Perseus the Deliverer

A Drama
The Legend of Perseus

Acrisius, the Argive king, warned by an oracle that his daughter’s son would be the agent of his death, hoped to escape his doom by shutting her up in a brazen tower. But Zeus, the King of the Gods, descended into her prison in a shower of gold and Danaë bore to him a son named Perseus. Danaë and her child were exposed in a boat without sail or oar on the sea, but here too fate and the gods intervened and, guided by a divine protection, the boat bore her safely to the Island of Seriphos. There Danaë was received and honoured by the King. When Perseus had grown to manhood the King, wishing to marry Danaë, decided to send him to his death and to that end ordered him to slay the Gorgon Medusa in the wild, unknown and snowy North and bring to him her head the sight of which turned men to stone. Perseus, aided by Athene, the Goddess of Wisdom, who gave him the divine sword Herpe, winged shoes to bear him through the air, her shield or aegis and the cap of invisibility, succeeded in his quest after many adventures. In his returning he came to Syria and found Andromeda, daughter of Cepheus and Cassiopea, King and Queen of Syria, chained to the rocks by the people to be devoured by a sea-monster as an atonement for her mother’s impiety against the sea-god, Poseidon. Perseus slew the monster and rescued and wedded Andromeda.

In this piece the ancient legend has been divested of its original character of a heroic myth; it is made the nucleus round which there could grow the scenes of a romantic story of human temperament and life-impulses on the Elizabethan model. The country in which the action is located is a Syria of romance, not of history. Indeed a Hellenic legend could not at all be set in the environments of the life of a Semitic people and its early Aramaean civilisation: the town of Cepheus must be looked at as a Greek colony with a blonde Achaean dynasty ruling
a Hellenised people who worship an old Mediterranean deity under a Greek name. In a romantic work of imagination of this type these outrages on history do not matter. Time there is more than Einsteinian in its relativity, the creative imagination is its sole disposer and arranger; fantasy reigns sovereign; the names of ancient countries and peoples are brought in only as fringes of a decorative background; anachronisms romp in wherever they can get an easy admittance, ideas and associations from all climes and epochs mingle; myth, romance and realism make up a single whole. For here the stage is the human mind of all times: the subject is an incident in its passage from a semi-primitive temperament surviving in a fairly advanced outward civilisation to a brighter intellectualism and humanism — never quite safe against the resurgence of the dark or violent life-forces which are always there subdued or subordinated or somnolent in the make-up of civilised man — and the first promptings of the deeper and higher psychic and spiritual being which it is his ultimate destiny to become.
Persons of the Drama

PALLAS ATHENE.
POSEIDON.
PERSEUS, son of Zeus and Danaë.
CEPHEUS, King of Syria.
IOLAUS, son of Cepheus and Cassiopea.
POLYDAON, priest of Poseidon.
PHINEUS, King of Tyre.
TYRNAUS, merchants of Babylonia, wrecked on the coast of Syria.
SMERDAS.
THEROPS, a popular leader.
PERISSUS, a citizen butcher.
DERCETES, a Syrian captain.
NEBASSAR, captain of the Chaldean Guard.
CHABRIAS.
DAMOETES.
MEDES, an usher in the palace.
MORUS.
SRYAX.
CIREAS, a servant in the temple of Poseidon.
CASSIOPEA, princess of Chaldea, Queen of Syria.
ANDROMEDA, daughter of Cepheus and Cassiopea.
CYDONE, mistress of Iolaus.
PRAXILLA, head of the palace household in the women's apartments.
DIOMEDA, a slave-girl, servant and playmate of Andromeda.
BALTIS.
PASITHEA, Syrian women.

SCENE. — The city of Cepheus, the seashore, the temple of Poseidon on the headland and the surrounding country.
Prologue

The Ocean in tumult, and the sky in storm: Pallas Athene appears in the heavens with lightnings playing over her head and under her feet.

ATHENE
Error of waters rustling through the world,
Vast Ocean, call thy ravenous waves that march
With blue fierce nostrils quivering for prey,
Back to thy feet. Hush thy impatient surges
At my divine command and do my will.

VOICES OF THE SEA
Who art thou layest thy serene command
Upon the untamed waters?

ATHENE
I am Pallas,
Daughter of the Omnipotent.

VOICES
What wouldst thou?
For we cannot resist thee; our clamorous hearts
Are hushed in terror at thy marble feet.

ATHENE
Awake your dread Poseidon. Bid him rise
And come before me.

VOICES
Let thy compelling voice
Awake him: for the sea is hushed.
ATHENE
Arise,
Illimitable Poseidon! let thy blue
And streaming tresses mingle with the foam
Emerging into light.

Poseidon appears upon the waters.

POSEIDON
What quiet voice
Compels me from my rocky pillow piled
Upon the floor of the enormous deep?

VOICES
A whiteness and a strength is in the skies.

POSEIDON
How art thou white and beautiful and calm,
Yet clothed in tumult! Heaven above thee shakes
Wounded with lightnings, goddess, and the sea
Flees from thy dreadful tranquil feet. Thy calm
Troubles me: who art thou, dweller in the light?

ATHENE
I am Athene.

POSEIDON
Virgin formidable
In beauty, disturber of the ancient world!
Ever thou seekest to enslave to man
The eternal Universe, and our huge motions
That shake the mountains and upheave the seas
Wouldst with the glancing visions of thy brain
Coerce and bridle.

ATHENE
Me the Omnipotent
Made from His being to lead and discipline
The immortal spirit of man, till it attain
To order and magnificent mastery
Of all his outward world.

POSEIDON
What wouldst thou of me?

ATHENE
The powers of the earth have kissed my feet
In deep submission, and they yield me tribute,
Olives and corn and all fruit-bearing trees,
And silver from the bowels of the hills,
Marble and iron ore. Fire is my servant.
But thou, Poseidon, with thy kindred gods
And the wild wings of air resist me. I come
To set my feet upon thy azure locks,
O shaker of the cliffs. Adore thy sovereign.

POSEIDON
The anarchy of the enormous seas
Is mine, O terrible Athene: I sway
Their billows with my nod. Man’s feeble feet
Leave there no traces, nor his destiny
Has any hold upon the shifting waves.

ATHENE
Thou severest him with thy unmeasured wastes
Whom I would weld in one. But I will lead him
Over thy waters, thou wild thunderer,
Spurning thy tops in hollowed fragile trees.
He shall be confident in me and dare
The immeasurable oceans till the West
Mingles with India, and reach the northern isles
That dwell beneath my dancing aegis bright,
Snow-weary. He shall, armed with clamorous fire,
Rush o’er the angry waters when the whale
Is stunned between two waves and slay his foe
Betwixt the thunders. Therefore I bid thee not,
O azure strong Poseidon, to abate
Thy savage tumults: rather his march oppose.
For through the shocks of difficulty and death
Man shall attain his godhead.

POSEIDON

What then desir’st thou,
Athene?

ATHENE

On yonder inhospitable coast
Far-venturing merchants from the East, or those
Who put from Tyre towards Atlantic gains,
Are by thy trident fiercely shaken forth
Upon the jagged rocks, and who escape,
The gay and savage Syrians on their altars
Massacre hideously, thee to propitiate,
Moloch-Poseidon of the Syrian coasts,
Dagon of Gaza, lord of many names
And many natures, many forms of power
Who rulest from Philistia to the north,
A terror and a woe. O iron King,
Desist from blood, be glad of kindlier gifts
And suffer men to live.

POSEIDON

Behold, Athene,
My waters! see them lift their foam-white tops
Charging from sky to sky in rapid tumult:
Admire their force, admire their thunderous speed.
With green hooves and white manes they trample onwards.
My mighty voices fill the world, Athene.
Shall I permit the grand anarchic seas
To be a road and the imperious Ocean
A means of merchandise? Shall the frail keels
Of thy ephemeral mortals score its back
With servile furrows and petty souls of men
Triumphing tame the illimitable sea?
I am not of the mild and later gods,
But of that elder world; Lemuria
And old Atlantis raised me crimson altars,
And my huge nostrils keep that scent of blood
For which they quiver. Return into thy heavens,
Pallas Athene, I into my deep.

ATHENE
Dash then thy billows up against my aegis
In battle! think not to hide in thy deep oceans;
For I will drive thy waters from the world
And leave thee naked to the light.

POSEIDON
Dread virgin!
I will not war with thee, armipotent.

ATHENE
Then send thy champion forth to meet my champion,
And let their conflict govern ours, Poseidon.

POSEIDON
Who is thy champion?

ATHENE
Perseus, the Olympian’s son,
Whom Danaë in her strong brazen tower,
Acrisius’ daughter, bore, by heavenly gold
Lapped into slumber: for of that shining rain
He is the beautiful offspring.

POSEIDON
The parricide
That is to be? But my sea-monster’s fangs
And fiery breathings shall prevent that murder.
Farewell, Athene!

ATHENE

Farewell, until I press
My feet upon thy blue enormous mane
And add thy Ocean to my growing empire.

Poseidon disappears into the sea.

He dives into the deep and with a din
The thunderous divided waters meet
Above his grisly head. Thou wingest, Perseus,
From northern snows to this fair sunny land,
Not knowing in the night what way thou wendest;
But the dawn comes and over earth’s far rim
The round sun rises, as thyself shalt rise
On Syria and thy rosy Andromeda,
A thing of light. Rejoice, thou famous hero!
Be glad of love, be glad of life, whose bosom
Harbours the quiet strength of pure Athene.

She disappears into light.
Act I

Scene 1

A rocky and surf-beat margin of land walled in with great frowning cliffs.
Cireas, Diomede.

CIREAS
Diomede? You here so early and in this wild wanton weather!

DIOMEDE
I can find no fault in the weather, Cireas; it is brilliant and frolicsome.

CIREAS
The rain has wept itself out and the sun has ventured into the open; but the wind is shouting like mad and the sea is still in a mighty passion. Has your mistress Andromeda sent you then with matin-offerings to Poseidon, or are you walking here to whip the red roses in your cheeks redder with the sea-wind?

DIOMEDE
My mistress cares as much for your Poseidon as I for your glum beetle-browed priest Polydaon. But you, Cireas? are you walking here to whip the red nose of you redder with the sea-wind or to soothe with it the marks of his holiness’s cudgel?

CIREAS
I must carry up these buckets of sea-water to swab down the blue-haired old fellow in the temple. Hang the robustious storm-shaken curmudgeon! I have rubbed him and scrubbed him and
bathed him and swathed him for these eighteen years, yet he
never sent me one profitable piece of wreckage out of his sea
yet. A gold bracelet, now, crusted with jewels, dropped from the
arm of some drowned princess, or a sealed casket velvet-lined
with a priceless vase carried by the Rhodian merchants: that
would not have beggared him! And I with so little could have
bought my liberty.

DIOMEDE
Maybe ’twas that he feared. For who would wish to lose such
an expert body-servant as you, my Cireas?

CIREAS
Zeus! if I thought that, I would leave his unwashed back to itch
for a fortnight. But these Gods are kittle cattle to joke with. They
have too many spare monsters about in their stables trained to
snap up offenders for a light breakfast.

DIOMEDE
And how prosper the sacrifices, Cireas? I hope you keep your
god soothingly and daintily fed in this hot summer season?

CIREAS
Alack, poor old Poseidon! He has had nothing but goats and
sea-urchins lately, and that is poor food for a palate inured to
homme à la Phénicienne, Diomede. It is his own fault, he should
provide wreckage more freely. But black Polydaon’s forehead
grows blacker every day: he will soon be as mad as Cybele’s
bull on the headland. I am every moment in terror of finding
myself tumbled on the altar for a shipwrecked Phoenician and
old Blackbrows hacking about in search of my heart with his
holy carving-tools.

DIOMEDE
You should warn him beforehand that your heart is in your
paunch hidden under twenty pounds of fat: so shall he have less
cutting-exercise and you an easier exit.
CIREAS
Out! would you have me slit for a water-god’s dinner? Is this your tenderness for me?

DIOMEDE
Heaven forbid, dear Cireas. Syria would lose half her scampishness if you departed untimely to a worse world.

CIREAS
Away from here, you long sauciness, you thin edge of naughty satire. But, no! First tell me, what news of the palace? They say King Phineus will wed the Princess Andromeda.

DIOMEDE
Yes, but not till the Princess Andromeda weds King Phineus. What noise is that?

CIREAS
It was the cry of many men in anguish. He climbs up a rock.

DIOMEDE
Zeus, what a wail was there! surely a royal Huge ship from Sidon or the Nile has kissed Our ragged beaches.

CIREAS
A Phoenician galley Is caught and spinning in the surf, the men Urge desperate oars in vain. Hark, with a crash She rushes on the boulders’ iron fangs That rip her tender sides. How the white ship Battered against them by the growling surf Screams like a woman tortured! From all sides The men are shaken out, as rattling peas Leap from a long and bursting sheath: these sink Gurgling into the billows, those are pressed
And mangled on the jagged rocks.

**Diomedes**

O it must be
A memorable sight! help me up, Creas.

**Creas**

No, no, for I must run and tell old Blackbrows
That here’s fresh meat for hungry grim Poseidon.

_He climbs down and out running._

**Diomedes**

You disobliging dog! This is the first wreck in eighteen months
and I not to see it! I will try and climb round the rock even if
my neck and legs pay the forfeit.

