bestowed upon*

*Yours sincerely,*

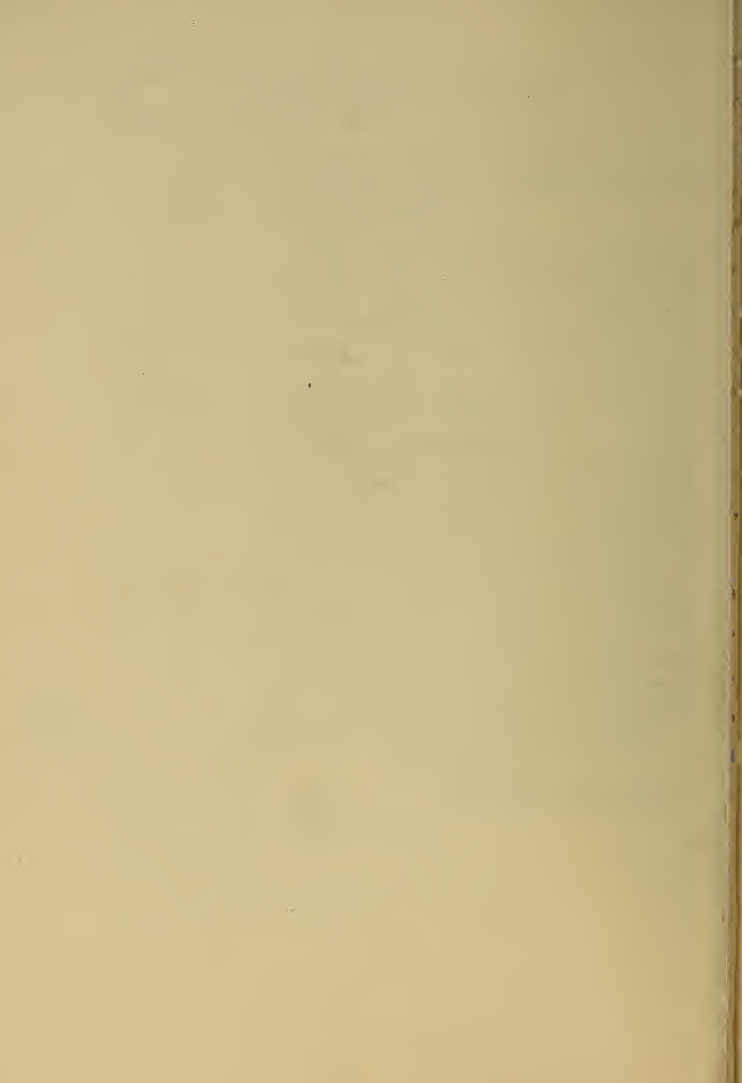
*GILBERT MURRAY*

*January 1900.*

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ANDROMACHE

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

PYRRHUS . . . . .	<i>Son of Achilles; King of Phthia.</i>
ANDROMACHE . . . . .	<i>Once wife of Hector, Prince of Troy; now slave to Pyrrhus.</i>
HERMIONE . . . . .	<i>Daughter of Helen, Queen of Sparta; wife to Pyrrhus.</i>
MOLOSSUS . . . . .	<i>Child of Pyrrhus and Andromache.</i>
ALCIMEDON or ALCIMUS	<i>An old Captain of Achilles' Myrmidons.</i>
ORESTES . . . . .	<i>Son of Agamemnon, King of Mycenæ; now banished for the slaying of his mother, Clytæmnestra.</i>
PYLADES . . . . .	<i>A Prince of Phocis, friend to Orestes.</i>

A PRIEST OF THETIS

TWO MAIDS OF HERMIONE

*Certain Maidens, Myrmidons, Men-at-Arms.*

*The Action takes place in Phthia, on the Southern borders of Thessaly, about fifteen years after the Fall of Troy.*

*The characters in this play must not be dressed like ornamental Greeks of the classical period. They are pre-classical and must suggest a mode of life that is hard, wild, poor, and above all savage. Hermione, and to a less degree her Maids, may show some richness of dress. Orestes, in spite of his gold, must be a dark travel-stained and haggard figure; a little older than Pyrrhus, who is ruddy and fair-haired, like a commonplace Viking.*



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# ANDROMACHE

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## THE FIRST ACT

SCENE: *The coast of Phthia. Rocks with the sea visible behind them. One of the rocks is a shrine, having niches cut in it for receiving offerings. At the back is the Altar of Thetis, shrouded in trees; to the left, a well. A path to the left leads to PYRRHUS' castle; another, far back to the right, leads to the house of the PRIEST. It is the morning twilight, with a faint glimmer of dawn.*

*At the foot of the rock ORESTES is seated in meditation; he carries two spears, and wears the garb of a traveller. An ARMED MAN is moving off the stage at the back, as though going towards the sea; he stops suddenly, listens, and hides behind a rock.*

*Enter, coming up from the sea, PYLADES, armed.  
The MAN steps out.*

MAN

My lord Pylades.

PYLADES

Where have you left him?

MAN

Yonder, by the shrine. He bade me go back to the ship.



- PYLADES                    That is the one thing that cannot be!
- ORESTES                    [*Musingly.*] If she is changed as all the world else is changed since that time —  
[*Abruptly.*] I care not for the woman. I will come back. If not —  
[*Smiles ambiguously.*
- PYLADES                    But why go alone, and why venture so much? We two could lie hid in the thickets by the shrine yonder, and see her when the women come to pray at sunrise. And then —
- ORESTES                    [*With determination, interrupting him.*] I will go alone, and see her and speak with her alone! Hinder me not, friend! Leave no man to watch over me. Keep the ship well hidden, and have twoscore men ambushed above the cliff, to hold the path if need comes.
- PYLADES                    There shall be fourscore ever ready to your call, night or day.
- MAN                        [*Coming down from path at back.*] My chief, the dawn is drawing close.
- ORESTES                    Ay, get you gone before any worshippers come.
- PYLADES                    As you will, then. And Apollo be your guard!

[*Exeunt* PYLADES and ARMED MAN.  
ORESTES *wraps his mantle round him*  
*and sits in silence.*

*Enter from the right, PRIEST of Thetis, with a*  
*bowl in his hands. He climbs a rock at the*  
*back and watches the sunrise.*

PRIEST

Not yet. Not quite yet. Ah, there it catches  
the crag-top: now the trees:—yes, there is  
the glint far off on the sea! [*He comes down*  
*towards the shrine and prays.*] Hail, Thetis!  
Accept this wine and honey I bring thee at  
first touch of dawn. Keep thy Priest in wealth  
and honour, even as I keep thy worship. And,  
as the sunlight drives the Things of dark-  
ness from thy waters—— [*Seeing ORESTES.*]  
Averter of evil! Who is this that has sat  
through the darkness under the Holy Rock?  
Stranger, whence come you here?

ORESTES

From Acarnania. Have I sinned in resting  
here?

PRIEST

No man of Phthia, for his life, would stay  
here in darkness! Saw you not anything?

ORESTES

What should I see?

PRIEST

No changing manifold shapes, as of women  
or winged things?

ORESTES

[*Harshly.*] I saw nought but what I have seen on a thousand nights. Enough! If I have offended any goddess I will make amends.

[*He begins to wring off a pendant from a gold chain that he wears, and moves towards the altar.*

PRIEST

Stay! There is no blood upon your hands?

ORESTES

I have shed blood in my time.

PRIEST

How long since? Is the stain washed off?

ORESTES

Oh, I have been purified and purified!

PRIEST

Duly and fully — with hyssop and the blood of swine?

ORESTES

With better sacrifices than swine! I am clean enough to make amends to your goddess. [*Coming across to the shrine.*] Where shall I lay it? For I may need her favour.

[*Holds out the gold pendant.*

PRIEST

[*Surprised.*] Gold! Stranger, it is well to give gold to Thetis, but —

ORESTES

Well, I give it to Thetis!

PRIEST

Scarce a man in Phthia has ever touched gold, save Pyrrhus himself and the servants of Hermione. Nor many, I should guess, in Acarnania.

- ORESTES            A banished man must have his wealth in little compass.
- PRIEST            A chain like that should buy an exile's return.
- ORESTES            I care not to return.
- PRIEST            Are the friends of the dead so bitter against you?
- ORESTES            The friends of the dead are dead, and my friends are dead. I have none to fear; but I have been wronged, my house taken from me, and my father's wealth, and the woman that was vowed me to wife. No more, old man! I am an exile, and I live in happier lands than mine own.
- PRIEST            Is it in Phthia you seek for a happy land? . . . No matter; affliction comes to the good as to the evil.
- ORESTES            Why, what ails your city, if a stranger may know?
- PRIEST            See you that shrine, and the footprint of Thetis in the rock? Once it was all covered with offerings!
- ORESTES            It is not so well loaded, nor yet so ill. Is there no worse than that?

- PRIEST                   Worse? Barren fields and a barren queen,  
and hatred in the house of Achilles!
- ORESTES                 Is it some sin the King has done?
- PRIEST                   The King and a woman.
- ORESTES                 [*Starting.*] Has *that* sin met its punishment?  
Speak plainly, Priest.
- PRIEST                   Long years ago, Pyrrhus brought back from  
Troy a slave woman to share his bed.
- ORESTES                 [*As though reassured.*] Hector's wife,  
Andromache, men say.
- PRIEST                   The wife of his father's bitterest enemy!  
Ay, and she was his enemy too, and loathed  
her life with Pyrrhus.
- ORESTES                 They all struggle, these women captives.  
But what harm came of it?
- PRIEST                   She is a foe to the land and to Thetis!
- ORESTES                 But has he not cast her off? [*With con-*  
*straint.*] Men say he has wedded a new Queen,  
the daughter of Helen.
- PRIEST                   Oh, the Trojan has not dwelt in the King's  
house these ten years back. She begged him  
for a hut in the mountain, and he gave it her.