_She goes out in the opposite direction._
Scene 2

The same.
Perseus descends on winged sandals from the clouds.

PERSEUS
Rocks of the outland jaggèd with the sea,
You slumbering promontories whose huge backs
Jut into azure, and thou, O many-thundered
Enormous Ocean, hail! Whatever lands
Are ramparted with these forbidding shores,
Yet if you hold felicitous roofs of men,
Homes of delightful laughter, if you have streams
Where chattering girls dip in their pitchers cool
And dabble their white feet in the chill lapse
Of waters, trees and a green-mantled earth,
Cicalas noisy in a million boughs
Or happy cheep of common birds, I greet you,
Syria or Egypt or Ionian shores,
Perseus the son of Danaë, who long
Have sojourned only with the hail-thrashed isles
Wet with cold mists and by the boreal winds
Snow-swathed. The angry voices of the surf
Are welcome to me whose ears have long been sealed
By rigorous silence in the snows. O even
The wail of mortal misery I choose
Rather than that intolerable hush;
For this at least is human. Thee I praise,
O mother Earth and thy guardian Sea, O Sun
Of the warm south nursing fair life of men.
I will go down into bee-murmuring fields
And mix with men and women in the corn
And eat again accustomed food. But first
This galley shattered on the sharp-toothed rocks
I fly to succour. You are grown dear to me,
You smiling weeping human faces, brightly
Who move, who live, not like those stony masks
And Gorgon visions of that monstrous world
Beyond the snows. I would not lose you now
In the dead surges of the inhuman flood.

He descends out of sight.

_Olauus enters with Cireas, Dercetes and soldiers._

_**Iolaus**_
Prepare your ambush, men, amid these boulders,
But at the signal, leave your rocky lairs
With level bristling points and gyre them in.

_**Cireas**_
O Poseidon Ennosigaios, man-swaller, earth-shaker, I have
swabbed thee for eighteen years. I pray thee tot up the price
of those swabbings and be not dishonest with me nor miserly.
Eighteen by three hundred and sixty-five by two, that is the sum
of them: and forget not the leap years either, O great Poseidon.

_**Iolaus**_
Into our ambush, for I hear them come.

_They conceal themselves._

_Perseus returns with Tyrnaus and Smerdas._

_**Perseus**_
Chaldean merchants, would my speed to save
Had matched the hawk’s when he swoops down for slaughter.
So many beautiful bodies of strong men
Lost in the surge, so many eager hopes
Of happiness now quenched would still have gladdened
The sunlight. Yet for two delightful lives
Saved to the stir and motion of the world
I praise the Gods that help us.
TYRNAUS
Thou radiant youth
Whose face is like a joyous god’s for beauty,
Whatever worth the body’s life may have,
I thank thee that ’tis saved. Smerdas, discharge
That hapless humour from thy lids! If riches
Are lost, the body, thy strong instrument
To gather riches, is not lost, nor mind,
The provident director of its labours.

SMERDAS
Three thousand pieces of that wealthy stuff,
Full forty chests all crammed with noble gems,
All lost, all in a moment lost! We are beggars.

TYRNAUS
Smerdas, not beggared yet of arm or brain.

SMERDAS
The toil-marred peasant has as much.

PERSEUS
Merchant,
I sorrow for thy loss: all beautiful things
Were meant to shine in the bright day, and grievous
It is to know the senseless billows play with them.
Yet life, most beautiful of all, is left thee.
Is not mere sunlight something, and to breathe
A joy? Be patient with the gods; they love not
Rebellion and o’ertake it with fresh scourgings.

SMERDAS
O that the sea had swallowed me and rolled
In my dear treasure! Tell me, Syrian youth,
Are there not divers in these parts, could pluck
My wealth from the abyss?
Perseus the Deliverer

PERSEUS
Chaldean merchant,
I am not of this country, but like thyself
Hear first today the surf roar on its beaches.

SMERDAS
Cursed be the moment when we neared its shores!
O harsh sea-god, if thou wilt have my wealth,
My soul, it was a cruel mercy then to leave
This beggared empty body bared of all
That made life sweet. Take this too, and everything.

IOLAUS (stepping forward)
Thy prayer is granted thee, O Babylonian.

The soldiers appear and surround
Perseus and the merchants.

CIREAS
All the good stuff drowned! O unlucky Cireas! O greedy Poseidon!

SMERDAS
Shield us! what are these threatening spear-points?

TYRNAUS
Fate’s.
This is that strange inhospitable coast
Where the wrecked traveller in his own warm blood
Is given guest-bath. (draws) Death’s dice are yet to throw.

IOLAUS
Draw not in vain, strive not against the gods.
This is the shore near the temple where Poseidon
Sits ivory-limbed in his dim rock-hewn house
And nods above the bleeding mariner
His sapphire locks in gloom. You three are come,
A welcome offering to that long dry altar,
O happy voyagers. Your road is straight
To Elysium.

PERSEUS
An evil and harsh religion
You practise in your land, stripling of Syria,
Yet since it is religion, do thy will,
If thou have power no less than will. And yet
I deem that ere I visit death’s calm country,
I have far longer ways to tread.

TYRNAUS (flinging away his sword)
Take me.
I will not please the gods with impotent writhing
Under the harrow of my fate.

They seize Tyrnaus.

SMERDAS
O wicked fool!
You might have saved me with that sword. Ah youth!
Ah radiant stranger! help me! thou art mighty.

PERSEUS
Still, merchant, thou wouldst live?

SMERDAS
I am dead with terror
Of these bright thirsty spears. O they will carve
My frantic heart out of my living bosom
To throw it bleeding on that hideous altar.
Save me, hero!

PERSEUS
I war not with the gods for thee.
From belching fire or the deep-mouthed abyss
Of waters to have saved the meanest thing
That wears man’s kindly semblance, is a joy.
But he is mad who for another’s ease
Incurs the implacable pursuit of heaven.
Yet since each man on earth has privilege
To battle even against the gods for life,
Sweet life, lift up from earth thy fellow’s sword;
I will protect meanwhile thy head from onset.

Smerdas
Alas, you mock me! I have no skill with weapons
Nor am a fighter. Save me!

The Syrians seize Smerdas.
Help! I will give thee
The wealth of Babylon when I am safe.

Perseus
My sword is heaven’s; it is not to be purchased.

Smerdas and Tyrnaus are led away.

Iolaus
Take too this radiance.

Perseus (drawing his sword)
Asian stripling, pause.
I am not weak of hand nor feeble of heart.
Thou art too young, too blithe, too beautiful;
I would not disarrange thy sunny curls
By any harsher touch than an embrace.

Iolaus
I too could wish to spare thy joyous body
From the black knife, whoe’er thou art, O stranger.
But grim compulsion drives and angry will
Of the sea’s lord, chafing that mortal men
Insult with their frail keels his rude strong oceans.
Therefore he built his grisly temple here,
And all who are broken in the unequal war
With surge and tempest, though they evade his rocks,
Act I, Scene 2

Must belch out anguished blood upon that altar
Miserably.

PERSEUS
I come not from the Ocean.

IOLAUS
There is no other way that men could come;
For this is ground forbidden to unknown feet.
(smiling)
Unless these gaudy pinions on thy shoes
Were wings indeed to bear thee through the void!

PERSEUS
Are there not those who ask nor solid land
For footing nor the salt flood to buoy their motions?
Perhaps I am of these.

IOLAUS
Of these thou art not.
The gods are sombre, terrible to gaze at,
Or, even if bright, remote, grand, formidable.
But thou art open and fair like our blue heavens
In Syria and thy radiant masculine body
Allures the eye. Yield! it may be the God
Will spare thee.

PERSEUS
Set on thy war-dogs. Me alive
If they alive can take, I am content
To bleed a victim.

IOLAUS
Art thou a demigod
To beat back with one blade a hundred spears?
PERSEUS
My sword is in my hand and that shall answer.
I am tired of words.

IOLAUS
Dercetes, wait. His face
Is beautiful as Heaven. O dark Poseidon,
What wilt thou do with him in thy dank caves
Under the grey abysses of the salt flood?
Spare him to me and sunlight.

Polydaon and Phineus enter from behind.

DERCETES
Prince, give the order.

IOLAUS
Let this young sungod live.

DERCETES
It is forbidden.

IOLAUS
But I allow it.

POLYDAON (coming forward)
And when did lenient Heaven
Make thee a godhead, Syrian Iolaus,
To set thy proud decree against Poseidon’s?
Wilt thou rescind what Ocean’s Zeus has ordered?

IOLAUS
Polydaon —

POLYDAON
Does a royal name on earth
Inflate so foolishly thy mortal pride,
Thou evenest thyself with the Olympians?
Beware, the blood of kings has dropped ere now
From the grey sacrificial knife.

**IOLAUS**
Our blood!
Thou darest threaten me, presumptuous priest?
Back to thy blood-stained kennel! I absolve
This stranger.

**POLYDAON**
Captain, take them both. You flinch?
Are you so fearful of the name of prince
He plays with? Fear rather dark Poseidon’s anger.

**PHINEUS**
Be wise, young Iolaus. Polydaon,
Thy zeal outstrips the reverence due to kings.

**IOLAUS**
I need not thy protection, Tyrian Phineus:
This is my country.

*He draws.*

**PHINEUS (aside to Polydaon)**
It were well done to kill him now, his sword
Being out against the people’s gods; for then
Who blames the god’s avenger?

**POLYDAON**
Will you accept,
Syrians, the burden of his sacrilege?
Upon them for Poseidon!

**DERCETES**
Seize them but slay not!
Let none dare shed the blood of Syria’s kings.
SOLDIERS
Poseidon! great Poseidon!

PERSEUS
Iolaus,
Rein in thy sword: I am enough for these.

He shakes his uncovered shield in the
faces of the soldiers: they stagger
back covering their eyes.

IOLAUS
Gods, what a glory lights up Syria!

POLYDAON
Amazement!
Is this a god opposes us? Back, back!

CIREAS
Master, master, skedaddle: run, run, good King of Tyre, it is scut-
tle or be scuttled. Zeus has come down to earth with feathered
shoes and a shield made out of phosphorus.

He runs off, followed more slowly by
Dercetes and the soldiers.

PHINEUS
Whate’er thou art, yet thou shalt not outface me.

He advances with sword drawn.
Hast thou Heaven’s thunders with thee too?

POLYDAON (pulling him back)
Back, Phineus!
The fiery-tasselled aegis of Athene
Shakes forth these lightnings, and an earthly sword
Were madness here.

He goes out with Phineus.
IOLAUΣ  O radiant strong immortal,
Iolaus kneels to thee.

PERSEUS  No, Iolaus.
Though great Athene breathes Olympian strength
Into my arm sometimes, I am no more
Than a brief mortal.

IOLAUΣ  Art thou only man?
O then be Iolaus’ friend and lover,
Who com’st to me like something all my own
Destined from other shores.

PERSEUS  Give me thy hands,
O fair young child of the warm Syrian sun.
Embrace me! Thou art like a springing laurel
Fed upon sunlight by the murmuring waters.

IOLAUΣ  Tell me thy name. What memorable earth
Gave thee to the azure?

PERSEUS  I am from Argolis,
Perseus my name, the son of Danaê.

IOLAUΣ  Come, Perseus, friend, with me: fierce entertainment
We have given, unworthy the fair joyousness
Thou carriest like a flag, but thou shalt meet
A kinder Syria. My royal father Cepheus
Shall welcome, my mother give thee a mother’s greeting
And our Andromeda’s delightful smile
Persuade thee of a world more full of beauty
Than thou hadst dreamed of.

PERSEUS
I shall yet be glad with thee,
O Iolaus, in thy father’s halls,
But I would not as yet be known in Syria.
Is there no pleasant hamlet near, hedged in
With orchard walls and green with unripe corn
And washed with bright and flitting waves, where I
Can harbour with the kindly village folk
And wake to cock-crow in the morning hours,
As in my dear Seriphos?

IOLAUS
Such a village
Lurks near our hills,—there with my kind Cydone
Thou mayst abide at ease, until thou choose,
O Perseus, to reveal thyself to Syria.
I too can visit thee unquestioned.

PERSEUS
Thither
Then lead me. I have a thirst for calm obscurity
And cottages and happy unambitious talk
And simple people. With these I would have rest,
Not in the laboured pomp of princely towns
Amid pent noise and purple masks of hate.
I will drink deep of pure humanity
And take the innocent smell of rain-drenched earth,
So shall I with a noble untainted mind
Rise from the strengthening soil to great adventure.

They go out.
Scene 3

The Palace of Cepheus. A room in the women's apartments. Praxilla, to her enters Diomede.

DIOMEDE
O Praxilla, Praxilla!

PRAXILLA
So, thou art back, thou tall inutility? Where wert thou lingering all this hour? I am tired of always whipping thee. I will hire thee out to a timber-merchant to carry logs from dawn to nightfall. Thou shalt learn what labour is.

DIOMEDE
Praxilla, O Praxilla! I am full to the throat with news. I pray you, rip me open.

PRAXILLA
Willingly.

She advances towards her with an uplifted knife.

DIOMEDE (escaping)
A plague! can you not appreciate a fine metaphor when you hear it? I never saw so prosaic a mortal. The soul in you was born of a marriage between a saucepan and a broomstick.

PRAXILLA
Tell me your news. If it is good, I will excuse you your whipping.