- ORESTES                    She begged to be sent away! How was that?
- PRIEST                    Why should a woman wish to live in secret, and not be seen? [*Slight pause.*] There be wise women among the barbarians.
- ORESTES                    Wise in bad drugs and magic; I know no other wisdom in them.
- PRIEST                    You have said it! There is a prophet here who knows of counter-charms—I gave him three ewes for this that I wear—[*showing a charm made of wolves' teeth*]—else I durst not face her!
- ORESTES                    Whom has she chiefly hurt?
- PRIEST                    Men say she has waked the dead Hector to come to her across the seas! . . . But for the King, we should have judged her long ago.
- ORESTES                    Does the new Queen hate her?
- PRIEST                    Has she not blighted the womb of the Queen? There is no heir to Achilles in Achilles' land!
- ORESTES                    And does Pyrrhus sit still while his Queen is thus wronged?



- PRIEST                    Cannot a witch blind the eyes? He can see nothing, and will hearken to nothing. Even now he has taken the Trojan woman's bastard with him.
- ORESTES                 Is Pyrrhus away from the land? Where?
- PRIEST                    He has gone hunting in the hills yonder and down to the fields of the Napæans.
- ORESTES                 When should he return?
- PRIEST                    To-day, it may be—it is the fifth day of the hunt; or perchance the game may keep him some time yet. [*Enter ALCIMEDON, L., an old man with spears but no armour; he carries a bunch of Violets for Thetis.*] The witch woman is mad lest any hurt come to the boy!
- ALCIMEDON              Health to you, Priest, and discretion to your tongue!
- PRIEST                    Health I accept, Alcimedon,—discretion to them that need it!
- ORESTES                 [*To the PRIEST.*] Why, what should bring hurt to the lad?
- ALCIMEDON              [*Carelessly, passing on.*] Jealousy stranger. Priests and barren women!  
                                  [*He passes on to the altar, and then to the rock, where he puts his violets.*]

PRIEST

Jealousy!

ORESTES

[*Involuntarily.*] Hermione would never plot against the boy!

[*He makes an angry movement after*  
ALCIMEDON.

PRIEST

What jealousy? What need to be jealous of him? He is no true heir. We have a King, and we have a Queen, both of the blood of Zeus, both our true rulers, but heir there is none.

ALCIMEDON

[*Seeing and handling the gold link.*] Ye golden gods, have the sons of Pactôlus come to Phthia?

ORESTES

[*In sudden anger.*] The curse of the crawling lichen on the man who moves that gold!

ALCIMEDON

On your own head! [*Throws gold quickly down.*] Who are you, stranger, to curse one that has done you no wrong?

ORESTES

I check the wrong before it is done. And I tell not my name save to my host after I have eaten and slept.

ALCIMEDON

If you come to teach your manners to the Myrmidons, by Thetis! you shall learn theirs first. Is the stranger yours, O Priest?

- ORESTES            I have broken no man's bread nor touched his hand. [*Defiantly.*] What seek you more?
- ALCIMEDON        Why is he so bold? Has he sanctuary with Thetis?
- ORESTES            [*Lifting his two spears.*] This is my sanctuary. And there is more gold for the man that will break through it.
- PRIEST             Stay! Slay not the stranger so fast, Alcimedon. Reason with him. He will give up the chain, and we will let him go in peace.
- ALCIMEDON        Go in peace, when he has lifted his spear against Alcimedon! How shall I look my grandchildren in the face? By Thetis! I will wash the chain with his blood!
- PRIEST             Beware; he has spears! It is man to man.  
                      [*Noise of footsteps.* ORESTES *puts his back towards a rock, so that neither he nor*  
                      ALCIMEDON *sees ANDROMACHE, the*  
                      MAID, *and two other damsels, who enter with*  
                      pitchers on their heads.
- ALCIMEDON        [*With his eye on ORESTES.*] Ha! who comes there? [*Calling to the newcomers without looking at them.*] A stranger in arms, and with gold! Hō! Myrmidons!

- ANDROMACHE        Shame on you, Alcimedon, robber of strangers!
- ALCIMEDON         Is it you? [*Yielding reluctantly.*] Nay, he is no man's guest; it is lawful to slay him.
- ANDROMACHE        He is mine. [*To ORESTES.*] Stranger, give me your right hand. [*To ALCIMEDON.*] He is my guest.
- ORESTES            [*Still stormy and excited.*] Shall I take a woman's hand for fear of this old loon? My spear-blade is dry and has not drunk.
- PRIEST             Stranger, you are alone; a wise man chooses peace, and not war.
- ORESTES            Alone? As a wolf among sheep is alone. When he slays first the dog — [*pointing spear at ALCIMEDON*] — and bleeds the sheep as he will!
- ANDROMACHE        And who will be the better when he has bled them? Nay, old friend — [*to ALCIMEDON, who wants to break in; then to ORESTES again*] — though you slay us all, you have but lost the food and shelter we had given you; and the shedder of blood escapes not the Dread Watchers.
- ORESTES            [*Who had been cooling, starts and threatens her.*] What know *you* of the Dread Watchers?

- ANDROMACHE           And there is little glory in the slaying of a woman, and little gain.
- ORESTES                [*Wildly.*] What woman? Who are you that taunt me? Priest, is this your witch?
- ALCIMEDON             [*Angrily.*] She is no witch! You lie, both stranger and priest!
- ANDROMACHE           I am a bondwoman of the King.
- ALCIMEDON             Andromache, once wife of Hector, Prince of Troy.
- ORESTES                And am I to be the guest of a bondwoman?
- ANDROMACHE           There are others of free estate who will take you in. I only sought to save men's lives.
- ORESTES                What worth are men's lives? I will be guest to none but the King.
- ANDROMACHE           One of these will guide you, when you will, to Pyrrhus' castle.
- ORESTES                [*Relaxing suddenly.*] Oh, let me be.  
                          [*He sits down on a rock, and buries his face in his hands.*]
- ANDROMACHE           [*To ALCIMEDON.*] The man is very weary and sore at heart, Alcimedon.
- PRIEST                 It may be he is mad. It is well we hurt him not.

- ALCIMEDON            Banishment may make a man well-nigh mad.  
I remember the year of my own manslaying.
- ANDROMACHE            Perchance he has been long alone in the  
forests. Take him and give him food and  
drink.
- ALCIMEDON            The priest can take him. I want no more  
of the man.
- ORESTES                [*Wearily.*] Nay, touch me not. Leave me  
awhile.
- PRIEST                 [*To the others.*] It is well. Make your  
prayers.
- ANDROMACHE            [*Approaching the altar, and praying with  
upstretched hands.*] Greeting to thee and joy,  
Thetis, mother of all Phthia. Give us peace  
in this land; and grant that my son Molossus  
return safe, and grow to give joy to thee and  
all this house!
- ALCIMEDON            [*In the same way.*] Joy to thee, Thetis!  
Accept my offerings, and grant that my arms  
keep strong, and that I find the man whose  
swine have trampled my barley field.
- MAID                    It will be a long day before Thetis grants  
you that, old man.
- ALCIMEDON            [*Grumbling.*] If I only knew of any one that  
knew!



PRIEST

You have given an offering, stranger; you may pray if you will.

ORESTES

I—to Thetis! No! Yet perhaps—  
 [*Going up to altar.*] Hail, Thetis! I have given thee an offering of many oxen's price, and many more will I give if thou hinder me not of my desires.

ALCIMEDON

A vile prayer, a very dangerous prayer! He might as well have prayed silently. I will not take the man; the Priest may take him.

[*The PRIEST goes towards ORESTES.*]

ORESTES

[*Looking about and scanning the faces.*] I will be this bondwoman's guest.

ANDROMACHE

So be it, stranger. [*The PRIEST moves anxiously towards ORESTES.*] And perchance the Priest will give you shelter till my work is done.

PRIEST

Ay, come with me. When the King returns, it were meet that he should take you. [*Aside to ORESTES.*] Beware, stranger! It is the Phrygian woman.

ORESTES

[*Apart to PRIEST.*] She is over-wise, methinks; but not evil. I fear her not. [*Coming back as though on impulse.*] I give you my hand, wife of Hector!



- ANDROMACHE      It is well, my guest.      [*Taking his hand.*
- PRIEST              Till the King returns!
- [*Exeunt* PRIEST and ORESTES R.]
- ALCIMEDON        [*As ANDROMACHE and the women draw water at the well.*] Lazy hounds, to let Hector's wife draw water! Fill her pails for her, little foxes!
- FIRST MAID        Better *she* fill mine! Perhaps she knows charms for filling them.
- ANDROMACHE      It is well, fellow slave. Let our work be even.
- Enter, by the path from the Castle, HERMIONE, with two attendants carrying libations. She does not notice the slaves.*
- ALCIMEDON        Greeting, O Queen.
- HERMIONE          Greeting, old man. [*Going up to the altar.*] Hail, Thetis, and have joy! Accept this wine and the blood of an ewe with two lambs that I bring to thee; and take off from me, I beseech— [*She stops, looks round, and sees ANDROMACHE, on whom she turns with vehemence.*] You?
- [*Flings out the blood on the ground.*
- ALCIMEDON        Queen, you have flung out the blood upon the ground!



MAID

Queen, the man laid a curse upon it!

HERMIONE

[*Putting it back.*]—I meant no evil; and that dear gold of the South will never hurt me — In Agamemnon's palace the men had gold in their armour, and even in the blades of their swords! And the gold was wrought into lions and wild bulls and trees, and strange sea-beasts like this.

ALCIMEDON

A plain haft and a plain blade cuts the steadiest.

HERMIONE

[*Angrily.*] Bah! You think because you are rude you are valiant, Alcimedon! The soldiers of the South were as brave as you.

ALCIMEDON

[*Turning away towards the maidens.*] Let not Andromache draw the water, jades!

HERMIONE

Will you not draw for her yourself, old man?

ALCIMEDON

I draw water! [*Drawing himself up in indignation.*] By Hermes! I care not for the tongue of a barren woman.

[*Voices and the loud talk of huntsmen are heard outside.*]

VOICE OF  
MOLOSSUS

Ho! Mother, Mother!

MAID

[*Looking.*] It is Molossus! And the King's huntsmen. They are coming up the path.

ALCIMEDON

Already!

HERMIONE

[*To ANDROMACHE, who has stopped.*] Why do you wait? Have I not bidden you back to the castle? And when the hall is swept, go to your own house. Come not up to trouble the King till that web is finished.

ANDROMACHE

[*Turning again and moving away.*] I go, O Queen.

VOICE OF  
PYRRHUS

[*Without.*] Ho, wife of Hector, mother of Molossus! Stay, and look at him.

MOLOSSUS and PYRRHUS enter, with some spearmen; PYRRHUS has his arm on the neck of MOLOSSUS.

MOLOSSUS

[*Running forward.*] Mother, look! I have slain a man!

PYRRHUS

He has slain his first man.

[*MOLOSSUS holds up his hands, the palms of which are smeared with blood.*]

MOLOSSUS

See, mother; they have smeared me with his blood!

HERMIONE

Keep away from the altar, with foul hands!

ANDROMACHE

[*To PYRRHUS, with reproach, while she embraces MOLOSSUS.*] You said you would take him to no battles, only to hunting.



- MOLOSSUS           And father put the blood on my hands himself.
- PYRRHUS            I will do more for you than that, my firstborn.
- HERMIONE            [*Who has kept back, by the altar.*] Take up your pitcher, and begone, woman!
- PYRRHUS            [*Turning upon HERMIONE.*] Now, by Peleus, daughter of Helen, what would you?
- HERMIONE            That when my slave is gone you may give me greeting.
- PYRRHUS            I give you greeting. But I praise not your greeting to me.
- HERMIONE            If I send my women to draw water at sunrise, shall the water not be back when the shadows are thus?
- PYRRHUS            There be other women meeter to draw water than Hector's wife. I tell you there is no man on this earth I should so joy to have slain as Hector.
- HERMIONE            If he had witchwork to help him, he may have been a deadly fighter.
- ANDROMACHE        [*To PYRRHUS, who has laid his hand on her shoulder.*] Nay, master, the hall must be made ready.

PYRRIUS

Well, take our boy, and be with him at the castle when I come. . . . Stay, think of a boon to ask of me in return for the day's good work. And make it a rich boon; I shall not stint you.

ANDROMACHE

I know it now; but I fear to anger my lord.

PYRRIUS

Ask on; yet I would not have you ask for freedom from me.

ANDROMACHE

My master, what could I do now with freedom? Only suffer Molossus to make atonement to the Napæans for the man he slew. He may give back the oxen, and I will add of my own.

PYRRIUS

[*Displeased.*] Atonement! Who are the Napæans to seek atonement from me?

ANDROMACHE

Nay, my lord, it was scarce a righteous slaying.

PYRRIUS

Not righteous! [*Scornfully.*] Then perchance you would have me cut off the herd-boy's hands and feet, for fear his ghost should come after us? Not righteous! What is it you fear?

ANDROMACHE

[*Putting her hand on MOLOSSUS' shoulder.*] He is but a boy, my lord! And if there is no atonement, they will watch day and night to slay him.

- MOLOSSUS                    Mother, I fear them not!
- ANDROMACHE                They will raid us again——
- PYRRHUS                    I can do them twice and four times the hurt they can do me.
- ANDROMACHE                They cannot hurt *us* in our castle, but they can burn the villages in the plain and make dearth and famine.
- MOLOSSUS                    Oh, Mother, why should I make atonement for my first man?
- PYRRHUS                    It was only a boy, too. I cannot ask for forgiveness for one boy!
- ANDROMACHE                It will cost little. I have three carpets of Sidon work——
- PYRRHUS                    And the oxen! I have given them to the lad; and one is already eaten. . . . Well, well, it is for the lad to say if he will give back his oxen and ask for pardon.
- HERMIONE                    Shall my chests be made empty because your slave's child is afraid?
- MOLOSSUS                    I am not afraid. I will never atone!
- PYRRHUS                    [*To* HERMIONE.] Peace, O Queen! [*To* ANDROMACHE.] Go! If Molossus wills, he can make his atonement. On to the castle, men!
- [*Exeunt spearmen*]



ANDROMACHE

[*Turning as she goes off.*] Be not wroth, my King. Your hall would be very desolate if the boy were slain.

[*Exeunt ANDROMACHE and MOLOSSUS.*]

HERMIONE

There is another atonement should come first, if you must humble yourself.

PYRRHUS

[*Stopping as he is going off.*] What other?

HERMIONE

Atone to Orestes, Agamemnon's son, that you stole away his bride!

PYRRHUS

[*Firing up and laying his hand on his dagger.*] Daughter of a dog! I stole no man's bride.

HERMIONE

Was I not vowed and sworn to Orestes?

PYRRHUS

Your father vowed you, not I. What is it to me if your father broke his oaths?

HERMIONE

You helped him and bribed him to break them. The wrath of the Broken Oath is on both of you!

PYRRHUS

You are mad, woman. Orestes had murdered his mother, and the Spirits without Name haunted him day and night——

HERMIONE

My father knew that when he betrothed me. He could be purified.

- PYRRHUS            [*Scornfully.*] Purified? For slaying his mother?
- HERMIONE           And you, you dared not enter the land while Agamemnon's son was there; you waited till ——
- PYRRHUS           'T was your father cozened Orestes away. How should I fear Agamemnon's son? Am I not the son of Achilles?
- HERMIONE           And was Achilles a better man than Agamemnon?
- PYRRHUS           All the world knows he was.
- HERMIONE           Then why did all the world choose Agamemnon to be their king?
- PYRRHUS           Bah! Very feeble men may be kings.
- HERMIONE           They may, in Phthia; and beggarly men and savage, and witch-ridden, and makers of atonement, and stealers of wives!
- PYRRHUS           By Peleus! if I stole you, you were willing 'T is yourself you mark with a dog's name Helen's daughter!
- HERMIONE           God be witness, willing I never was! Though I dreamed not then that I should come to a beggared land and the house of a master who hated me!

*[Flings herself down by the altar, hidden from the back of the stage by the trees.]*

PYRRHIUS By Thetis, woman, you are bewitched!

HERMIONE *[With a cry.]* Bewitched! Have I not said it?

*Enter from R. back, PRIEST and ORESTES.*

PRIEST *[To ORESTES.]* Here is the King himself!  
*[To PYRRHIUS.]* Son of Achilles, I bring you this stranger, whom your handmaid, Andromache, commended to my care.

PYRRHIUS Whence comes he, and what seeks he?

PRIEST From Acarnania, banished for the slaying of a man.

PYRRHIUS He seeks not purification?

ORESTES The blood is faded long ago from my hand. I seek but to rest a while at your castle; I will give payment either in battle with your enemies, or by tidings and songs from beyond Parnassus and the Waters of Pelops.

*[HERMIONE looks up in amazement at the voice, utters a stifled cry, and peers round.]*

PYRRHIUS It is well, stranger. Tidings are good in peace; and if war comes, an exile for manslaughter may well be worth the bread he eats.

ORESTES

Others know if I am skilled in war. I know only that my life is little worth to me, and I care not much to save it.

PYRRHUS

A good word, Sir Guest, and worthy of the roof of Achilles. We give you greeting, my Queen and I. [*Shakes his hand, and looks round for HERMIONE.*] Daughter of Helen, have you not seen our guest?

HERMIONE

[*In a startled tone.*] Seen him? What do you mean, my lord?

ORESTES

Nay, though methinks I have heard the Queen's praises till it is almost as though I knew her. For the women of the South speak daily of Helen's daughter, and the bards and kings' sons will never forget her.

HERMIONE

[*Mastering her agitation with difficulty.*] You know the land of Pelops, stranger? It is a fair land.

ORESTES

Once it was far the fairest upon earth. But now its pride is brought down, and that which made it beautiful is departed.

[*He looks steadily at her.*]

PYRRHUS

Ay, they have had their troubles in the South. Howbeit, with us you may stay in peace as long as your pleasure is. Daughter

of Helen, give your hand to our guest, and guide him to the castle.

HERMIONE

[*Moving her hand forward, then drawing back.*] Let another guide him. I have yet a prayer unspoken, and my offering is poured.

PYRRHUS

[*Displeased.*] Be not vexed, stranger. Who can tell the prayers of a childless woman, save that they change and are very many? Come with me, and to-morrow we will ask your name and race.

[*Exeunt PYRRHUS and ORESTES, L. The PRIEST looks to the niches in the rock to see the offerings. HERMIONE falls on her knees at the altar, and prays silently.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT



## THE SECOND ACT

SCENE: *The Hall of PYRRHUS' Castle, a rude stone building, with spears, swords, and armour hanging on the walls. A doorway in the back wall leads to the courtyard. At the extreme right is a fire burning; near it are two high seats for the King and Queen.*

*On a bench near the door are ANDROMACHE and MOLOSSUS seated; on the floor near them is a small pile of carpets and tapestries, and a bowl with some metal ornaments and small weapons in it.*

ANDROMACHE

But when you saw him fall, and saw the pain in his face, did it give you no grief?

MOLOSSUS

A little, it may be. Not more than when I struck my first deer. A child might cry over the ox they are flaying now in the yard.

ANDROMACHE

And a grown man, too, if it availed anything.

MOLOSSUS

Mother, you are only a woman, and I am getting to be a man; I must grow past all that and throw it behind me.

*Enter ORESTES unnoticed: he stands in the doorway, leaning against a pillar.*

ANDROMACHE

May your eyes never see half the pain mine have seen! I grew past feeling for it, too, long, long ago. I saw men writhe and bite the dust, without caring for them or counting them. They were so many that they were all confused, and the noise of their anguish was like the crying of cranes far off; there was no one voice in it, and no meaning. And then, as it went on growing, and the sons of Priam died about me and the folk starved, and my husband, Hector, was slain with torment, all the voices gathered again together and seemed as one voice, that cried to my heart so that it understood.

MOLOSSUS

What did it say, mother?

ANDROMACHE

It spoke in a language that you know not, my son.

MOLOSSUS

Did it speak Phrygian?

ANDROMACHE

It spoke the language of old, old men, and those whose gods have deserted them.

[ORESTES *moves forward as though to speak, but checks himself.*

MOLOSSUS

But you could tell me what it said.