DIOMEDE
I was out on the beach thinking to watch the seagulls flying and crying in the wind amidst the surf dashing and the black cliff-heads —
PRAXILLA
And could not Poseidon turn thee into a gull there among thy natural kindred? Thou wert better fitted with that shape than in a reasonable human body.

DIOMEDE
Oh then you shall hear the news tell itself, mistress, when the whole town has chewed it and rechewed it. *She is going.*

PRAXILLA
Stop, you long-limbed impertinence. The news!

DIOMEDE
I'll be hanged if I tell you.

PRAXILLA
You shall be whipped, if you do not.

DIOMEDE
Well, your goddess Switch is a potent divinity. A ship with men from the East has broken on the headland below the temple and two Chaldeans are saved alive for the altar.

PRAXILLA
This is glorious news indeed.

DIOMEDE
It will be a great day when they are sacrificed!

PRAXILLA
We have not had such since the long galley from Cnossus grounded upon our shores and the temple was washed richly with blood and the altar blushed as thickly with hearts of victims as the King's throne with rubies. Poseidon was pleased that year and the harvest was so plentiful, men were brought in from beyond the hills to reap it.
DIOMEDE
There would have been a third victim, but Prince Iolaus drew
sword on the priest Polydaon to defend him.

PRAXILLA
I hope this is not true.

DIOMEDE
I saw it.

PRAXILLA
Is the wild boy
In love with ruin? Not the King himself
Can help him if the grim sacrificial
Demand his fair young head: only a god
Could save him. And he was already in peril
From Polydaon’s gloomy hate!

DIOMEDE
And Phineus’.

PRAXILLA
Hush, silly madcap, hush; or speak much lower.

DIOMEDE
Here comes my little queen of love, stepping
As daintily as a young bird in spring
When he would take the hearts of all the forest.

Andromeda enters.

PRAXILLA
You have slept late, Andromeda.

ANDROMEDA
Have I?
The sun had risen in my dreams: perhaps
I feared to wake lest I should find all dark
Once more, Praxilla.

DIOMEDE

He has risen in your eyes,
For they are full of sunshine, little princess.

ANDROMEDA

I have dreamed, Diomede, I have dreamed.

DIOMEDE

What did you dream?

ANDROMEDA

I dreamed my sun had risen.
He had a face like the Olympian Zeus
And wings upon his feet. He smiled upon me,
Diomede.

PRAXILLA

Dreams are full of stranger fancies.
Why, I myself have seen hooved bears, winged lions,
And many other monsters in my dreams.

ANDROMEDA

My sun was a bright god and bore a flaming sword
To kill all monsters.

DIOMEDE

I think I’ve seen today
Your sun, my little playmate.

ANDROMEDA

No, you have not.
I’ll not have any eyes see him but mine:
He is my own, my very own.
DIOMEDE
And yet
I saw him on the wild sea-beach this morning.

PRAXILLA
What mean you, Diomede?

DIOMEDE (to Andromeda)
You have not heard?
A ship was flung upon the rocks this morning
And all her human burden drowned.

ANDROMEDA
Alas!

DIOMEDE
It was a marvellous sight, my little playmate,
And made my blood with horror and admiration
Run richer in my veins. The great ship groaned
While the rough boulders dashed her into pieces,
The men with desperate shrieks went tumbling down
Mid laughers of the surge, strangled twixt billows
Or torn by strips upon the savage rocks
That tossed their mangled bodies back again
Into the cruel keeping of the surge.

ANDROMEDA
O do not tell me any more! How had you heart
To look at what I cannot bear to hear?
For while you spoke, I felt as if the rocks
Were tearing my own limbs and the salt surge
Choking me.

DIOMEDE
I suppose it must have hurt them.
Yes, it was pitiful. Still, 'twas a sight.
Meanwhile the deep surf boomed their grandiose dirge
With fierce triumphant voices. The whole scene
Was like a wild stupendous sacrifice
Offered by the grey-filleted grim surges
On the gigantic altar of the rocks
To the calm cliffs seated like gods above.

ANDROMEDA
Alas, the unhappy men, the poor drowned men
Who had young children somewhere whom they loved!
How could you watch them die? Had I been a god,
I would not let this cruel thing have happened.

DIOMEDE
Why do you weep for them? they were not Syrians.

PRAXILLA
Not they, but barbarous jabbering foreigners
From Indus or Arabia. Fie, my child,
You sit upon the floor and weep for these?

ANDROMEDA
When Iolaus fell upon the rocks
And hurt himself, you did not then forbid me
To weep!

PRAXILLA
He is your brother. That was loving,
Tender and right.

ANDROMEDA
And these men were not brothers?
They too had sisters who will feel as I should
If my dear brother were to die so wretchedly.

PRAXILLA
Let their own sisters weep for them: we have
Enough of our own sorrows. You are young
And softly made: because you have yourself
No griefs, but only childhood’s soon-dried tears,
You make a luxury of others’ woes.
So when we watch a piteous tragedy,
We grace with real tears its painted sorrows.
When you are older and have true things to weep for,
Then you will understand.

**ANDROMEDA**

I’ll not be older!
I will not understand! I only know
That men are heartless and your gods most cruel.
I hate them!

**PRAXILLA**

Hush, hush! You know not what you say.
You must not speak such things. Come, Diomede,
Tell her the rest.

**ANDROMEDA** *(covering her ears with her hands)*

I will not hear you.

**DIOMEDE** *(kneeling by her and drawing her hands away)*

But I
Will tell you of your bright sungod.

**ANDROMEDA**

He is not
My sungod or he would have saved them.

**DIOMEDE**

He did.

**ANDROMEDA** *(leaping to her feet)*

Then tell me of him.
Suddenly there dawned
A man, a vision, a brightness, who descended
From where I know not, but to me it seemed
That the blue heavens just then created him
Out of the sunlight. His face and radiant body
Aspired to copy the Olympian Zeus
And wings were on his feet.

Andromeda
He was my sungod!

Diomede
He caught two drowning wretches by the robe
And drew them safe to land.

Andromeda
He was my sungod.
Diomede, I have seen him in my dream.

Praxilla
I think it was Poseidon come to take
His tithe of all that death for the ancient altar,
Lest all be engulfed by his grey billows, he
Go quite unhonoured.

Diomede
Hang up your grim Poseidon!
This was a sweet and noble face all bright
With manly kindness.

Andromeda
O I know, I know.
Where went he with those rescued?

Diomede
Why, just then
Prince Iolaus and his band leaped forth
And took them.

ANDROMEDA (angrily)
Wherefore took them? By what right?

DIOMEDE
To die according to our Syrian law
On dark Poseidon’s altar.

ANDROMEDA
They shall not die.
It is a shame, a cruel cold injustice.
I wonder that my brother had any part in it!
My sungod saved them, they belong to him,
Not to your hateful gods. They are his and mine,
I will not let you kill them.

PRAXILLA
Why, they must die
And you will see it done, my little princess.
You shall! Where are you going?

ANDROMEDA
Let me go.
I do not love you when you talk like this.

PRAXILLA
But you are Syria’s lady and must appear
At these high ceremonies.

ANDROMEDA
I had rather be
A beggar’s daughter who devours the remnants
Rejected from your table, than reign a queen
Doing such cruelty.
PRAXILLA
Little passionate scold!
You mean not what you say. A beggar's daughter!
You? You who toss about if only a rose-leaf
Crinkle the creamy smoothness of your sheets,
And one harsh word flings weeping broken-hearted
As if the world had no more joy in store.
You are a little posturer, you make
A theatre of your own mind to act in,
Take parts, declaim such childish rhetoric
As that you speak now. You a beggar's daughter!
Come, listen what became of your bright sungod.

DIOMEDE
Him too they would have seized, but he with steel
Opposed and tranquil smiling eyes appalled them.
Then Polydaon came and Phineus came
And bade arrest the brilliant god. Our Prince,
Seized by his glory, with his virgin point
Resisted their assault.

ANDROMEDA
My Iolaus!

DIOMEDE
All suddenly the stranger's lifted shield
Became a storm of lightnings. Dawn was blinded:
Far promontories leaped out in the blaze,
The surges were illumined and the horizon
Answered with light.

ANDROMEDA (clapping her hands)
O glorious! O my dream!

PRAXILLA
You tell the actions of a mighty god,
Diomede.
DIOMEDE
A god he seemed to us, Praxilla.
The soldiers ran in terror, Polydaon
Went snorting off like a black whale harpooned,
And even Phineus fled.

ANDROMEDA
Was he not killed?
I wish he had been killed.

PRAXILLA
This is your pity!

ANDROMEDA (angrily)
I do not pity tigers, wolves and scorpions.
I pity men who are weak and beasts that suffer.

PRAXILLA
I thought you loved all men and living things.

ANDROMEDA
Perhaps I could have loved him like my hound
Or the lion in the park who lets me pat his mane.
But since he would have me even without my will
To foul with his beast touch, my body abhors him.

PRAXILLA
Fie, fie! you speak too violently. How long
Will you be such a child?

DIOMEDE
Our Iolaus
And that bright stranger then embraced. Together
They left the beach.

ANDROMEDA
Where, where is Iolaus?
Why is he long in coming? I must see him.  
I have a thousand things to ask.  

She runs out.

DIOMEDE

She is
A strange unusual child, my little playmate.

PRAXILLA

None can help loving her, she is in charm
Compelling: but her mind is wry and warped.  
She is not natural, not sound in fancy,  
But made of wild uncurbed imaginations,  
With feelings as unruly as winds and waves  
And morbid sympathies. At times she talks  
Strange childish blasphemies that make me tremble.  
She would impose her fancies on the world  
As better than the eternal laws that rule us!  
I wish her mother had brought her up more strictly,  
For she will come to harm.

DIOMEDE

Oh, do not say it!  
I have seen no child in all our Syria like her,  
None her bright equal in beauty. She pleases me  
Like days of sunlight rain when spring caresses  
Warmly the air. Oh, here is Iolaus.

PRAXILLA

Is it he?

DIOMEDE

I know him by the noble strut  
He has put on ever since they made him captain.  

Andromeda comes running.
ANDROMEDA
My brother comes! I saw him from the terrace.
   *Enters Iolaus. Andromeda runs and embraces him.*
Oh, Iolaus, have you brought him to me?
Where is my sungod?

IOLAUS
   In heaven, little sister.

ANDROMEDA
Oh, do not laugh at me. I want my sungod
Whose face is like the grand Olympian Zeus’
And wings are on his feet. Where did you leave him
After you took him from our rough sea-beaches?

IOLAUS
What do you mean, Andromeda?

DIOMEDE
   Some power
Divine sent her a dream of that bright strength
Which shone by you on the sea-beach today,
And him she calls her sungod.

IOLAUS
   Is it so?
My little wind-tossed rose Andromeda!
I shall be glad indeed if Heaven intends this.

ANDROMEDA
Where is he?

IOLAUS
   Do you not know, little rose-sister,
The great gods visit earth by splendid moments
And then are lost to sight? Come, do not weep;
He is not lost to Syria.
ANDROMEDA

Iolaus,
Why did you take the two poor foreign men
And give them to the priest? My sungod saved them,
Brother, — what right had you to kill?

IOLAUS

My child,
I only did my duty as a soldier,
Yet grieve I was compelled.

ANDROMEDA

Now will you save them?

IOLAUS

But they belong to dread Poseidon now!

ANDROMEDA

What will be done to them?

IOLAUS

They must be bound
On the god’s altar and their living hearts
Ripped from their blood-choked breasts to feed his hunger.

Andromeda covers her face with her robe.

Grieve not for them: they but fulfil their fate.
These things are in the order of the world
Like plagues and slaughters, famines, fires and earthquakes,
Which when they pass us by killing their thousands,
We should not weep for, but be grateful only
That other souls than the dear heads we loved
Have perished.

ANDROMEDA

You will not save them?
Act I, Scene 3

PRAXILLA  
Unhappy girl!
It is impiety to think of it.
Fie! Would you have your brother killed for your whimsies?

ANDROMEDA  
Will you not save them, brother?

IOLAUS  
I cannot, child.

ANDROMEDA  
Then I will.  
She goes out.

IOLAUS  
Does she mean it?

PRAXILLA  
Such wild caprices  
Are always darting through her brain.

IOLAUS  
I could not take  
Poseidon’s wrath upon my head!

PRAXILLA  
Forget it  
As she will too. Her strange imaginations  
Flutter awhile among her golden curls,  
But soon wing off with careless flight to Lethe.  
Medes enters.

IOLAUS  
What is it, Medes?
MEDES
The King, Prince Iolaus,
Requires your presence in his audience-chamber.

IOLAUS
So? Tell me, Medes, is Poseidon’s priest
In presence there?

MEDES
He is and full of wrath.

IOLAUS
Go, tell them I am coming.

Medes goes out.

PRAXILLA
Alas!

IOLAUS
Fear not.
I have a strength the grim intriguers dream not of.
Let not my sister hear this, Diomede.

He goes.

PRAXILLA
What may not happen! The priest is dangerous,
Poseidon may be angry. Let us go
And guard our child from peril of this shock.

They go.
Act II

Scene 1

*The audience-chamber in the Palace of Cepheus. Cepheus and Cassiopea, seated.*

**CASSIOPEA**
What will you do, Cepheus?

**CEPHEUS**
This that has happened
Is most unfortunate.

**CASSIOPEA**
What will you do?
I hope you will not give up to the priest
My Iolaus’ golden head? I hope
You do not mean that?

**CEPHEUS**
Great Poseidon’s priest
Sways all this land: for from the liberal blood
Moistening that high-piled altar grow our harvests
And strong Poseidon satisfied defends
Our frontiers from the loud Assyrian menace.

**CASSIOPEA**
Empty thy treasuries, glut him with gold.
Let us be beggars rather than one bright curl
Of Iolaus feel his gloomy mischiefs.
CEPHEUS
I had already thought of it. Medes!

Medes enters.

Waits Polydaon yet?

MEDES
He does, my lord.

Call him, and Tyrian Phineus.

Medes goes out again.

CASSIOPEA
Bid Tyre save
Andromeda’s loved brother from this doom;
He shall not have our daughter otherwise.

CEPHEUS
This too was in my mind already, queen.

Polydaon and Phineus enter.

Be seated, King of Tyre: priest Polydaon,
Possess thy usual chair.

POLYDAON
Well, King of Syria,
Shall I have justice? Wilt thou be the King
Over a peopled country? or must I loose
The snake-haired Gorgon-eyed Erinnyes
To hunt thee with the clamorous whips of Hell
Blood-dripping?

CEPHEUS
Be content. Cepheus gives nought
But justice from his mighty seat. Thou shalt
Have justice.
POLYDAON
I am not used to cool my heels
About the doors of princes like some beggarly
And negligible suitor whose poor plaint
Is valued by some paltry drachmas. I am
Poseidon’s priest.

CEPHEUS
The prince is called to answer here
Thy charges.

POLYDAON
Answer! Will he deny a crime
Done impudently in Syria’s face? ’Tis well;
The Tyrian stands here who can meet that lie.

CASSIOPEA
My children’s lips were never stained with lies,
Insulting priest, nor will be now; from him
We shall have truth.

CEPHEUS
And grant the charge admitted,
The ransom shall be measured with the crime.

POLYDAON
What talk is this of ransom? Thinkst thou, King,
That dire Poseidon’s grim offended godhead
Can be o’erplastered with a smudge of silver?
Shall money blunt his vengeance? Shall his majesty
Be estimated in a usurer’s balance?
Blood is the ransom of this sacrilege.

CASSIOPEA
Ah God!
CEPHEUS (in agitation)
Take all my treasury includes
Of gold and silver, gems and porphyry
Unvalued.

POLYDAON
The Gods are not to be bribed,
King Cepheus.

CASSIOPEA (apart)
Give him honours, state, precedence,
All he can ask. O husband, let me keep
My child's head on my bosom safe.

CEPHEUS
Listen!
What wouldst thou have? Precedence, pomp and state?
Hundreds of spears to ring thee where thou walkest?
Swart slaves and beautiful women in thy temple
To serve thee and thy god? They are thine. In feasts
And high processions and proud regal meetings
Poseidon's followers shall precede the King.

POLYDAON
Me wilt thou bribe? I take these for Poseidon,
Nor waive my chief demand.

CEPHEUS
What will content thee?

POLYDAON
A victim has been snatched from holy altar:
To fill that want a victim is demanded.

CEPHEUS
I will make war on Egypt and Assyria
And throw thee kings for victims.
POLYDAON
Thy vaunt is empty.
Poseidon being offended, who shall give thee
Victory o’er Egypt and o’er strong Assyria?

CEPHEUS
Take thou the noblest head in all the kingdom
Below the Prince. Take many heads for one.

POLYDAON
Shall then the innocent perish for the guilty?
Is this thy justice? How shall thy kingdom last?

CEPHEUS
You hear him, Cassiopea? he will not yield,
He is inexorable.

POLYDAON
Must I wait longer?

CEPHEUS
Ho Medes!

Iolaus enters. Iolaus comes not yet. Medes enters.

Medes goes out.

CASSIOPEA (rising fiercely)
Priest, thou wilt have my child’s blood then, it seems!
Nought less will satisfy thee than thy prince
For victim?

POLYDAON
Poseidon knows not prince or beggar.
Whoever honours him, he heaps with state
And fortune. Whoever wakes his dreadful wrath,
He thrusts down into Erebus for ever.
CASSIOPEA
Beware! Thou shalt not have my child. Take heed
Ere thou drive monarchs to extremity.
Thou hopest in thy sacerdotal pride
To make the Kings of Syria childless, end
A line that started from the gods. Thinkst thou
It will be tamely suffered? What have we
To lose, if we lose this? I bid thee again
Take heed: drive not a queen to strong despair.
I am no tame-souled peasant, but a princess
And great Chaldea’s child.

POLYDAON (after a pause)
Wilt thou confirm
Thy treasury and all the promised honours,
If I excuse the deed?

CEPHEUS
They shall be thine.
He turns to whisper with Cassiopea.

PHINEUS (apart to Polydaon)
Dost thou prefer me for thy foeman?

POLYDAON
See
In the queen’s eyes her rage. We must discover
New means; this way’s not safe.

PHINEUS
Thou art a coward, priest, for all thy violence.
But fear me first and then blench from a woman.

POLYDAON
Well, as you choose.

Iolaus enters.
IOLAUS  
Father, you sent for me?

CEPHEUS  
There is a charge upon thee, Iolaus,  
I do not yet believe. But answer truth  
Like Cepheus’ son, whatever the result.

IOLAUS  
Whatever I have done, my father, good  
Or ill, I dare support against the world.  
What is this accusation?

CEPHEUS  
Didst thou rescue  
At dawn a victim from Poseidon’s altar?

IOLAUS  
I did not.

POLYDAON  
Dar’st thou deny it, wretched boy?  
Monarch, his coward lips have uttered falsehood.  
Speak, King of Tyre.

IOLAUS  
Hear me speak first. Thou ruffian,  
Intriguer masking in a priest’s disguise, —

POLYDAON  
Hear him, O King!

CEPHEUS  
Speak calmly. I forbid  
All violence. Thou deniest then the charge?
IOLAUS
As it was worded to me, I deny it.

PHINEUS
Syria, I have not spoken till this moment,
And would not now, but sacred truth compels
My tongue how’er reluctant. I was there,
And saw him rescue a wrecked mariner
With his rash steel. Would that I had not seen it!

IOLAUS
Thou liest, Phineus, King of Tyre.

CASSIOPEA
   Alas!
If thou hast any pity for thy mother,
Run not upon thy death in this fierce spirit,
My child. Calmly repel the charge against thee,
Nor thus offend thy brother.

PHINEUS
   I am not angry.

IOLAUS
It was no shipwrecked weeping mariner,
Condemned by the wild seas, whom they attempted,
But a calm god or glorious hero who came
By other way than man’s to Syria’s margin.
Nor did rash steel or battle rescue him.
With the mere dreadful waving of his shield
He shook from him a hundred threatening lances,
This hero hot from Tyre and this proud priest
Now bold to bluster in his monarch’s chamber,
But then a pallid coward,—so he trusts
In his Poseidon!
POLYDAON
    Hast thou done?

IOLAUS
    Not yet.
That I drew forth my sword, is true, and true
I would have rescued him from god or devil
Had it been needed.

POLYDAON
    Enough! He has confessed!
Give verdict, King, and sentence. Let me watch
Thy justice.

CEPHEUS
    But this fault was not so deadly!

POLYDAON
    I see thy drift, O King. Thou wouldst prefer
Thy son to him who rules the earth and waters:
Thou wouldst exalt thy throne above the temple,
Setting the gods beneath thy feet. Fool, fool,
Knowst thou not that the terrible Poseidon
Can end thy house in one tremendous hour?
Yield him one impious head which cannot live
And he will give thee other and better children.
Give sentence or be mad and perish.

IOLAUS
    Father,
Not for thy son’s, but for thy honour’s sake
Resist him. ’Tis better to lose crown and life,
Than rule the world because a priest allows it.

POLYDAON
    Give sentence, King. I can no longer wait,
Give sentence.
CEPHEUS (helplessly to Cassiopea)
What shall I do?

CASSIOPEA
Monarch of Tyre,
Thou choosest silence then, a pleased spectator?
Thou hast bethought thee of other nuptials?

PHINEUS
Lady,
You wrong my silence which was but your servant
To find an issue from this dire impasse,
Rescuing your child from wrath, justice not wounded.

CASSIOPEA
The issue lies in the accuser’s will,
If putting malice by he’ld only seek
Poseidon’s glory.

PHINEUS
The deed’s by all admitted,
The law and bearing of it are in doubt.
(to Polydaon)
You urge a place is void and must be filled
On great Poseidon’s altar, and demand
Justly the guilty head of Iolaus.
He did the fault, his head must ransom it.
Let him fill up the void, who made the void.
Nor will high heaven accept a guiltless head,
To let the impious free.

CASSIOPEA
Phineus, —

PHINEUS
But if
The victim lost return, you cannot then
Claim Iolaus; then there is no void
For substitution.

**POLYDAON**

King,—

**PHINEUS**
The simpler fault
With ransom can be easily excused
And covered up in gold. Let him produce
The fugitive.

**IOLAUS**

Tyrian,—

**PHINEUS**

I have not forgotten.
Patience! You plead that your mysterious guest
Being neither shipwrecked nor a mariner
Comes not within the doom of law. Why then,
Let Law decide that issue, not the sword
Nor swift evasion! Dost thou fear the event
Of thy great father’s sentence from that throne
Where Justice sits with bright unsullied robe
Judging the peoples? Calmly expect his doom
Which errs not.

**CASSIOPEA**

Thou art a man noble indeed in counsel
And fit to rule the nations.

**CEPHEUS**

I approve.

You laugh, my son?

**IOLAUS**

I laugh to see wise men
Catching their feet in their own subtleties.
King Phineus, wilt thou seize Olympian Zeus
And call thy Tyrian smiths to forge his fetters?
Or wilt thou claim the archer bright Apollo
To meet thy human doom, priest Polydæon?
'Tis well; the danger's yours. Give me three days
And I'll produce him.

**CEPHEUS**

Priest, art thou content?

**POLYDÆON**

Exceed not thou the period by one day,
Or tremble.

**CEPHEUS (rising)**

Happily decided. Rise
My Cassiopea: now our hearts can rest
From these alarms.

*Ce[ph]eus and Cassiopa leave the chamber.*

**IOLAUS**

Keep thy knife sharp, sacrificant.
King Phineus, I am grateful and advise
Thy swift departure back to Tyre unmarried.

*He goes out.*

**POLYDÆON**

What hast thou done, King Phineus? All is ruined.

**PHINEUS**

What, have the stripling's threats appalled thee, priest?

**POLYDÆON**

Thou hast demanded a bright dreadful god
For victim. We might have slain young Iolaus:
Wilt thou slay him whose tasselled aegis smote
Terror into a hundred warriors?

PHINEUS

Thou art a superstitious fool. Believe not
The gods come down to earth with swords and wings,
Or transitory raiment made on looms,
Or bodies visible to mortal eyes.
Far otherwise they come, with unseen steps
And stroke invisible,—if gods indeed
There are. I doubt it, who can find no room
For powers unseen: the world’s alive and moves
By natural law without their intervention.

POLYDAON

King Phineus, doubt not the immortal gods.
They love not doubters. If thou hadst lived as I,
Daily devoted to the temple dimness,
And seen the awful shapes that live in night,
And heard the awful sounds that move at will
When Ocean with the midnight is alone,
Thou wouldst not doubt. Remember the dread portents
High gods have sent on earth a hundred times
When kings offended.

PHINEUS

Well, let them reign unquestioned
Far from the earth in their too bright Olympus,
So that they come not down to meddle here
In what I purpose. For your aegis-bearer,
Your winged and two-legged lion, he’s no god.
You hurried me away or I’d have probed
His godlike guts with a good yard of steel
To test the composition of his ichor.

POLYDAON

What of his flaming aegis lightning-tasselled?
What of his wingèd sandals, King?

**PHINEUS**

The aegis?
Some mechanism of refracted light.
The wings? Some new aerial contrivance
A luckier Daedalus may have invented.
The Greeks are scientists unequalled, bold
Experimenters, happy in invention.
Nothing’s incredible that they devise,
And this man, Polydaon, is a Greek.

**POLYDAON**

Have it your way. Say he was merely man!
How do we profit by his blood?

**PHINEUS**

O marvellous!
Thou hesitate to kill! thou seek for reasons!
Is not blood always blood? I could not forfeit
My right to marry young Andromeda;
She is my claim to Syria. Leave something, priest,
To Fortune, but be ready for her coming
And grasp ere she escape. The old way’s best;
Excite the commons, woo their thunderer,
That plausible republican. Iolaus
Once ended, by right of fair Andromeda
I’ll save and wear the crown. Priest, over Syria
And all my Tyrians thou shalt be the one prelate,
Should all go well.

**POLYDAON**

All shall go well, King Phineus.  

*They go.*
Scene 2

A room in the women's apartments of the Palace. Andromeda, Diomede, Praxilla.

ANDROMEDA
My brother lives then?

PRAXILLA
Thanks to Tyre, it seems.

DIOMEDE
Thanks to the wolf who means to eat him later.

PRAXILLA
You'll lose your tongue some morning; rule it, girl.

DIOMEDE
These kings, these politicians, these high masters! These wise blind men! We slaves have eyes at least To look beyond transparency.

PRAXILLA
Because
We stand outside the heated game unmoved
By interests, fears and passions.