- ANDROMACHE      [*Looking at him, and not answering.*] Why did you ever *wish* to kill that herd-boy?
- MOLOSSUS        We had taken their cattle before. They always fight us.
- ANDROMACHE      Would it not be better that they should live at peace with you?
- MOLOSSUS        Why should I fear their blood-feud? I would sooner be slain than ask favours of them. My father would avenge me well!
- ANDROMACHE      And who will be the happier? Listen. Can you hear that little beating sound — down seaward, away from the sun?
- MOLOSSUS        It is the water lapping against the rocks.
- ANDROMACHE      There is a sound like that in the language I told you of. Old, old men, and those whose gods have deserted them, hear it in their hearts — the sound of all the blood that men have spilt and the tears they have shed, lapping against great rocks, in shadow, away from the sun.
- MOLOSSUS        But, mother, no warrior hears any sound like that.
- ANDROMACHE      Hector learnt to hear it before he died.



- ANDROMACHE      Light of my age, if I hated, how should I live? There are three living souls that I love — you and your father and old Alcimus. And if I hated, whom should I hate more bitterly?
- MOLOSSUS        I know my father was your enemy once. But what did old Alcimus?
- ANDROMACHE      He was one of the three who slew my little child.
- MOLOSSUS        Astyanax? [*She nods.*] I wish Astyanax were alive, mother. I would take him hunting. — He would have no share, would he, in my heritage?
- ANDROMACHE      I know nothing of that.
- MOLOSSUS        And did you *never* hate them — not at the time?
- ANDROMACHE      [*Looking at him, then passing her hand across her face.*] Oh yes, I hated them!
- MOLOSSUS        But not me! I never did much harm to you.
- ANDROMACHE      Some day perhaps you will hurt me worse than any of them; but I shall not hate you.
- MOLOSSUS        [*After a pause, handling the objects in the bowl.*] Well, I give you my oath this time, Mother; but I will not atone for my next slaying.

*Enter ALCIMEDON and Attendants.*

- ALCIMEDON           The bull is finished, and a fine beast he was.  
[*Seeing the bowl.*] What is this?
- MOLOSSUS           [*Shamefaced.*] Nothing. Some pieces of  
mother's old stores.
- ANDROMACHE        The price for the blood of the herd-boy.
- MOLOSSUS           She made me vow it!
- ALCIMEDON         The atonement? That is right. I feared  
that Pyrrhus would be too proud to pay it.
- MOLOSSUS           You need not think that *I* wanted him to  
pay it!
- ALCIMEDON         H'm! That was how *I* talked once, before  
I knew what a blood-feud was. And now I  
would pay a dead man's weight in silver to be  
clear of one. Of course, with a stranger it is  
different, or a man who has no kin. [*Exam-  
ining the stores.*] No need to pay too much,  
though. It was a little boy, they tell me, and  
poorly clad.
- MOLOSSUS           [*Almost crying.*] He was a big boy! — I hate  
the Napæans, and I will slay more of them!
- ALCIMEDON         There are the oxen as well. We have killed  
two; but sorry beasts, both, sorry beasts.  
Any two calves will more than make up for  
them.

- MOLOSSUS                    But I hate them !
- ALCIMEDON                 Hate them your fill ; but make up the feud :  
we must not have Pyrrhus left childless.
- MOLOSSUS                 What is it to me if Pyrrhus is childless ? He  
can avenge his children.
- ALCIMEDON                 Peace is better.
- MOLOSSUS                 [*Contemptuously.*] Peace !
- ORESTES                    And what is the road to peace ? The hate  
must eat itself out, till it stays for weariness.
- ALCIMEDON                 A long road, stranger, too long and too  
rough to the feet. We want peace *now* !
- ORESTES                    How can you get peace now, when the  
blood is still wet ? He may give all his silver  
and his kine, but he will hate the men whose  
blood he has drunk ; and though they swear  
by all the gods of their valley, they will hate  
him. And hate will out, in time, one way or  
another.
- MOLOSSUS                 If ever they swerve a hair's breadth from  
their oaths ——
- ALCIMEDON                 And is there to be no peace at all ?
- ORESTES                    Peace for this one — [*touching* MOLOSSUS] —  
when Pyrrhus is childless, or when ——

- ALCIMEDON                    Your words on your own head!
- ORESTES                      ——— when the last of the Napæans has  
gone from the earth.
- ANDROMACHE                Nay; no peace then.
- ORESTES                      Not for the dead?
- ANDROMACHE                Do not men see the dead roaming the  
world, and hear them call for blood?
- ORESTES                      [*Excitedly.*] How know *you*, woman, that the  
Dead call for blood? [*Gloomily again.*] When  
the whole of a race is gone there may perhaps  
be peace.
- ANDROMACHE                But the whole of a race is never gone.  
Even from Troy there are men escaped who  
may make cities and seek for vengeance again.  
And if you blot out all the Napæans, there  
are those beyond the Napæans who will hate  
you for that very thing. Make peace, swiftly,  
before you die, my son, lest there be no peace  
for ever and ever.
- Enter HERMIONE, with PRIEST of Thetis and  
Attendants; she is richly dressed, and her  
eyes bright and anxious. She passes up to  
the two high seats, and takes one. She talks  
with her MAIDS, and ALCIMEDON goes over  
to her.*

ORESTES

[*Detaching another pendant from his chain.*]  
Woman, you can see men's hearts, and you talk not as these talk. Behold, there is no peace, for peace is nothing; there is either Love or Hate. [*Throwing pendant into the bowl.*] If gold can buy love where hate is, put that to the blood-gift!

HERMIONE

[*To ORESTES, across the hall.*] Sir Stranger, this Priest tells me you are skilled as a bard.

ORESTES

I have little skill in music, but I have journeyed much.

HERMIONE

You can tell us strange tales of your voyages?

ORESTES

Not of my own. But I was telling this boy a tale even now.

HERMIONE

Nay, no boys' tales! Andromache, take your son and help with the ox flesh. [*To ORESTES.*] And sit not so far off, among the slaves' seats. Tell us some *man's* story.

ORESTES

[*Approaching, but bringing MOLOSSUS with him, while ANDROMACHE goes out.*] Nay, I will keep the boy. It is a boy's tale, this, and of little meaning. But seeing I have begun — [*To MOLOSSUS.*] Have you heard of a man that once had a great feud — Orestes, Agamemnon's son?

- MOLOSSUS           Who slew his mother, and was driven by  
—
- PRIEST               Nay, name them not, child, name not those  
Holy Ones!
- ALCIMEDON           We love not his name in this house, stranger.  
Have you no other tale?
- HERMIONE           [*Controlling her excitement.*] Nay, what hurt  
is his name? It is only a tale.
- ORESTES             He took on him a great feud, greater than  
he knew. For his father called from the dead  
for vengeance on the woman who had murdered  
him. And the gods called, too, and put  
voices always about him calling for blood.  
And then they betrayed him!
- MOLOSSUS           Did his father betray him, too?
- ORESTES             Nay, it may be that the voice was not his  
father's, after all. But the gods——
- PRIEST               See that your tongue offend not, stranger!
- ORESTES             So be it. Well, in the end he recked not of  
the gods. He cared not how sore they hated  
him, and cared not if he lived or died.
- MOLOSSUS           And what did he do?



ORESTES

This is the last story I heard of him, from a Cretan man who had been in the Northern lands.

HERMIONE

Had he gone so far away?

ORESTES

To the far North where the people are barbarians. For he vowed that he would be like Paris, and win the most beautiful of all women for his wife; for, you must know, the gods had marred all the world for him, and made it all as ashes in his mouth, except beauty. For beauty is immortal, like themselves; and they cannot hurt it. So he sought and questioned where that woman might be; and travellers said she was queen of a land among the Northmen.

HERMIONE

[*Half divining his meaning.*] Had he seen her himself?

ORESTES

Ay, long ago, they said.

HERMIONE

And did he too deem her so fair?

ORESTES

[*Looking full at her.*] More beautiful than the flowers and the sunlight, so that in dreams her eyes haunted him.

MOLOSSUS

Well, and what did he do?

ORESTES

He took his ship, with a hundred men well armed, and hid them in a bay of that country.

And he went up alone to the king's castle and saw the woman. For he was not sure if she was really so beautiful, and wanted to see her again very close. So he stayed in the king's house and made a plot to bear her away.

MOLOSSUS

But what happened?

ORESTES

I said it was but a boy's story. The Cretan knew not what had happened. Some said he won the queen to his ship, and fled away, wandering; and some said she told the king of his plotting, and they slew him there in the banquet hall. [*A slight pause.*] So perchance even Orestes has found his peace; or, perchance he is still an outcast man, with a new feud following him.

MOLOSSUS

But I wish I knew.

ORESTES

Oh, 't is a foolish story, without an ending.

HERMIONE

[*Breaking out from her suspense; recklessly.*]  
And a poor fool, your Orestes, whatever befell!

ORESTES

How so? What if he won the woman?

HERMIONE

He only fled on the seas with her, an exiled man, with no comfort. Could he not get him a kingdom?

ORESTES

Belike he cared not for a little kingdom, being once robbed of his own great kingdom.

HERMIONE

If a high seat is empty, shall not a great king's son be bold to sit on it? Were his men good soldiers of Mycenæ?

ORESTES

Some, of Mycenæ, who had sacked Troy; some, pirates he had got in his voyaging; all good fighters!

HERMIONE

Could he not slay that Northern King in his hall, and sit upon his seat?

ALCIMEDON

By Thetis! that would have been a gallant deed.

PRIEST

Unrighteous, very unrighteous; but doubtless the King would have sinned against some god.

ORESTES

The Northmen may be brave fighters; I know not. And he knew of none to help him.

ALCIMEDON

A hundred good Phthians might have tried it.

HERMIONE

The queen might have had her own friends who would fight for her.

ALCIMEDON

A very foul deed, very foul; but a gallant one! And if she would leave her lord—the hound!—she might well help to slay him!

ORESTES

He did not seek her for her righteousness; he sought her because her beauty spoke like a god to him!

*[A moment's pause. A shout of several voices heard in the Court.]*

ALCIMEDON

What is that shouting?

*[Moves towards door, with MOLOSSUS; the PRIEST follows.]*

HERMIONE

I heard the King's voice in it. *[To her MAIDS.]* Go, both of you. See what has happened. *[They also go towards the door, leaving HERMIONE and ORESTES alone. An instant of silence; then she makes a quick movement to him.]* Oh, speak!

ORESTES

Either I will take you this night or I will be slain here in the hall!

HERMIONE

Oh, take me, take me! I am half dead with wearying!

ORESTES

You shall weary no more. Go forth alone at midnight to the altar of Thetis —

HERMIONE

The altar of Thetis — by night!

*[She shows fear.]*

ORESTES

What do you fear? *[HERMIONE shudders, but does not answer.]* You dare not? Then, let it end the other way!

HERMIONE

Dare you slay *him*?

ORESTES

That is no great thing!



- MOLOSSUS I—verily I liked it not—but I gave my word. Mother made me.
- PYRRHUS You have just slain a man, and a woman can frighten you to promising your own dishonour?
- MOLOSSUS She did not frighten me; she—I know not how she did it!
- HERMIONE [*With a laugh.*] Others can guess well enough how she did it!
- FIRST MAID [*Muttering.*] Sorceress!
- SECOND MAID [*The same.*] Phrygian witch!
- ALCIMUS Hold your peace, little prating foxes!
- FIRST MAID Oh, we all know she has witched old Alcimedon, long ago.
- MOLOSSUS [*Half crying, as PYRRHUS stands gloomily silent.*] I would not make atonement to them, Father, for all the world!
- PYRRHUS She has your word now, little fool; and mine likewise.—By the gods, woman, you have got your will, and shamed me in the eyes of all men.
- ANDROMACHE Master, your honour is more to me than mine own. This thing shames you not; even Alcimedon deemed it wise and honourable.

- ALCIMUS           The boy is very young; if he were a man,  
belike —
- HERMIONE           Is Alcimedon the judge of his lord's hon-  
our?
- ANDROMACHE       But how should I ever seek to hurt your  
honour? Why should I wish it?
- PRIEST             [*As PYRRHUS goes silently back to the throne.*]  
A barbarian woman never forgets a hurt.
- FIRST MAID         'T is the spite of a conquered Phrygian.
- HERMIONE           Let her be, King! She is thinking ever of  
her Hector, and Astyanax whom you slew!
- ANDROMACHE       My lord —
- PYRRHUS            Peace, peace! She knows well enough that  
Hector is dead — and beyond the seas too.  
Though I were shamed to the dirt in mine  
own hall, Hector would not hear of it!
- HERMIONE           Are you sure?
- PRIEST             Hector himself is buried beyond the seas,  
but his ghost may have followed your ships to  
Phthia. [*Coming up to the throne.*] Yea, son  
of Achilles, though you like not my counsel,  
there be witches in Phrygia that can wake the  
dead, and tell them of shame come to their  
enemies, or of —

ALCIMUS

There be none such in Phthia, old man!  
And if the dead *should* wake, your prating  
would soon set them to sleep again.

[*Laughter, in which PYRRHUS slightly joins.*]

PYRRHUS

'T is well said, Alcimedon! These women  
and priests!

PRIEST

Nay, but I *will* speak!

[*Talks to PYRRHUS, round whom a group  
gathers, leaving ANDROMACHE alone,  
and ORESTES near ALCIMEDON.*]

ORESTES

[*Apart to ALCIMEDON.*] Old man, you have  
seen Helen. Was she more beautiful than  
your Queen?

ALCIMUS

[*Looking towards HERMIONE, then brighten-  
ing.*] Nay, this is a woman like another;  
Helen was goddesslike, deathless and ageless  
for ever!

ORESTES

[*To himself.*] For Helen I could have done  
it! . . . Alcimedon, did yonder woman ever  
do Helen any great wrong, anything meet for  
vengeance?

ALCIMUS

Andromache? Why, 't was Helen did *her*  
all the wrong!

ORESTES

Even so; and therefore she must have hated  
her. Did she never seek, think you, to have  
Helen slain?



ALCIMUS

I trow not! Why, she gave her home and shelter when the folk of Troy sought to stone her.

ORESTES

[*Brooding.*] If she had ever plotted against Helen, I could have done it.

PYRRHUS

[*Shaking off the PRIEST.*] Enough, enough! — Is your stranger in the hall, Andromache?

ANDROMACHE

He is here, my lord; a man of good counsel, methinks, and like to be faithful to his guest-oath.

PYRRHUS

He is happily come to a night of festival. — Stranger, you stand far from the fire.

[*ORESTES and HERMIONE have been trying to read one another's faces. Here ORESTES turns bitterly, looks to the suits of armour on the wall, and chooses a seat near one.*]

ORESTES

Nay, I have a good seat.

PYRRHUS

We will call the bard and be merry.

ORESTES

[*Gloomily.*] I have heard your bard but now.

PRIEST

The stranger makes minstrelsy himself, as many chieftains may.

ORESTES

Ay, give me a goblet, and I will sing. I am but a rude singer, but my songs may perchance be new.

PYRRHUS

Take him the wine.

[ *They bring wine and a lyre.*

ORESTES

There are two songs running in my ears  
this hour past; and I know not fully even yet  
which of the two is better.

PYRRHUS

Let it be something joyful, meet for a feast-  
day.

ORESTES

I fancied before that one of my songs was  
very joyful; but now methinks there is no joy  
at all in either.

PYRRHUS

[ *After looking at him questioningly for a  
moment.* ] Then give us a good straight battle-  
piece, with no cowards in it, and no slaying by  
stealth.

ORESTES

[ *Excitedly.* ] That it shall be! No cowards,  
no slaying by stealth, and a clean, hard fight!  
Ay, and it is the easier too!

PRIEST

You will call first upon the god, stranger.

ORESTES

Assuredly; and the god can choose the end  
of the lay. [ *Chanting.*

“ Lord of Man’s hope, whom no man worshipping,  
Heart of his fears, and burthen of his breath,

Queller of hate and love, hear, O Most Strong,  
Most Wrathful and Unrighteous, hear, O Death! ”

MEN-AT-ARMS

Good words! Good words!

- PRIEST                    God avert the omen!  
                               [*He goes and does purifications at the fire.*]
- ALCIMEDON              On his own head! By Thetis! this stran-  
 ger has run over with evil words ever since he  
 came.
- PYRRHUS                Choose another song, Sir Stranger! Men  
 like not the name of Death.
- ORESTES                Not death! Shall I sing of women, then?  
 They come nearest.                    [*Chants.*]
- "O Light and Shadow of all things that be,  
                               O Beauty, wild with shipwreck like the sea,  
                               Say who shall win thee, thou without a name?  
                               O Helen, Helen, who shall die for thee?"
- ALCIMEDON              [*Starting up.*] Now, by Thetis, stranger, in  
 shape God has made you kinglike, but within  
 a very fool!
- HERMIONE              [*Piteously.*] My mother Helen never *wished*  
 the men to die!
- ORESTES                My singing mislikes you, old man? Or is  
 it women that like you not?
- PYRRHUS                Stranger, some gayer song would better suit  
 a day of rejoicing. Are the songs of Acar-  
 nania all sad?
- ORESTES                Do the men of Phthia wince at the name of  
 death?

- ALCIMEDON      We have our own bard, who can sing to our liking; and his lays will tell whether we fear death.
- ORESTES      Your own bard will sing your own valour, belike? That I can ill do; for I have heard but little of the deeds of Pyrrhus.
- ALCIMEDON      The name of Troy has been heard, perchance, even in Acarnania?
- ORESTES      But the praise of your ancestors I could make into something — something gayer, you said? Was Æacus the first of your house?
- ALCIMEDON      Æacus, son of Zeus.
- ORESTES      [*Twanging the lyre carelessly and improvising.*  
                   "Great were our sires, and feeble folk are we!  
                   A strong king and a wise was Æacus,  
                   And Zeus his father helped him in his need,  
                   And Pelops, Lord of Hellas, loved him well!"
- ALCIMEDON      [*Grumbling.*] Æacus was no vassal of Pelops!
- ORESTES      "The son is weaker, weaker than the sire!  
                   And Peleus he begat, a goodly king;  
                   Albeit he stabbed his brother on the sand,  
                   And wandered from his house, and begged, and lied,  
                   And vowed a goddess held him to her breast."

[*Murmurs in the hall. ORESTES pauses and drinks.*

PYRRHIUS [Under his breath.] Does the man seek for strife?

ORESTES "The son is falser, falser than the sire!" —

HERMIONE Perchance his wine likes him not. [*Goes down to ORESTES, pours him fresh wine, and whispers.*] Are you mad?

ORESTES [*In the same tone, looking in her face.*] Knew you not that, long ago?

[*Continuing, while she goes back to the throne.*

"Achilles, Peleus' son was swift of foot,  
And slew by guile great Hector, and was slain.  
And, though he hid from war in woman's weeds,  
And though he kept his tent while others fought,  
Yet gat he from his loins one son true born,  
And craved not mercy, gave not gifts for blood!"

PYRRHIUS What does the dog mean?

ORESTES "The son is viler, viler than the sire!"

PYRRHIUS [*Starting up.*] By all my fathers together,  
this is the end! Ho, Myrmidons!

[*He snatches up the spear and shield of MOLOSSUS. The other men take arms*

*and growl. HERMIONE starts up, clasping her head with both hands, and staring in terror before her. ORESTES stays quietly seated.*

ANDROMACHE [Rushing before PYRRHUS.] Your oath, O King! Your pledged hand! He is our guest!

PYRRHUS [Checking himself suddenly, then turning upon her.] Whose guest? You brought him here — you gave the barb to his mocking! [To the men.] Back, men! [To ANDROMACHE.] Who taught him to revile my house?

ANDROMACHE Nay, I have told him nothing.

MAID OF HERMIONE He has been talking hours and hours with the Lady Andromache.

ANDROMACHE I know him not. I think he is mad.

BOTH MAIDS OF HERMIONE Bewitched, perchance!  
[Murmurs of assent and dissent.]