ANDROMEDA
He is a wolf, for I have seen his teeth.

PRAXILLA
Yet must you marry him, my little princess.
ANDROMEDA
What, to be torn in pieces by the teeth?

DIOMEDE
I think the gods will not allow this marriage.

ANDROMEDA
I know not what the gods may do: be sure,
I'll not allow it.

PRAXILLA
Fie, Andromeda!
You must obey your parents: 'tis not right,
This wilfulness. Why, you're a child! you think
You can oppose the will of mighty monarchs?
Be good; obey your father.

ANDROMEDA
Yes, Praxilla?
And if my father bade me take a knife
And cut my face and limbs and stab my eyes,
Must I do that?

PRAXILLA
Where are you with your wild fancies?
Your father would not bid you do such things.

ANDROMEDA
Because they'd hurt me?

PRAXILLA
Yes.

ANDROMEDA
It hurts me more
To marry Phineus.
**PRAXXILLA**

O you sly logic-splitter!
You dialectician, you sunny-curled small sophist,
Chop logic with your father. I’m tired of you.

*Cepheus enters.*

**ANDROMEDA**

Father, I have been waiting for you.

**CEPHEUS**

What! you?
I’ll not believe it. You? *(caressing her)* My rosy Syrian!
My five-foot lady! My small queen of Tyre!
Yes, you are tired of playing with the ball.
You wait for me!

**ANDROMEDA**

I was waiting. Here are
Two kisses for you.

**CEPHEUS**

Oh, now I understand.
You dancing rogue, you’re not so free with kisses:
I have to pay for them, small cormorant.
What is it now? a talking Tyrian doll?
Or a strong wooden horse with silken wings
To fly up to the gold rims of the moon?

**ANDROMEDA**

I will not kiss you if you talk like that.
I am a woman now. As if I wanted
Such nonsense, father!

**CEPHEUS**

Oh, you’re a woman now?
Then ’tis a robe from Cos, sandals fur-lined
Or belt all silver. Young diplomatist,
I know you. You keep these rippling showers of gold
Upon your head to buy your wishes with.
Therefore you packed your small red lips with honey.
Well, usurer, what’s the price you want?

**ANDROMEDA**

I want, —
But father, will you give me what I want?

**CEPHEUS**

I’d give you the bright sun from heaven for plaything
To make you happy, girl Andromeda.

**ANDROMEDA**

I want the Babylonians who were wrecked
In the great ship today, to be my slaves,
Father.

**CEPHEUS**

Was ever such a perverse witch?
To ask the only thing I cannot give!

**ANDROMEDA**

Can I not have them, father?

**CEPHEUS**

They are Poseidon’s.

**ANDROMEDA**

Oh then you love Poseidon more than me!
Why should he have them?

**CEPHEUS**

Fie, child! the mighty gods
Are masters of the earth and sea and heavens,
And all that is, is theirs. We are their stewards.
But what is once restored into their hands
Is thenceforth holy: he who even gazes
With greedy eye upon divine possessions,
Is guilty in Heaven’s sight and may awake
A dreadful wrath. These men, Andromeda,
Must bleed upon the altar of the God.
Speak not of them again: they are devoted.

ANDROMEDA
Is he a god who eats the flesh of men?

PRAXILLA
O hush, blasphemer!

ANDROMEDA
Father, give command,
To have Praxilla here boiled for my breakfast.
I'll be a goddess too.

CEPHEUS
Praxilla!

PRAXILLA
’Tis thus
She talks. Oh but it gives me a shivering fever
Sometimes to hear her.

CEPHEUS
What mean you, dread gods?
Purpose you then the ruin of my house
Preparing in my children the offences
That must excuse your wrath? Andromeda,
My little daughter, speak not like this again,
I charge you, no, nor think it. The mighty gods
Dwell far above the laws that govern men
And are not to be mapped by mortal judgments.
It is Poseidon’s will these men should die
Upon his altar. ’Tis not to be questioned.
ANDROMEDA
It shall be questioned. Let your God go hungry.

CEPHEUS
I am amazed! Did you not hear me, child?
On the third day from now these men shall die.
The same high evening ties you fast with nuptials
To Phineus, who shall take you home to Tyre.

(aside)
On Tyre let the wrath fall, if it must come.

ANDROMEDA
Father, you’ll understand this once for all,—
I will not let the Babylonians die,
I will not marry Phineus.

CEPHEUS
Oh, you will not?
Here is a queen, of Tyre and all the world;  
How mutinous-majestically this smallness
Divulges her decrees, making the most
Of her five feet of gold and cream and roses!
And why will you not marry Phineus, rebel?

ANDROMEDA
He does not please me.

CEPHEUS
School your likings, rebel.
It is most needful Syria mate with Tyre.
And you are Syria.

ANDROMEDA
Why, father, if you gave me a toy, you’d ask
What toy I like! If you gave me a robe
Or vase, you would consult my taste in these!
Must I marry any cold-eyed crafty husband
I do not like?

CEPHEUS
   You do not like! You do not like!
Thou silly child, must the high policy
Of Princes then be governed by thy likings?
'Tis policy, 'tis kingly policy
That made this needful marriage, and it shall not
For your spoilt childish likings be unmade.
What, you look sullen? what, you frown, virago?
Look, if you mutiny, I'll have you whipped.

ANDROMEDA
You would not dare.

CEPHEUS
   Not dare!

ANDROMEDA
Of course you would not.
As if I were afraid of you!

CEPHEUS
   You are spoiled,
You are spoiled! Your mother spoils you, you wilful sunbeam.
Come, you provoking minx, you'll marry Phineus?

ANDROMEDA
I will not, father. If I must marry, then
I'll marry my bright sungod! and none else
In the wide world.

CEPHEUS
   Your sungod! Is that all?
Shall I not send an envoy to Olympus
And call the Thunderer here to marry you?
You're not ambitious?
PRAXILLA
It is not that she means;
She speaks of the bright youth her brother rescued.
Since she has heard of him, no meaner talk
Is on her lips.

CEPHEUS
Who is this radiant coxcomb?
Whence did he come to set my Syria in a whirl?
For him my son’s in peril of his life,
For him my daughter will not marry Tyre.
Oh, Polydaon’s right. He must be killed
Before he does more mischief. Andromeda,
On the third day you marry Tyrian Phineus.

He goes out hurriedly.

DIOMEDE
That was a valiant shot timed to a most discreet departure.
Parthian tactics are best when we deal with mutinous daughters.

PRAXILLA
Andromeda, you will obey your father?

ANDROMEDA
You are not in my counsels. You’re too faithful,
Virtuous and wise, and virtuously you would
Betray me. There is a thing full-grown in me
That you shall only know by the result.
Diomede, come; for I need help, not counsel.

She goes.

PRAXILLA
What means she now? Her whims are as endless as the tossing
of leaves in a wind. But you will find out and tell me, Diomede.

DIOMEDE
I will find out certainly, but as to telling, that is as it shall please
me — and my little mistress.
PRAXILLA
You shall be whipped.

DIOMEDE
Pish! 

PRAXILLA
The child is spoiled herself and she spoils her servants. There is no managing any of them.

She runs out.

She goes out.
Scene 3


CYDONE (sings)
O the sun in the reeds and willows!
O the sun with the leaves at play!
Who would waste the warm sunlight?
And for weeping there's the night.
But now 'tis day.

PERSEUS
Yes, willows and the reeds! and the bright sun
Stays with the ripples talking quietly.
And there, Cydone, look! how the fish leap
To catch at sunbeams. Sing yet again, Cydone.

CYDONE (sings)
O what use have your foolish tears?
What will you do with your hopes and fears?
They but waste the sweet sunlight.
Look! morn opens: look how bright
The world appears!

PERSEUS
O you Cydone in the sweet sunlight!
But you are lovelier.

CYDONE
You talk like Iolaus.
Come, here's your crown. I'll set it where 'tis due.

PERSEUS
Crows are too heavy, dear. Sunlight was better.

CYDONE
'Tis a light crown of love I put upon you,
My brother Perseus.

PERSEUS
Love! but love is heavy.

CYDONE
No, love is light. I put light love upon you,
Because I love you and you love Iolaus.
I love you because you love Iolaus,
And love the world that loves my Iolaus,
Iolaus my world and all the world
Only for Iolaus.

PERSEUS
Happy Cydone,
Who can lie here and babble to the river
All day of love and light and Iolaus.
If it could last! But tears are in the world
And must some day be wept.

CYDONE
Why must they, Perseus?

PERSEUS
When Iolaus becomes King in Syria
And comes no more, what will you do, Cydone?

CYDONE
Why, I will go to him.
PERSEUS
And if perhaps
He should not know you?

CYDONE
Then it will be night.
It is day now.

PERSEUS
A bright philosophy,
But with the tears behind. Hellas, thou livest
In thy small world of radiant white perfection
With eye averted from the night beyond,
The night immense, unfathomed. But I have seen
Snow-regions monstrous underneath the moon
And Gorgon caverns dim. Ah well, the world
Is bright around me and the quick lusty breeze
Of strong adventure wafts my bright-winged sandals
O’er mountains and o’er seas, and Herpe’s with me,
My sword of sharpness.

CYDONE
Your sword, my brother Perseus?
But it is lulled to sleep in scarlet roses
By the winged sandals watched. Can they really
Lift you into the sky?

PERSEUS
They can, Cydone.

CYDONE
What’s in the wallet locked so carefully?
I would have opened it and seen, but could not.

PERSEUS
’Tis well thou didst not. For thy breathing limbs
Would in a moment have been charmed to stone
And these smooth locks grown rigid and stiffened, O Cydone, 
Thy happy heart would never more have throbbed 
To Iolaus’ kiss.

**CYDONE**

What monster’s there?

**PERSEUS**

It is the Gorgon’s head who lived in night. 
Snake-tresses frame its horror of deadly beauty 
That turns the gazer into marble.

**CYDONE**

Ugh!
Why do you keep such dreadful things about you?

**PERSEUS**

Why, are there none who are better turned to stone 
Than living?

**CYDONE**

O yes, the priest of the dark shrine 
Who hates my love. Fix him to frowning grimness 
In innocent marble. *(listening)* It is Iolaus! 
I know his footfall, muffled in the green. 

*Iolaus enters.*

**IOLAUS**

Perseus, my friend, —

**PERSEUS**

Thou art my human sun. 
Come, shine upon me; let thy face of beauty 
Become a near delight, my arm, fair youth, possess thee.

**IOLAUS**

I am a warrant-bearer to you, friend.
PERSEUS
On what arrest?

IOLAUS
For running from the knife.
A debt that must be paid. They’ll not be baulked
Their dues of blood, their strict account of hearts.
Or mine or thine they’ll have to crown their altars.

PERSEUS
Why, do but make thy tender breast the altar
And I’ll not grudge my heart, sweet Iolaus.
Who’s this accountant?

IOLAUS
Poseidon’s dark-browed priest,
As gloomy as the den in which he lairs,
Who hopes to gather Syria in his hands
Upon a priestly pretext.

CYDONE
Change him, Perseus,
Into black stone!

PERSEUS
Oh, hard and black as his own mood!
He has a stony heart much better housed
In limbs of stone than a kind human body
Who would hurt thee, my Iolaus.

IOLAUS
He’d hurt
And find a curious pleasure. If it were even
My sister sunbeam, my Andromeda,
He’d carve her soft white breast as readily
As any slave’s or murderer’s.
PERSEUS  Andromeda!
It is a name that murmurs to the heart
Of strength and sweetness.

IOLAUS
Three days you are given to prove yourself a god!
You failing, 'tis my bosom pays the debt.
That's their decree.

CYDONE  Turn them to stone, to stone!
All, all to heartless marble!

PERSEUS  Thy father bids this?

IOLAUS
He dare not baulk this dangerous priest.

PERSEUS  Ah, dare not!
Yes, there are fathers too who love their lives
And not their children: earth has known of such.
There was a father like this once in Argos!

IOLAUS
Blame not the King too much.

CYDONE  Turn him to stone,
To stone!

IOLAUS
Hush, hush, Cydone!
CYDONE

Stone, hard stone!

IOLAUS
I'll whip thee, shrew, with rose-briars.

CYDONE
Will you promise
To kiss the blood away? Then I'll offend
Daily, on purpose.

IOLAUS
Love’s rose-briars, sweet Cydone,
Inflict no wounds.

CYDONE
Oh yes, they bleed within.

IOLAUS
The brow of Perseus grows darkness!

PERSEUS
Rise,
And be my guide. Where is this temple and priest?

IOLAUS
The temple now?

PERSEUS
Soonest is always best
When noble deeds are to be done.

IOLAUS
What deed?

PERSEUS
I will release the men of Babylon
From their grim blood-feast. Let them howl for victims.

IOLAUS
It will incense them more.

PERSEUS
Me they have incensed
With their fierce crafty fury. If they must give
To their dire god, let them at least fulfil
With solemn decency their fearful rites.
But since they bring in politic rage and turn
Their barbarous rite into a trade of murder,
Nor rite nor temple be respected more.
Must they have victims? Let them take and slay
Perseus alone. I shall rejoice to know
That so much strength and boldness dwells in men
Who are mortal.

IOLAUS
Men thou needst not fear; but, Perseus,
Poseidon’s wrath will wake, whose lightest motion
Is deadly.

PERSEUS
Mine is not harmless.

IOLAUS
Against gods
What can a mortal’s anger do?