PYRRHUS Peace, hounds! [To ORESTES.] Sir Guest, this woman has saved you, else, oath or no oath, had I slain you where you stand!

HERMIONE [Starting from her stupefaction.] What is that in the bowl?

PYRRHUS What bowl?

HERMIONE

The bowl of your blood-gifts.

*[Pointing to it.]*

PYRRIUS

*My blood-gifts!* [*Goes to the bowl; then turns furiously on ANDROMACHE.*] Woman, who gave you this gold?

ANDROMACHE

No man gave me gold. The stranger cast a pendant of his chain to add to the blood-gifts, for pity, lest the boy should be slain.

PYRRIUS

Pity of the boy! — 'T is a plot — a plot to shame me past all enduring!

FIRST MAID

She witched the gold out of him!

PRIEST

King, King, hear me! She has witched the Queen's womb long ago, and witched the whole harvest. She has this day witched your own boy to consent to your dishonour; she has witched this mad stranger to give her gold worth twenty oxen; yea, she has witched both him and you, so that he stands up and flouts you in your hall. You are stripped naked, O King, for men and dogs to walk upon, that Hector in his grave may be merry! — Judgment, O son of Achilles, judgment!

ANDROMACHE

Yea, judgment, my King! I, too, crave judgment. Only let not these be my judges.

PRIEST

Who is she to say how she shall be judged?



- ANDROMACHE Judge me yourself, O Pyrrhus, son of Achilles! even now, in your anger; and I fear not. Oh, my King, you who know me, say if I have hated you!
- PRIEST A witch has no right to speak. Let her be bound outside at the gate till she is judged.
- ALCIMEDON Not speak? What law is this, Priest?
- PRIEST Not a witch! She will bind the King's heart, so that he cannot judge her.
- PYRRHUS [*After a moment's hesitation.*] By Zeus in heaven, it is the truth! I cannot judge her while she stands looking at me. Begone, woman! — Nay, touch her not! — Let her go to her own house.
- ANDROMACHE I go, my King. Yet if you slay me and tomorrow wake sorrowful, remember there is no cure for that sorrow! [*Exit ANDROMACHE.*]
- MOLOSSUS Mother, I will come too!
- ALCIMEDON [*Stopping MOLOSSUS at the door.*] To sanctuary! Not to your own house! Take sanctuary, both, at the altar of Thetis, till his fury is over. [*Exit MOLOSSUS.*]
- ORESTES [*Who during the interruption has mounted on the bench, taken the suit of arms from*



*the wall, and armed himself, here leaps down, picks up the lyre, and sings again—*

"The son is viler, viler than the sire!"

ALCIMEDON

The man is armed!

ORESTES

*[Continuing amid general confusion.*

"Achilles' son slew women and slew babes,  
But quailed before the blood-wrath of a churl;  
And stole another's bride; and fled, fled, fled!"

*[Tumult in hall.*

ALCIMEDON

Down with him!

PYRRIUS

Slay him not! Break his spear and thrust him out!

ORESTES

Will nothing sting you? Lo, mine was the bride he stole, and from me he fled! For he dared not face the wrath of Orestes, nor the spear of Agamemnon's son.

PYRRIUS

Orestes!

PRIEST

Is it Orestes?

ALCIMEDON

He must have men behind him! To the watch-tower quick! *[Two retainers run out, R.*

HERMIONE

He lies, he lies! Do I not know Orestes?

PYRRIUS

Is it not Orestes? Who is it?

- HERMIONE            This is some poor half-mad, wandering minstrel-man. I know him not. He is not Orestes!
- A VOICE FROM THE WATCH-TOWER            There are no men near the castle.
- ALCIMEDON            Well, strike him down!
- HERMIONE            What profit to break the guest-oath for such as he? He is not Orestes!
- PYRRHUS            Now, the Furies that haunt Orestes dog you, woman, if you lie!            [ORESTES gives a cry.]
- PRIEST            If he be mad, it were a great sin to slay him. And the god has been strong in him to-day.
- HERMIONE            [*After gazing at ORESTES steadily.*] May the Furies that haunt Orestes be ever with me if I lie. [*Recklessly.*] Is that enough? If you would have another oath, behold, I will go this night to the altar of Thetis——
- PYRRHUS            Hush, Queen, lest the goddess hear!
- HERMIONE            [*Continuing.*] And there by the altar I will swear oaths, and Thetis may work upon me what she will!
- PYRRHUS            Nay, daughter of Helen, no such wild words! I mistrust you not.— Guest, get you gone in peace.

ORESTES

[*Subdued by mention of the Furies.*] I go, not fearing you, but lest I see Them. I am no guest of yours. [*Throwing down armour.*] Take back your shield and helmet. Aught else I have had from your hands, my gold will more than repay. [*To himself with horror.*] Apollo, Averter of Evil! keep them back!— Oh, why did you not slay me while you might?  
[*Exit ORESTES.*]

A RETAINER

Shall we not stone him from the Court?

PRIEST

He is possessed! Stricken of God! Touch him not if you fear the gods' anger.

HERMIONE

[*Terrified staring in front of her.*] No, no, I see nothing!

END OF THE SECOND ACT

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## THE THIRD ACT

SCENE: *As in Act I. Night.* ANDROMACHE on the steps of the altar of Thetis, with MOLOSSUS asleep. Enter from the back, one after another, three armed men, with bows and arrows as well as spears; they pass silently behind rocks or bushes and disappear. Enter ORESTES, armed, by path at back: a MAN comes from behind a rock to meet him.

ORESTES

Is the watch set?

MAN-AT-ARMS

Everywhere.

ORESTES

And the path to the ship safe?

MAN-AT-ARMS

Yes. We have but to wait till they are drawn off from the castle.

ORESTES

Which way will Pylades lure them?

MAN-AT-ARMS

He will feign flight northwards, to leave our way clear to the ship.

ORESTES

Good. One thing more. If I be stricken here, waste no men's lives for me. Make your way back to the ship.

MAN-AT-ARMS

Prince, we have our orders for this night's work from Pylades. We leave you not.

- ORESTES                    Nay, what worth is a dead body, or who can hurt it?
- MAN-AT-ARMS            Hush! What was that?  
                                  [*Steals back to his ambush.* ANDROMACHE has made some movement. ORESTES peers towards Castle, L., in darkness; then, turning, sees that there is a woman at the altar.
- ORESTES                    Daughter of Helen, why at the altar? Whom do you fear so sore? [*No answer. He comes nearer and sees MOLOSSUS lying.*] What does the boy here?
- ANDROMACHE            It is the stranger! Come you to seek me, or what more has chanced?
- ORESTES                    Is it you? You? — Is the boy asleep?
- ANDROMACHE            We have waited here so long, and have heard no word, good or evil.
- ORESTES                    But why hide you here?
- ANDROMACHE            We have taken sanctuary from the wrath of the King and Queen, my guest.
- ORESTES                    Call you me still your guest?
- ANDROMACHE            Nay, you are still my guest till you leave the land; and the King's wrath will perchance be cooled to-morrow.

ORESTES

Why did you not let them slay me in the hall? 'Twas your own folly. I sought no hurt to you. Speak, think you an altar will hold me back, or your blood stain deeper than my mother's blood?

ANDROMACHE

Who are you that speak like this? And what will my death profit you?

ORESTES

Spoke I not loud enough in my enemy's hall? I am Orestes.

ANDROMACHE

[*Amazed.*] Clytæmnestra's son! [*Coming towards him.*] Oh, now I understand your face! Give me your hand. Whether that old stain be yet purged or no——

ORESTES

'Tis hidden and buried, rather, with much new blood over it. [*Keeping back his hand.*

ANDROMACHE

It is such a one as you I have long prayed for, to be a friend to my child and me.

ORESTES

Why should I be your friend? I want no friends.

ANDROMACHE

Listen. You and I have had more grief than others. We have seen beyond the glory of battle, beyond the joy of the conqueror and the shame of the conquered — as Priam and Hector saw before they died.

- ORESTES                    I know the battle, and I know the shame.  
I have seen nought else.
- ANDROMACHE              The King has had but little sorrow ; he has  
conquered always, and taken glory in his  
manslaying.
- ORESTES                    Belike he will soon taste the other side of  
glory.
- ANDROMACHE              It may be. But none here, save old Acimus,  
know aught of suffering. I have long prayed  
that some man should come here who had  
suffered from the hurts he had done, and  
learnt to pity men and women. And if the  
King's feet are set fast and cannot be turned,  
at least there is my son.
- ORESTES                    Woman, I am come to slay the King and  
your son !
- ANDROMACHE              [*Calmly.*] Slay them ? But why ? Why ?
- ORESTES                    To take their kingdom, as others have taken  
mine !
- ANDROMACHE              But is all the grief wasted that the gods  
have sent you ? Can you not forget past evils  
and live in peace ?
- ORESTES                    In storm I can forget them. Peace is all  
anguish to me.
- ANDROMACHE              And what will a kingdom profit you ?



- ORESTES I am a king's son ; I must have my kingdom.
- ANDROMACHE Oh, you kings and kings' sons, you dwell like wolves in your castles. I have heard many a ploughman at his ploughing sing with gladness, but seldom, seldom, a king's son.
- ORESTES Wolves must live in the wolves' way ; and they have their own gladness, too.
- ANDROMACHE You may know them by the howling of their misery in the night ! God grant my boy may never be a king !
- ORESTES Shall I slay him, then, as they bid me ? Or would you that I should take him away, where there are no kingdoms ? My ship is in the bay, and lacks not for plunder.
- ANDROMACHE Better that you should slay him now, where he lies.
- ORESTES Is he asleep ? [*He bends tenderly over MOLOSSUS ; then recovers himself, and speaks in a harsh troubled voice.*] Why is it that you fear me not ?
- ANDROMACHE Why should I fear you ?
- ORESTES Do you trust to these gods ? For I reckon little of them.
- ANDROMACHE Nay, my gods are vanished and powerless long ago, and these are but my enemies' gods.