PERSEUS
We’ll talk
With those pale merchants. Wait for me; I bring
Herpe my sword.

CYDONE
The wallet, Perseus! leave not the dear wallet!

*Perseus goes out towards the cottage.*
IOLAUS
My queen, have I your leave?

CYDONE
Give me a kiss
That I may spend the hours remembering it
Till you return.

IOLAUS (*kissing her*)
Will one fill hours, Cydone?

CYDONE
I fear to ask for more. You’re such a miser.

IOLAUS
You rose-lipped slanderer! there! Had I the time
I would disprove you, smothering you with what
You pray for.

CYDONE
Come soon.

IOLAUS
I’ll watch the sun go down.
In your dark night of tresses.

PERSEUS
Come.

IOLAUS
I am ready.

CYDONE
Stone, brother Perseus, make them stone for ever.

*Perseus returns.*

*Perseus and Iolaus go out.*
(sings)
“Marble body, heart of bliss
Or a stony heart and this,
Which of these two wilt thou crave?
One or other thou shalt have.”
“By my kisses shall be known
Which is flesh and which is stone.
Love, thy heart of stone! it quakes.
Sweet, thy fair cold limbs! love takes
With this warm and rosy trembling.
Where is now thy coy dissembling?
Heart and limbs I here escheat
For that fraudulent deceit.”
“And will not marble even grow soft,
Kissed so warmly and so oft?”

Curtain
Act III

Scene 1

*The women’s apartments of the Palace.*
*Andromeda, Diomede.*

**ANDROMEDA**  
All’s ready, let us go.

**DIOMEDE**  
Andromeda,  
My little mistress whom I love, let me  
Beseech you by that love, do not attempt it.  
Oh, this is no such pretty wilfulness  
As all men love to smile at and to punish  
With tenderness and chidings. It is a crime  
Full of impiety, a deed of danger  
That venturous and iron spirits would be aghast  
To dream of. You think because you are a child,  
You will be pardoned, because you are a princess  
No hand will dare to punish you. You do not know  
Men’s hearts. They will not pause to pity you,  
They will not spare. The people in its rage  
Will tear us both to pieces, limb from limb,  
With blows and fury, roaring round like tigers.  
Will you expose yourself to that grim handling  
Who cry out at the smallest touch of pain?

**ANDROMEDA**  
Do not delay me on the brink of action.  
You have said these things before.
DIOMEDE  You shall not do it.
I will not go with you.

ANDROMEDA  So you expose me
To danger merely and break the oath you swore;
For I must do it then unhelped.

DIOMEDE  I'll tell
Your mother, child, and then you cannot go.

ANDROMEDA
I shall die then on the third day from this.

DIOMEDE
What! you will kill yourself, and for two strangers
You never saw? You are no human maiden
But something far outside mortality,
Princess, if you do this.

ANDROMEDA  I shall not need.
You threaten me with the fierce people’s tearings,
And shall I not be torn when I behold
My fellows’ piteous hearts plucked from their bosoms
Between their anguished shrieks? I shall fall dead
With horror and with pity at your feet:
Then you’ll repent this cruelty.

She weeps.

DIOMEDE  Child, child!
Hush, I will go with you. If I must die,
I’ll die.
ANDROMEDA
Have I not loved you, Diomede?
Have I not taken your stripes upon myself,
Claiming your dear offences? Have I not lain
Upon your breast, stealing from my own bed
At night, and kissed your bosom and your hands
For very love of you? And I had thought
You loved me: but you do not care at last
Whether I live or die.

DIOMEDE
Oh hush! I love you,
I'll go with you. You shall not die alone,
If you are bent on dying. I'll put on
My sandals and be with you in a moment.
Go, little princess. I am with you; go.

She goes.

ANDROMEDA
O you poor shuddering men, my human fellows,
Horribly bound beneath the grisly knife
You feel already groping for your hearts,
Pardon me each long moment that you wrestle
With grim anticipation. O, and you,
If there is any god in the deaf skies
That pities men or helps them, O protect me!
But if you are inexorably unmoved
And punish pity, I, Andromeda,
Who am a woman on this earth, will help
My brothers. Then, if you must punish me,
Strike home. You should have given me no heart;
It is too late now to forbid it feeling.

She is going out. Athene appears.

What is this light, this glory? who art thou,
O beautiful marble face amid the lightnings?
My heart faints with delight, my body trembles,
Intolerable ecstasy beats in my veins;
I am oppressed and tortured with thy beauty.

ATHENE
I am Athene.

ANDROMEDA
Art thou a goddess? Thy name
We hear far off in Syria.

ATHENE
I am she
Who helps and has compassion on struggling mortals.

ANDROMEDA (falling prostrate)
Do not deceive me! I will kiss thy feet.
O joy! thou art! thou art!

ATHENE
Lift up thy head,
My servant.

ANDROMEDA
Thou art! there are not only void
Azure and cold inexorable laws.

ATHENE
Stand up, O daughter of Cassiope.
Wilt thou then help these men of Babylonia,
My mortals whom I love?

ANDROMEDA
I help myself,
When I help these.

ATHENE
To thee alone I gave
This knowledge. O virgin, O Andromeda,
It reached thee through that large and noble heart
Of woman beating in a little child.
But dost thou know that thy reward shall be
Betrayal and fierce hatred? God and man
Shall league in wrath to kill and torture thee
Mid dire revilings.

**ANDROMEDA**

My reward shall be
To cool this anguish of pity in my heart
And be at peace: if dead, O still at peace!

**ATHENE**

Thou fearst not then? They will expose thee, child,
To slaughter by the monsters of the deep
Who shall come forth to tear thy limbs.

**ANDROMEDA**

Shall I be hated, in that other world?

**ATHENE**

Perhaps.

**ANDROMEDA**

Wilt thou love me?

**ATHENE**

Thou art my child.

**ANDROMEDA**

O mother, O Athene, let me go.
They linger in anticipated pangs.

**ATHENE**

Go, child. I shall be near invisibly.
She disappears. Andromeda stands with clasped hands straining her eyes as if into infinity.
Diomede returns.

DIOMEDE
You are not gone as yet? what is this, princess?
What is this light around you! How you are altered,
Andromeda!

ANDROMEDA
Diomede, let us go.

They go out.
Scene 2

In the Temple of Poseidon.
Cireas.

CIREAS
I am done with thee, Poseidon Ennosigaios, man-slayer, ship-breaker, earth-shaker, lord of the waters! Never was faithful service so dirtily rewarded. In all these years not a drachma, not an obolus, not even a false coin for solace. And when thou hadst mocked me with hope, when a Prince had promised me all my findings, puttest thou me off with two pauperized merchants of Babylon? What, thou takest thy loud ravenous glut of the treasures that should have been mine and roarest derision at me with thy hundred-voiced laughers? Am I a sponge to suck up these insults? No! I am only moderately porous. I will break thy treasury, Poseidon, and I will run. Think not either to send thy sea-griffins after me. For I will live on the top of Lebanon, and thy monsters, when they come for me, shall snort and grin and gasp for breath and return to thee baffled and asthmatic.

As he talks Iolaus and Perseus enter.

IOLAUS
What, Cireas, wilt thou run? I'll give thee gold
To wing thy shoes, if thou wilt do my bidding.

CIREAS
I am overheard! I am undone! I am crucified! I am disembowelled!

IOLAUS
Be tranquil, Cireas, fool, I come to help thee.
CIREAS
Do you indeed! I see, they have made you a god, for you know men's minds. But could old father Zeus find your newborn godhead no better work than to help thieves and give wings to runaways? Will you indeed help me, god Iolaus? I can steal then under thy welcome protection? I can borrow Poseidon's savings and run?

IOLAUS
Steal not: thou shalt have gold enough to buy Thy liberty and farms and slaves and cattle.

CIREAS
Prince, art thou under a vow of liberality? or being about to die, wilt thou distribute thy goods and chattels to deserving dishonesty? Do not mock me, for if thou raise hopes again in me and break them, I can only hang myself.

IOLAUS
I mock thee not, thou shalt have glut of riches.

CIREAS
What must I do? I'd give thee nose and ears For farms and freedom.

PERSEUS
Wherefore dost thou bribe This slave to undo a bond my sword unties?

IOLAUS
I shrink from violence in the grim god's temple.

CIREAS
Zeus, art thou there with thy feathers and phosphorus? I pray thee, my good bright darling Zeus, do not come in the way of my earnings. Do not be so cantankerously virtuous, do not
be so damnably economical. Good Zeus, I adjure thee by thy foot-plumes.

IOLAUS
Cireas, wilt thou bring forth the wretched captives
Who wait the butcher Polydaon’s knife
With groanings? we would talk with them. Wilt thou?

CIREAS
Will I? Will I? I would do any bad turn to that scanty-hearted rampantous old ship-swaller there. I would do it for nothing, and for so much gold will I not?

IOLAUS
And thou must shut thine eyes.

CIREAS
Eyes! I will shut mouth and nose and ears too, nor ask for one penny extra.

IOLAUS
Dost thou not fear?

CIREAS
Oh, the blue-haired old bogy there? I have lived eighteen years in this temple and seen nothing of him but ivory and sapphires. I begin to think he cannot breathe out of water; no doubt, he is some kind of fish and walks on the point of his tail.

PERSEUS
Enough, bring forth the Babylonian captives.

CIREAS
I run, Zeus, I run: but keep thy phosphorus lit and handy against Polydaon’s return unasked for and untrumpeted.

He runs out.
Act III, Scene 2

PERSEUS
O thou grim calmness imaged like a man
That frownst above the altar! dire Poseidon!
Art thou that god indeed who smooths the sea
With one finger, and when it is thy will,
Rufflest the oceans with thy casual breathing?
Art thou not rather, lord, some murderous
And red imagination of this people,
The shadow of a soul that dreamed of blood
And took this dimness? If thou art Poseidon,
The son of Cronos, I am Cronos’ grandchild,
Perseus, and in my soul Athene moves
With lightnings.

IOLAUS
I hear the sound of dragging chains.
Cireas returns with Tyrnaus and Smerdas.

PERSEUS
Smerdas and thou, Tyrnaus, once again
We meet.

SMERDAS
Save me, yet save me.

PERSEUS
If thou art worth it,
I may.

SMERDAS
Thou shalt have gold. I am well worth it.
I’ll empty Babylonia of its riches
Into thy wallet.

PERSEUS
Has terror made thee mad?
Refrain from speech! Thine eyes are calm, Tyrnaus.
TYRNAUS
I have composed my soul to my sad fortunes.
Yet wherefore sad? Fate has dealt largely with me.
I have been thrice shipwrecked, twice misled in deserts,
Wounded six times in battle with wild men
For life and treasure. I have outspent kings:
I have lost fortunes and amassed them: princes
Have been my debtors, kingdoms lost and won
By lack or having of a petty fraction
Of my rich incomings: and now Fate gives me
This tragic, not inglorious death: I am
The banquet of a god. It fits, it fits,
And I repine not.

PERSEUS
But will these help, Tyrnaus,
To pass the chill eternity of Hades?
This memory of glorious breathing life,
Will it alleviate the endless silence?

TYRNAUS
But there are lives beyond, and we meanwhile
Move delicately amid aerial things
Until the green earth wants us.

PERSEUS (shearing his chains with a touch of his sword)
Yet awhile
Of the green earth take all thy frank desire,
Merchant: the sunlight would be loth to lose thee.

SMERDAS
O radiant helpful youth! O son of splendour!
I live again.

PERSEUS
Thou livest, but in chains,
Smerdas.
SMERDAS
But thy good sword will quickly shear them.

PERSEUS
Thou wilt give me all Babylonia holds
Of riches for reward?

SMERDAS
More, more, much more!

PERSEUS
But thou must go to Babylon to fetch it.
Then what security have I of payment?

SMERDAS
Keep good Tyrnaus here, my almost brother.
I will come back and give thee gold, much gold.

PERSEUS
You'd leave him here? in danger? with the knife
Searching for him and grim Poseidon angry?

SMERDAS
What danger, when he is with thee, O youth,
Strong radiant youth?

PERSEUS
Yourself then stay with me,
And he shall bring the ransom from Chaldea.

SMERDAS
Here? here? Oh God! they'll seize me yet again
And cut my heart out. Let me go, dear youth,
Oh, let me go; I'll give thee double gold.

PERSEUS
Thou sordid treacherous thing of fears, I'll not
Venture for such small gain as the poor soul
Thou holdest, nor drive with danger losing bargains.

SMERDAS
Oh, do not jest! it is not good to jest
With death and horror.

PERSEUS
I jest not.

SMERDAS
Oh God! thou dost.

DIOMEDE (without)
Cireas!

CIREAS (jumping)
Who? who? who?

IOLAUS
Is’t not a woman’s voice?
Withdraw into the shadow: let our swords
Be out against surprise. Hither, Tyrnaus.

DIOMEDE
Cireas! where are you, Cireas? It is I.

CIREAS
It is the little palace scamp, Diomedes.
Plague take her! How she fluttered the heart in me!

IOLAUS
Say nothing of us, merchant, or thou diest.

*Iolaus, Perseus and Tyrnaus withdraw into the dimness of the Temple. Andromeda and Diomedes enter.*
CIREAS
Princess Andromeda!

PERSEUS (apart)  Andromeda!
Iolaus’ rosy sister! O child goddess
Dropped recently from heaven! Its light is still
Upon thy face, thou marvel!

IOLAUS  My little sister
In these grim precincts, who so feared their shadows!

ANDROMEDA
Cireas, my servant Diomede means
To tell you of some bargain. Will you walk yonder?

Cireas and Diomede walk apart talking.

Art thou, as these chains say, the mournful victim
Our savage billows spared and men would murder?
But was there not another? Have they brought thee
From thy sad prison to the shrine alone?

SMERDAS
He, — he, —

ANDROMEDA
Has terror so possessed thy tongue,
It cannot do its office? Oh, be comforted.
Although red horror has its grasp on thee,
I dare to tell thee there is hope.

SMERDAS  What hope?
Ah heaven! what hope! I feel the knife even now
Hacking my bosom. If thou bringst me hope,
I’ll know thee for a goddess and adore thee.
ANDROMEDA
Be comforted: I bring thee more than hope.
Cireas!

CIREAS
You’ll give me chains? you’ll give me jewels?

ANDROMEDA
All of my own that I can steal for you.

CIREAS
Steal boldly, O honey-sweet image of a thief, steal and fear not.
I rose for good luck after all this excellent morning! O Poseidon,
had I known there was more to be pocketed in thy disservice
than in thy service, would I have misspent these eighteen barren
years?

ANDROMEDA
Undo this miserable captive’s bonds.

SMERDAS
What! I shall be allowed to live! Is’t true?

ANDROMEDA
No, I’ll undo them, Cireas; I shall feel
I freed him. Is there so much then to unlink?
O ingenuity of men to hurt
And bind and slay their brothers!

SMERDAS
’Tis not a dream,
The horror was the dream. She smiles on me
A wonderful glad smile of joy and kindness,
Making a sunshine. Oh, be quicker, quicker.
Let me escape this hell where I have eaten
And drunk of terror and have slept with death.
ANDROMEDA
Are you so careless of the friend who shared
The tears and danger? Where is he? Cireas!

TYRNAUS (coming forward)
O thou young goddess with the smile! Behold him,
Tyrnaus the Chaldean.

ANDROMEDA (dropping the chain which binds Smerdas)
Already free!
Who has forestalled me?

TYRNAUS
Maiden, art thou vexed
To see me unbound?

ANDROMEDA
I grudge your rescuer the happy task
Heaven meant for me of loosening your chains.
It would have been such joy to feel the cold
Hard irons drop apart between my fingers!
Who freed you?

TYRNAUS
A god as radiant as thyself,
Thou merciful sweetness.

ANDROMEDA
Had he not a look
Like the Olympian’s? Was he not bright like Hermes
Or Phoebus?

TYRNAUS
He was indeed. Thou knowst him then?

ANDROMEDA
In dreams I have met him. He was here but now?
TYRNAUS
He has withdrawn into the shadow, virgin.

SMERDAS
Why do you leave me bound, and talk, and talk,
As if Death had not still his fingers on me?

ANDROMEDA (resuming her task)
Forgive me! Tyrnaus, did that radiant helper
Who clove thy chains, forget to help this poor
Pale trembling man?

TYRNAUS
Because he showed too much
The sordid fear that pities only itself,
He left him to his fate.

ANDROMEDA
Alas, poor human man!
Why, we have all so many sins to answer,
It would be hard to have cold justice dealt us.
We should be kindly to each other’s faults
Remembering our own. Is’t not enough
To see a face in tears and heal the sorrow,
Or must we weigh whether the face is fair
Or ugly? I think that even a snake in pain
Would tempt me to its succour, though I knew
That afterwards ’twould bite me! But he is a god
Perhaps who did this and his spotless radiance
Abhors the tarnish of our frailer natures.

SMERDAS
Oh, I am free! I fall and kiss thy robe,
O goddess, O deliverer.

ANDROMEDA
You must
Go quickly from this place. There is a cave
Near to those unkind rocks where you were shipwrecked,
A stone-throw up the cliff. We found it there
Climbing and playing, reckless of our limbs
In the sweet joy of sunshine, breeze and movement,
When we were children, I and Diomede.
None else will dream of it. There have I stored
Enough of food and water. Closely lurk
Behind its curtains of fantastic stone:
Venture not forth, though your hearts pine for sunlight,
Or Death may take you back into his grip.
When hot pursuit and search have been tired out,
I’ll find you golden wings will carry you
To your Chaldea.

SMERDAS
Can you not find out divers
Who’ll rescue our merchandise from the sunk rocks
Where it is prisoned?

TYRNAS
You have escaped grim murder,
Yet dream of nothing but your paltry gems!
You will call back Heaven’s anger on our heads.

SMERDAS
We cannot beg our way to far Chaldea.

ANDROMEDA
Diving is dangerous there: I will not risk
Men’s lives for money. I promised Cireas what I have,
And yet you shall not go unfurnished home.
I’ll beg a sum from my brother Iolaus
Will help you to Chaldea.

SMERDAS
O my dear riches!
Must you lie whelmed beneath the Syrian surge
Uncared for?

**ANDROMEDA (to Diomede)**
Take them to the cave. Show Cireas
The hidden mouth. I'll loiter and expect you
Under the hill-side, where sweet water plashes
From the grey fountain's head, our fountain. Merchants, go;
Athena guard you!

**TYRNAUS**
Not before I kneel
And touch thy feet with reverent humble hands,
O human merciful divinity,
Who by thy own sweet spirit moved, unasked,
Not knowing us, cam'st from thy safe warm chamber
Here where Death broods grim-visaged in his home,
To save two unseen, unloved, alien strangers,
And being a woman feared not urgent death,
And being a child shook not before God's darkness
And that insistent horror of a world
O'ershadowing ours. O surely in these regions
Where thou wert born, pure-eyed Andromeda,
There shall be some divine epiphany
Of calm sweet-hearted pity for the world,
And harsher gods shall fade into their Hades.

**SMERDAS**
You prattle, and at any moment, comes
The dreadful priest with clutch upon my shoulder.
Come! come! you, slave-girl, lead the way, accursèd!
You loiter?

**ANDROMEDA**
Chide not my servant, Babylonian.
Go, Diomede; darkness like a lid
Will soon shut down upon the rugged beach
And they may stumble as they walk. Go, Cireas.

*Diomede and Cireas go out,*

*followed by the merchants.*

Alone I stand before thee, grim Poseidon,
Here in thy darkness, with thy altar near
That keeps fierce memory of tortured groans
And human shrieks of victims, and, unforced,
I yet pollute my soul with thy bloody nearness
To tell thee that I hate, contention, defy thee.
I am no more than a brief-living woman,
Yet am I more divine than thou, for I
Can pity. I have torn thy destined prey
From thy red jaws. They say thou dost avenge
Fearfully insult. Avenge thyself, Poseidon.

*She goes out: Perseus and Iolaus come forward.*

**PERSEUS**
Thou art the mate for me, Andromeda!
Now, now I know wherefore my eager sandals
Bore me resistlessly to thee and Syria.

**IOLAUS**
This was Andromeda and not Andromeda.
I never saw her woman till this hour.

**PERSEUS**
Knew you so ill the child you loved so well,
Iolaus?

**IOLAUS**
Sometimes we know them least
Whom most we love and constantly consort with.

**PERSEUS**
How daintily she moved as if a hand
She loved were on her curls and she afraid
Of startling the sweet guest!
IOLAUS

O Perseus, Perseus!
She has defied a strong and dreadful god,
And dreadfully he will avenge himself.

PERSEUS
Iolaus, friend, I think not quite at random
Athene led me to these happy shores
That bore such beautiful twin heads for me
Sun-curled, Andromeda and Iolaus,
That I might see their beauty marred with death
By cunning priests and blood-stained gods. Fear not
The event. I bear Athene’s sword of sharpness.

They go out.
Scene 3

Darkness. The Temple of Poseidon.
Polydæon enters.

POLYDAON
Cireas! Why, Cireas! Cireas! Knavè, I call you!
Is the rogue drunk or sleeps? Cireas! you, Cireas!
My voice comes echoing from the hollow shrine
To tell me of solitude. Where is this drunkard?
A dreadful thing it is to stand alone
In this weird temple. Forty years of use
Have not accustomed me to its mute threatening.
It seems to me as if dead victims moved
With awful faces all about this stone
Invisibly here palpable. And Ocean
Groans ever like a wounded god aloud
Against our rocky base, his voice at night
Weirdly insistent. I will go and talk
With the Chaldeans in their chains: better
Their pleasing groans and curses than the hush.

He goes out and after a while
comes back, disordered.

Wake, sleeping Syria, wake! Thou art violated,
Thy heart cut out: thou art outraged, Syria, outraged,
Thy harvests and thy safety and thy sons
Already murdered! O hideous sacrilege!
Who can have dared this crime? Could the slave Cireas
Have ventured thus? No, it is the proud
God-hating son of Cepheus, Iolaus,
And that swift stranger borne through impious air
To upheave the bases of our old religion.
They have rescued the Chaldeans. Cireas lies
Murdered perhaps on the sound-haunted cliffs
Who would have checked their crime. I'll strike the gong
That only tolls when dread calamity
Strides upon Syria. Wake, doomed people, wake!

He rushes out. A gong sounds for some moments. It is silent and he returns, still more disordered.

Wake! Wake! Do you not hear Poseidon raging
Beneath the cliffs with tiger-throated menace?
Do you not hear his feet upon the boulders
Sounding, a thunderous report of peril,
As he comes roaring up his stony ramparts
To slay you? Ah, the city wakes. I hear
A surge confused of hurrying, cries and tumult.
What is this darkness moving on me? Gods!
Where is the image? Whose is this awful godhead?

The Shadow of Poseidon appears, vague and alarming at first, then distinct and terrible in the darkness.

POSEIDON
My victims, Polydaon, give me my victims.

POLYDAON (falling prostrate)
It was not I, it was not I, but others.

POSEIDON
My victims, Polydaon, give me my victims.

POLYDAON
O dire offended god, not upon me
Fall thy loud scourges! I am innocent.

POSEIDON
How art thou innocent, when the Chaldeans Escape? Give me my victims, Polydaon.
POLYDAON
I know not how they fled nor who released them.
Gnash not thy blood-stained teeth on me, O Lord,
Nor slay me with those glaring eyes. Thy voice
Thunders, a hollow terror, through my soul.

POSEIDON
Hear me, unworthy priest. While thou art scheming
For thy own petty mortal aims abroad,
I am insulted in my temple, laughed at
By slaves, by children done injurious wrong,
My victims snatched from underneath my roof
By any casual hand, my dreadful image
Looking deserted on: for none avenges.

POLYDAON
Declare thy will, O Lord, it shall be done.

POSEIDON
Therefore I will awake, I will arise,
And you shall know me for a god. This day
The loud Assyrians shall break shouting in
With angry hooves like a huge-riding flood
Upon this country. The pleasant land of Syria
Shall be dispeopled. Wolves shall howl in Damascus,
And Gaza and Euphrates bound a desert.
My resonant and cliff-o’ervaulting seas,
Black-cowled, with foaming tops thundering shall climb
Into your lofty seats of ease and wash them
Strangled into the valleys. From the deep
My ravening herds pastured by Amphitrite
Shall walk upon your roads, devour your maidens
And infants, tear your strong and armèd men
Helplessly shrieking like weak-wristed women,
Till all are dead. And thou, neglectful priest,
Shalt go down living into Tartarus
Where knives fire-pointed shall disclose thy breast
And pluck thy still-renewing heart from thee
For ever: till the world cease shall be thy torments.

POLYDAON
O dreadful Lord!

POSEIDON
If thou wouldst shun the doom,
And keep my Syria safe, discover then
The rescuer of the Babylonian captives
And to the monsters of my deep expose
For a delicious banquet. Offer the heart
Of Iolaus here still warmly alive
And sobbing blood to leave his beautiful body;
Slaughter on his yet not inanimate bosom
The hero for whose love he braved my rage,
And let the sacrilegious house of Cepheus
Be blotted from the light. Thy sordid aims
Put from thy heart: remember to be fearless.
I will inhabit thee, if thou deserve it.

*He disappears thundering.*

POLYDAON
Yes, Lord! shall not thy dreadful will be done?

*Phineus enters and his Tyrians with torches.*

PHINEUS
Wherefore has the gong’s ominous voice tonight
Affrighted Syria? Are you Polydaon
Who crouch here?

POLYDAON *(rising)*
Welcome, King Phineus.

PHINEUS
Who art thou?
Thine eyes roll round in a bright glaring horror
And rising up thou shak’st thy gloomy locks
As if they were a hungry lion’s mane
Preparing for the leap. Speak, Polydaon.

POLYDAON
Yes, I shall speak, of sacrilege and blood,
Its terrible forfeit, and the wrath of Heaven.

Cepheus enters with Dercetes and Syrian
soldiers, Therops, Perissus and a throng
of Syrians; scores of torches.

CEPHEUS
What swift calamity, O Polydaon,
Has waked to clamorousness the fatal gong
At which all Syria trembles? What is this face
Thou showest like some grim accusing phantom’s
In the torches’ light? Wherefore rangst thou the bell?

POLYDAON
It rang the doom of thee and all thy house,
Cepheus.

CEPHEUS
My doom!

PHINEUS (aside)
I glimpse a striking plot
And ’tis well-staged too.

POLYDAON
The victims are released,
The victims bound for terrible Poseidon.
Thou and thy blood are guilty.