- ORESTES                    Then what defence have you against me?
- ANDROMACHE             I need no defence. You and I are friends.
- ORESTES                    How, friends! I am charged to slay you also.
- ANDROMACHE             You will not slay me.
- ORESTES                    How can you know what I myself know not yet?
- ANDROMACHE             You have no peace to see your own heart; but I can see it.
- ORESTES                    How have you learnt it? — Woman, they may well speak of your sorceries!
- ANDROMACHE             I have no sorceries. We slave-women are like dogs who read men's moods in their eyes and voices, because their moods bring life or death to us.
- ORESTES                    Then why do you not fear me the more? [*Roughly.*] You have never seen my heart!
- ANDROMACHE             He who has seen beyond the glory of bloodshedding may soon see beyond the hardness of man's heart.
- ORESTES                    [*Troubled — roughly.*] I know my own heart!
- ANDROMACHE             The gods' hearts may be hard, but man's is tender; only very hungry, and sore afraid, and wild as a hunted beast on the mountain.

- ORESTES Know you your Queen's heart?
- ANDROMACHE Not hard, but starving. And she thinks, perchance, that the grief of others will feed it.
- ORESTES [*Absently — bending and touching the boy's hands.*] He is very cold.
- Enter HERMIONE, hooded and wrapped, hurriedly. She cannot see those at the altar.*
- HERMIONE [*To herself.*] Is there no one? — Oh, I dare not!
- [*ORESTES steps quickly out from behind the trees. HERMIONE starts in terror.*
- ORESTES Welcome, daughter of Helen!
- [*HERMIONE does not answer, but stands, breathing hard with relief.*
- ORESTES Throw back your hood. — Ye gods, she is passing beautiful!
- HERMIONE Take me to the ship. Quick, quick!
- ORESTES It is not yet time. My men must draw Pyrrhus away from the castle.
- HERMIONE He has gone. Nay, take me quick — Orestes —
- ORESTES Why do you tremble so? What is it?
- HERMIONE That oath I swore —

- ORESTES                    You have not heard Them ?
- HERMIONE                I know not. There seemed shapes at the edge of the trees.
- ORESTES                    Shapes ! [*Looks at her close.*] No ; *you* have not seen them.
- HERMIONE                [*With horror.*] Is the sight of them written on men's faces ?
- ORESTES                    Speak not of them ! — You have neither seen nor heard.
- HERMIONE                It is only now, and here, that I am afraid. Take me to the ship now ; and when once it is over —
- ORESTES                    When Pyrrhus is slain ?
- HERMIONE                And the other — [*clinging to him*] — oh, then we shall be safe and at peace.
- ORESTES                    The boy ? Why do you fear him ?
- HERMIONE                [*Absently.*] The boy ? He is the king's son.
- ORESTES                    But why do you *fear* him ?
- HERMIONE                It is not the boy I fear.
- ORESTES                    Who, then ?
- HERMIONE                It is the woman.
- ORESTES                    [*Repelled.*] And what fear you from *her* ? I care not to slay a woman and a child.

HERMIONE I can never breathe in peace while she is there!

ORESTES [*Sternly.*] What has she done?

HERMIONE [*Speaking in vague, troubled tones.*] When she is near me, even if I know it not, her breath runs in my blood and makes me tremble. [*She is trembling.*]

ORESTES Be still! Say what she has done. If she has done you a wrong I will slay her.

HERMIONE [*In the same way.*] I might have borne her eyes perchance in my own country, with friends near me; but here, all alone——

ORESTES What has she done!

HERMIONE [*In the same way.*] I meant no hurt to her for her sharing the king's bed. But when first I saw her and she looked straight into me, there was something that turned my heart sick and dimmed my eyes.

ORESTES How can I slay her for dreams like these? I know nought of your heart, but I can see your beauty. She has not hurt that.

HERMIONE Can you not see a dimness over my face, where it once was bright—and a radiance in hers?

- ORESTES                    [*Reflecting.*] There is a radiance, although she is so sad.
- HERMIONE                Where got she that radiance? It is not hers. It is the joy and sunlight she has sucked out of me!
- ORESTES                    [*Looking at her coldly.*] I can see no cloud in your face.
- HERMIONE                [*Passionately.*] No, no, you cannot see. I am rotting, shrivelling, dying within; and only she can see how I die!
- ORESTES                    All flesh must decay. Tell me one deed of hate she has done, and I will slay her.
- HERMIONE                She has made me childless, that her child may be king!
- ORESTES                    [*To himself.*] And Helen never faded at all.
- HERMIONE                Childless, barren — barren of womb and of heart! — I had courage and strength to bear good sons, till she sapped it from me to feed *her* son. Nay, there is another thing —
- ORESTES                    [*Coldly.*] What?
- HERMIONE                No, no, you do not believe me! I cannot say it.
- ORESTES                    You speak such wild things.

HERMIONE

I know not why I am so wild now, and anger you. — When she is near, it makes me wild and cruel; but now, I know not why this should come over me.

ORESTES

Great Zeus! if it should be true! — Andromache, Andromache, speak and answer her.

HERMIONE

Is she here? [*ANDROMACHE comes out from the trees by the altar.*] Averter of Evil, what is that?

ANDROMACHE

I am but your handmaid, I have done you no hurt.

HERMIONE

Nay, now you can see it — the thing I dared not say!

ORESTES

What is it?

HERMIONE

She is no live woman! See! she is dead, and sucks the blood of the living. Why is she not afraid, like a live woman?

ORESTES

[*Troubled.*] She is deathly white. Why she has no fear I know not.

ANDROMACHE

What can I answer? The King might slay me, but not this man.

ORESTES

It was the same but now, when I held death over her.



HERMIONE

She has passed through death! She has no fear, no anger, as the living have. Why does she never *ask* for anything? [*Almost beside herself with terror.*] Faugh! the smell of death clings about all her garments! Kill her, kill her! [ORESTES *looks at* HERMIONE *with a shudder.* HERMIONE, *breaking down, continues.*] Oh, friend, friend, I was not like this in Sparta.

ANDROMACHE

Queen, I know my heart is with the dead of Troy. Why should that anger you?

ORESTES

[*Looking at* HERMIONE.] In very truth there is a shadow come over you. You seem to be shrunken, and scarce so wondrous beautiful.

HERMIONE

[*In a weary frightened voice.*] Kill her, kill her!

ORESTES

I know not——

HERMIONE

You have eyes. Can you not see there is a fiend working in me?

ANDROMACHE

There is no fiend. Queen, Queen, why are you so full of hate?

HERMIONE

'T is your spells have done it! Before I came here I never hated any one.

ORESTES

[*To* ANDROMACHE.] Know you not any cause why she should hate you?



- ANDROMACHE      Nay, stranger, why *do* men hate?
- HERMIONE      She has made me feel that I am vile. Slay her, or I go back to the King.
- ORESTES      Pyrrhus most like is dead. If I do slay her will you come away with me?
- HERMIONE      Away? To the ship? Yes; till we come back and take the kingdom!
- ORESTES      I will not take your kingdom!
- HERMIONE      Is it the boy you fear to slay?
- ORESTES      My kingdom must be an ever-changing kingdom. I dreamed for an hour that I might stay and rest like other men.
- HERMIONE      And why not?
- ORESTES      There be Those watching that will not let me rest.
- HERMIONE      Those watching? But you have not seen them? *I* have not seen anything! [*To herself.*]
- ORESTES      Not now. Few men have ever seen them; but I hear their wings on the wind. And perchance if I stayed long in one place——
- HERMIONE      I hear nothing. [*Listening.*] No, it cannot be wings on the wind! Oh!

- ANDROMACHE      There is no sound at all. Be not so terrified.
- HERMIONE      I cannot stay here alone! Oh, I care not for the kingdom.
- ORESTES      We are exiles for ever, both!
- HERMIONE      Nay, if you love me I can bear anything; if any one will love me.
- ORESTES      I know not if I love or hate you. It was for your passing beauty I came, because your eyes beaconsed me through the dark of the sea.
- HERMIONE      Oh, take me; that is all the love I want!
- ORESTES      Like those two stars that men call Helen's brethren, immortal, never fading——
- HERMIONE      Oh, I am fading fast, but, perchance, if the spell were off me——
- ORESTES      [*His madness growing upon him.*] Nay, you shall never fade. There is a blue sunlit island, waterless, desolate—— Hear me, daughter of Helen, ageless and deathless!
- HERMIONE      I hear.
- ORESTES      Some sunset when you are beautiful like a dream I will set you on that bright island, and fill my eyes full. And then I will go my ways

alone, and the fairest of earthly things shall be mine for ever.

HERMIONE           What do you mean?

ORESTES           No man shall ever see you fade from your loveliness. The gods may take you even as they took Helen.

ANDROMACHE       Oh, he is mad! Queen, Queen, go back while there is time.

HERMIONE           [*Shrinking back.*] I should die! I am afraid!

ORESTES           Die? Of that I know not. Only never, never fade; perfect for ever without age or waning! Daughter of Helen, will you come with me?

[*A sound of arms outside. They start.*]

HERMIONE           Oh, quick! I am yours. Do with me what you will.

ORESTES           Come. [*Sound again.*] What is that?

VOICE OF  
PYRRHUS           Andromache! Ho! snake of Phrygia, starve at the altar if you will! Your plotters are all fled!

[*ORESTES stands in posture of defence.*  
*HERMIONE shrinks back.*]



PYRRHUS

I sought that when I came. Now I need more.

*[He poises his spear. ANDROMACHE slips back to MOLOSSUS at the altar.]*

ORESTES

*[Not raising his spear.]* Nay, it was I that should have slain Andromache. Go your ways! I only take back my own bride.

*[Pointing to HERMIONE, whom PYRRHUS now sees for the first time.]*

PYRRHIUS

It is Orestes!— But the queen vowed— And that oath! Oh, perjured! perjured!

HERMIONE

*[To the rocks and thickets.]* O ye in the ambush, strike him down! Strike him down! . . . Oh, what is that rushing on the wind?

*[Puts her hands over her ears as though in terror.]*

ORESTES

The oath is fulfilled upon her!

ANDROMACHE

*[Close to PYRRHUS.]* My lord, my lord, wait and let him speak. It is he that asks you, so there is no dishonour. *[He glares at her.]* Nay, you may slay me after if I have done wrong. And his men are crowding behind these bushes and rocks.

PYRRHUS

*[In a war chant.]* The wolves set an ambush, set an ambush for the lion; and the lion feasted for many days! Ho, Myrmidons!

- ORESTES                    They hear you not. Go back!  
                                   [*He grasps his spear for defence; PYRRHUS  
                                   draws his sword and starts forward.*
- HERMIONE                    [*As before.*] Now! Now!
- VOICE                        [*From behind the rocks.*] Now, men of  
 Mycenæ!  
                                   [*A shower of arrows strikes PYRRHUS.*
- ANDROMACHE                It is a murder, a coward's murder!  
                                   [*PYRRHUS staggers to the altar and falls.  
                                   ANDROMACHE bends over, tending him.  
                                   MOLOSSUS, with a cry, snatches PYR-  
                                   RHUS' sword and flies at ORESTES, who  
                                   disarms him at a blow.*
- ORESTES                    Hold the boy! Hurt him not!
- HERMIONE                    [*In a stupefied tone.*] His blood is running  
 down the steps of the altar!
- PYRRHUS                    Where is Molossus? Boy, if you leave  
 these dogs unpunished——
- ANDROMACHE                Nay, curse him not! Oh, my lord, if you  
 have ever loved him, curse him not! Let  
 him be free; he will do all that is well.
- PYRRHUS                    [*Faintly.*] Andromache? . . . Ay, then, so  
 be it. . . . It is the same in the end. [*Dies.*
- HERMIONE                    [*As before.*] His blood is trickling into the  
 mark of the footprint of Thetis! [*Wildly.*]

Ab, drag him away, or it will be a curse upon us! He must not die at the altar!

ORESTES

*I never slew him. I will not touch a man dying at an altar. Andromache, touch him not; he will haunt you.*

HERMIONE

She is not afraid of the haunting of the dead. See, she is whispering in his ear. She is doing witchwork to bring him back. [*Crossing to ANDROMACHE, who is still bending over PYRRHUS' body, and kneeling to her.*] Nay, in the goddess's name, Andromache, do not wake him! I have wronged you much, but I will make amends; I will set you free. *He* would never have done that. Only, do not whisper to him! Do not call him back to haunt me!

ANDROMACHE

Hold your peace, traitor and coward! If I *could* bring him back, think you I would stay my voice for you?

HERMIONE

O God! And the noise on the wind is nearer and nearer!

ORESTES

[*To HERMIONE.*] You did not slay him. Even if he does wake, he will only haunt them that slew him.

HERMIONE

He saw them not; he knows them not. He has only seen you and me. [*Rapidly.*] Oh,



in God's name, it is too much! The sound of Their wings is all about me, and if I dared look, I know I should see Their faces. It is more than one woman can bear. If he wakes I shall go mad!

ORESTES

It is done now. We will fly in the ship quickly; he will never follow us over the seas.

HERMIONE

[*As before.*] *She* will show him the way! Oh, she will have no pity! I have sought so long to slay her. She would not spare me now for all the treasures of Egypt. I knew well I should have no peace till I saw her dead.— Oh, woman, woman! bend not over him; whisper to him no more!

ANDROMACHE

I *will* whisper no more; I will cry aloud—in dead ears, as I have cried all my life! [*To PYRRHUS.*] O thou who hearest me not, who hast never heard me, I call again to thee, let there at last be peace! If thou hast found thy sleep, oh, cling to it! Never wake nor stir to follow these who murdered thee!

HERMIONE

What does she mean? It is all magic. She means that he *is* to follow us!

ANDROMACHE

The living have never heard me, and the dead cannot hear; but broken and dying men know the words that I speak. Remember the



one moment before utter death, when thine eyes were opened to see and thine ears to hear. Remember that, and forget the long waste of days before!

HERMIONE

She bids him remember! — He will awake. I can feel that he will wake and follow us!

ANDROMACHE

By the bitter hate wherewith once I hated thee; by the blood in the streets of Troy and the death-cry of Hector's child; by the love wherewith I have loved thee in spite of all — [*the body moves*] — and love thee still —

HERMIONE

[*With a shriek.*] O God! He is waking! [*Groavelling in terror and hiding her eyes.*] Oh, smite off his feet that he shall not pursue, and his hands that he may never lay hold of me!

ANDROMACHE

Before thy soul is fled far away, hearken to me and put away thine hatred.

HERMIONE

[*As before.*] Smite off his hands and his feet!

ORESTES

She is not crying him to waken. She is bidding him rest in peace and not harm us.

HERMIONE

It cannot be that; it cannot. I have hated her too sore. It is all witchwork or else madness.

*[She looks up and sees the sword; suddenly clutches it and moves towards ANDROMACHE.]*

ANDROMACHE

And afterward go and seek Hector, and he will tell thee more, for he was wiser and greater than other men. And some day this woman, too, will be broken and dying; and then she will see what thou and I have seen, and will know what mercy is. *[HERMIONE stabs her.]* Ah!

*[ANDROMACHE falls over the body of PYRRHUS. ORESTES starts forward and grasps HERMIONE.]*

ORESTES

*[To the men holding MOLOSSUS.]* Hold this wild beast! Let the boy free.

*[ORESTES and MOLOSSUS bend together over the body of ANDROMACHE. The men-at-arms seize HERMIONE.]*

MOLOSSUS

Mother, speak! — Is she dead?

ORESTES

No, but there is death in her face.

MOLOSSUS

Mother, mother, speak!

ORESTES

*[Standing up.]* We know what she would say — Young King of Phthia, I never sought to slay your father; and for this woman, I would give all my wealth to have her alive

again. — But I will make atonement: take all my gold — [*takes off his chain, and throws it at MOLOSSUS' feet. MOLOSSUS stands silent*] — and this dagger likewise. There is a bright stone in the hilt that keeps off the venom of snakes. [*MOLOSSUS is still silent.*] And my cloak was woven by women of Sidon.

[*Throws down the cloak.*]

MOLOSSUS

[*In a struggling sullen voice.*] It was not you that slew her.

ORESTES

Is it the woman? There is your sword. [*Picks it up and gives it to him. To the men holding HERMIONE.*] Hold back her arms, men, that the King may slay her as he will!

[*The men bring forward HERMIONE, dazed and stupefied; they hold her so that either breast or throat may receive the sword.*]

MOLOSSUS

Oh, take her away, or I will verily slay her! Let her never set foot upon this land again.

ORESTES

Begone with her to the ship!

[*The men move off with her.*]

HERMIONE

[*Suddenly struggling.*] I will not go! Let me free! I will stay and he shall slay me!

[*The men drag her off.*]

ORESTES

And for mine own atonement. [*He looks round.*] Men, get you gone! — If you would

have more, here is my sword ; and here is my shield, and my helmet. [*He lays the arms one by one at MOLOSSUS' feet.*]—My men are all gone. The rest is for you to take.

MOLOSSUS

[*Looking at ANDROMACHE.*] I will take no more. I will have peace.

[*Kneels down, bending over the body.*]

ORESTES

Peace let it be !—

ANDROMACHE

[*Half raising herself.*] Hector ! Hector !

THE END

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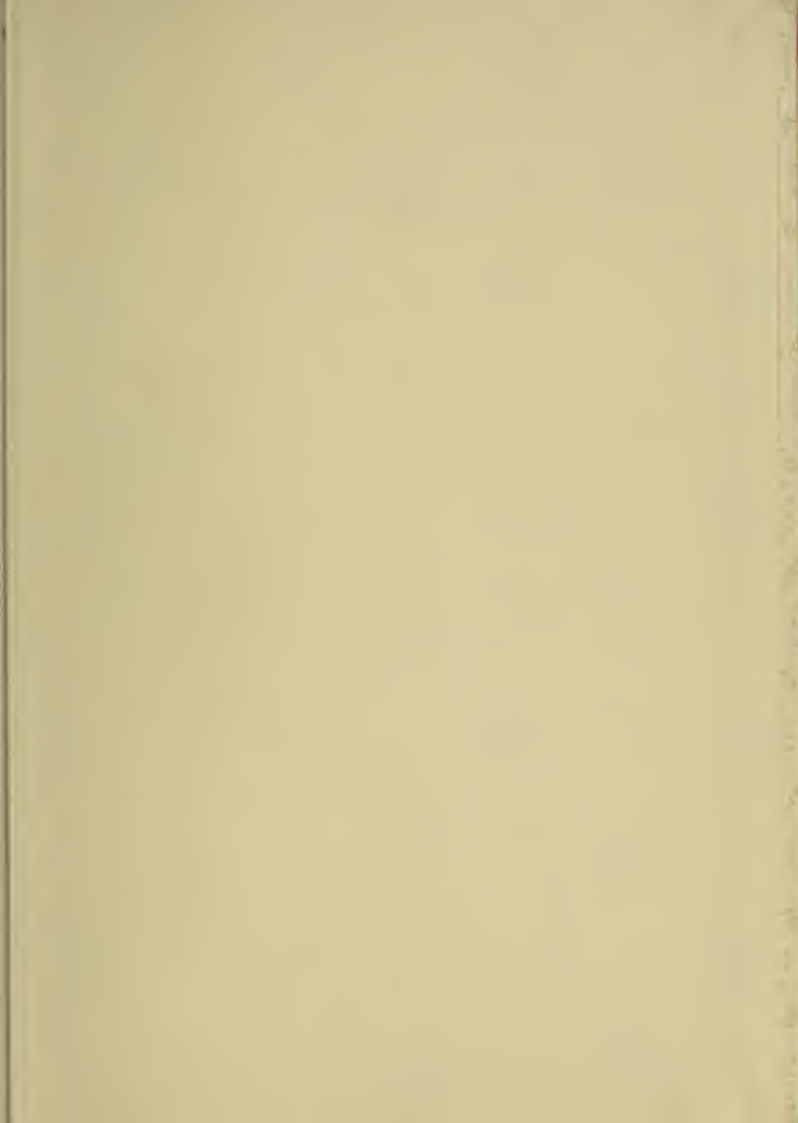
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