CEPHEUS
Thou art mad!
POLYDAON
'Tis thou and thy doomed race are seized with madness,
Who with light hearts offend against Poseidon.
But they shall perish. Thou and thy blood shall perish.

CEPHEUS
O, thou appalst me. Wherefore rings out thy voice
Against me like a clamorous bell of doom
In the huge darkness?

POLYDAON
Poseidon's self arose
In the dim night before me with a voice
As angry as the loud importunate surge
Denouncing thee. Thou and thy blood shall perish.

PHINEUS
Cepheus, let search be made. Perhaps the victims
Have not fled far, and all may yet be saved.

CEPHEUS
Scour, captains, scour all Syria for the fugitives.
Dercetes and thy troop, down to the coast,
Scan every boulder: out, out, Meriones,
Callias, Oridamas and Pericarpus,
Ring in the countryside with cordons armed,
Enter each house, ransack most private chambers,
But find them.

Dercetes and the captains go out
with their soldiers, the people
making way for them.

POLYDAON
People of Syria, hearken, hearken!
Poseidon for this sacrilege arouses
The Assyrian from the land and from the sea
His waves and all their sharp-toothed monsters: your men
Shall be rent and disembowelled, your women ravished,  
Butchered by foemen or by Ocean's dogs  
Horribly eaten: what's left, the flood shall swallow.  

*Cries and groans.*

**VOICES**
Spare us, Poseidon, spare us, dread deity!

**POLYDAON**
Would you be spared? Obey Poseidon, people.

**THEROPS**
Thou art our King, command us.

**POLYDAON**
Bring the woman,  
Chaldean Cassiopea, and her daughter.  
Tell them that Syria's King commands them here.  

*Therops and others go out to do his bidding.*

**PHINEUS**
What mean you, priest?

**CEPHEUS**
Wherefore my queen and princess?

**POLYDAON**
I do the will of terrible Poseidon.  
Thou and thy blood shall perish.

**PHINEUS**
Thou then art mad!  
I thought this was a skilful play. Thinkst thou  
I will permit the young Andromeda,  
My bride, to be mishandled or exposed  
To the bloody chances of wild popular fury  
In such a moment?
POLYDAON
Phineus, I know not what thou wilt permit:
I know what terrible Poseidon wills.

PHINEUS
Poseidon! thou gross superstitious fool,
Hast thou seen shadows in the night and tookst them
For angry gods?

POLYDAON
Refrain from impious words,
Or else the doom shall take thee in its net.

PHINEUS
Refrain thyself from impious deeds, or else
A hundred Tyrian blades shall search thy brain
To look for thy lost reason.

POLYDAON (recoiling)
Patience, King Phineus!
It may be, thou shalt have thy whole desire
By other means.

Dercetes returns.

DERCETES
One of the fugitives is seized.

POLYDAON
Where, where?

DERCETES
Creeping about the sea-kissed rocks we found him
Where the ship foundered, babbling greedily
Of his lost wealth, in cover of the darkness.

POLYDAON
Now we shall know the impious hand. Tremble,
Tremble, King Cepheus.

CEPHEUS (aside)
   I am besieged, undone.
No doubt it is my rash-brained Iolaus
Ruins us all.

Soldiers enter, driving in Smerdas.

SMERDAS (groaning)
   I am dragged back to hell.
I am lost and nothing now can save me.

POLYDAON
   Chaldean,
The choice is thine. Say, wilt thou save thy life
And see the green fields of thy land once more
And kiss thy wife and children?

SMERDAS
   You mock me, mock me!

POLYDAON
   No, man! thou shalt have freedom at a price
Or torture gratis.

SMERDAS
   Price? price? I'll give the price!

POLYDAON
   The names of those whose impious hands released thee:
Which if thou speak not, thou shalt die, not given
To the dire god, for he asks other victims,
But crushed with fearful tortures.

SMERDAS
   O kind Heaven!
Have mercy! Must I give up, — that smile
Of sweetness and those kindly eyes, to death?
It is a dreadful choice! I cannot do it.

POLYDAON
It was a woman did this!

SMERDAS
I'll say no more.

CEPHEUS
I breathe again: it was not Iolaus.

POLYDAON
Seize him and twist him into anguished knots!
Let every bone be crushed and every sinew
Wrenched and distorted, till each inch of flesh
Gives out its separate shriek.

SMERDAS
O spare me, spare me:
I will tell all.

POLYDAON
Speak truth and I will give thee
Bushels of gold and shipment to Chaldea.

SMERDAS
Gold? Gold? Shall I have gold?

POLYDAON
Thou shalt.

SMERDAS (after a pause)
The youth
You would have taken on the beach, arrived,
And his the sword bit through my iron fetters.
POLYDAON
Palter not! Who was with him? Thou shalt have gold.

SMERDAS
Young Iolaus.

CEPHEUS
Alas!

PHINEUS
Thus far is well.

POLYDAON
Thou hast a shifty look about the eyes.
Thou spkest of a woman. Was’t the Queen?
Hast thou told all? His face grows pale. To torment!

SMERDAS (groaning)
I will tell all. Swear then I shall have gold
And safety.

POLYDAON
By grim Poseidon’s head I swear.

SMERDAS
O hard necessity! The fair child princess,
Andromeda, with her young slave-girl came,
She was my rescuer.

There is a deep silence of amazement.

PHINEUS
I’ll not believe this! could that gentle child
Devise and execute so huge a daring?
Thou liest: thou art part of some foul plot.

POLYDAON
He has the accent of unwilling truth.
Phineus, she is death’s bride, not thine. Wilt thou
Be best man in that dolorous wedding? Forbear
And wait Poseidon’s will.

PHINEUS (low)
Shall I have Syria?

POLYDAON
When it is mine to give thee.

Therops returns.

THEROPS
The Queen arrives.

POLYDAON
Remove the merchant.

The soldiers take Smerdas into the background.
Cassiopea enters with Andromeda and Diomede,
Nebassar and the Chaldean Guard.

CASSIOPEA
Keep ready hands upon your swords, Chaldeans.
What is this tumult? Wherefore are we called
At this dim hour and to this solemn place?

POLYDAON
Com’st thou with foreign falchions, Cassiopea,
To brave the Syrian gods? Abandon her,
Chaldeans. ’Tis a doomed head your swords encompass.

CASSIOPEA
Since when dost thou give thy commands in Syria
And sentence queens? My husband and thy King
Stands near thee; let him speak.

POLYDAON
Let him. There stands he.
CASSIOPEA
Why hidest thou thine eyes, monarch of Syria,
Sinking thy forehead like a common man
Unkingly? What grief o’ertakes thee?

POLYDAON
You see he speaks not.
'Tis I command in Syria. Is't not so,
My people?

THEROPS
'Tis so.

POLYDAON
Stand forth, Andromeda.

CASSIOPEA
What would you with my child? I stand here for her.

POLYDAON
She is accused of impious sacrilege,
And she must die.

CASSIOPEA (shuddering)
Die! Who accuses her?

POLYDAON
Bring the Chaldean.

DIOMEDE
Oh, the merchant’s seized
And all is known. Deny it, my sweet lady,
And we may yet be saved.

ANDROMEDA
Oh poor, poor merchant!
Did I unloose thy bonds in vain?
DIOMEDE

Say nothing.

ANDROMEDA
And why should I conceal it, Diomede?
What I had courage in my heart to do,
Surely I can have courage to avow.

DIOMEDE
But they will kill us both.

ANDROMEDA
I am a princess.
Why should I lie? From fear? But I am not afraid.

Meanwhile the soldiers have brought Smerdas to the front.

POLYDAON
Look, merchant. Say before all, who rescued thee?
She was it?

SMERDAS
It is she. Oh, do not look
With that sad smile upon me. I am compelled.

POLYDAON
Is this the slave-girl?

SMERDAS
It is she.

CASSIOPEA
This wretch
Lies at thy bidding. Put him to the question.
He said he was compelled.

POLYDAON
I'll not permit it.
PERISSUS
Why, man, it is the law. We’ll not believe
Our little princess did the crime.

CASSIOPEA
Syrians,
Look at this paltering priest. Do you not see
It is a plot, this man his instrument
Who lies so wildly? He’ll not have him questioned.
No doubt ‘twas he himself released the man,—
Who else could do it in this solemn temple
Where human footsteps fear to tread? He uses
The name of great Poseidon to conceal
His plottings. He would end the line of Cepheus
And reign in Syria.

PERISSUS
This sounds probable.

VOICES
Does he misuse Poseidon’s name? unbind
Victims? Kill him!

CASSIOPEA
Look how he pales, O people!
Is’t thus that great Poseidon’s herald looks
When charged with the god’s fearful menaces?
He diets you with forgeries and fictions.

CRIES
Let him be strangled!

PHINEUS
This is a royal woman!

POLYDAON
Well, let the merchant then be put to question.
PERISSUS
Come and be tickled, merchant. I am the butcher.
Do you see my cleaver? I will torture you kindly.

SMERDAS
O help me, save me, lady Andromeda.

ANDROMEDA
Oh, do not lay your cruel hands upon him.
I did release him.

CASSIOPEA
Ah, child Andromeda.

PERISSUS
You, little princess! Wherefore did you this?

ANDROMEDA
Because I would not have their human hearts
Mercilessly uprooted for the bloody
Monster you worship as a god! because
I am capable of pain and so can feel
The pain of others! For which if you I love
Must kill me, do it. I alone am guilty.

POLYDAON
Now, Cassiopea! You are silent, Queen.
Lo, Syrians, lo, my forgeries and fictions!
Lo, my vile plottings! Enough. Poseidon wills
That on the beach this criminal be bound
For monsters of the sea to rend in fragments,
And all the royal ancient blood of Syria
Must be poured richly forth to appease and cleanse.

CASSIOPEA
Swords from the scabbard! gyre in your King from harm,
Chaldeans! Hew your way through all opposers!
Thou in my arms, my child Andromeda!
I'll keep my daughter safe upon my bosom
Against the world.

POLYDAON
What dost thou, Babylonian?

CASSIOPEA
To the palace,
My trusty countrymen!

POLYDAON
Oppose them, soldiers!
They cheat the god of the crime-burdened heads
Doomed by his just resentment.

DERCETES
We are few:
And how shall we lay hands on royalty?

POLYDAON
Nebassar, darest thou oppose the gods?

NEBASSAR
Out of my sword's way, priest! I do my duty.

POLYDAON
Draw, King of Tyre!

PHINEUS
'Tis not my quarrel, priest.
Nebassar and the Chaldeans with drawn swords
go out from the Temple, taking the King and
Queen, Andromeda and Diomede.

POLYDAON
People of Syria, you have let them pass!
You fear not then the anger of Poseidon?

PERISSUS
Would you have us spitted upon the Chaldean swords? Mad priest, must we be broached like joints and tossed like pancakes? We have no weapons. Tomorrow we will go to the Palace and what must be done shall be done. But 'tis not just that many should be slain for the crime of one and the house of Syria out-rooted. Follow me and observe my commands, brave aristocracy of the shop, gallant commoners of the lathe and anvil, follow Perissus. I will lead you tonight to your soft downy beds and tomorrow to the Palace.

All the Syrians go out, led by Therops and Perissus.

PHINEUS
Thou hast done foolishly in this, O priest. Hadst thou demanded the one needful head Of Iolaus, it was easy: but now The tender beauty of Andromeda Compels remorse and the astonished people Recoil from the bold waste of royal blood Thou appointest them to spill. I see that zeal And frantic superstition are bad plotters. Henceforth I work for my sole hand, to pluck My own good from the storms of civic trouble This night prepares.

He goes out with his Tyrians.

POLYDAON
O terrible Poseidon, Thyself avenge thyself! hurl on this people The sea and the Assyrian. Where is the power Thou saidst should tarry with me? I have failed.

He remains sunk in thought for a while, then raises his head.

Tomorrow, Syrian? tomorrow is Poseidon’s.  
Curtain
Act IV

Scene 1

The countryside, high ground near the city of Cepheus.
A crowd of Syrians, men and women, running in terror, among
them Chabrias, Megas, Baltis, Pasithea, Morus, Gardas, Syrax.

BALTIS (stopping and sinking down on her knees)
Ah, whither can we run where the offended
Poseidon shall not reach us?

CHABRIAS
Stop, countrymen;
Let’s all die here together.

OTHERS
Let’s stop and die.

MEGAS
Run, run! Poseidon’s monsters howl behind.

PASITHEA
O day of horror and of punishment!

SYRAX
Let us stay here; it is high ground, perhaps
The monster will not reach us.

Damoetes enters.

DAMOETES
I have seen the terror near, and yet I live.
It vomits fire for half a league.

SYRAX
   It is
As long as a sea-jutting promontory.

DAMOETES
It has six monstrous legs.

SYRAX
   Eight, eight; I saw it.

MEGAS
Chabrias, it caught thy strong son by the foot,  
And dashed his head against a stone, that all  
The brains were scattered.  

CHABRIAS
   Alas, my son! I will  
Go back and join you in the monster’s jaws.  
   *He is stopped by the others.*

DAMOETES
It seized thy daughter, O Pasithea,  
And tore her limbs apart, which it devoured  
While yet the trunk lay screaming under its foot.

PASITHEA
Oh God!  
   *She swoons.*

ALL
   Lift her up, lift her up. Alas!

MEGAS
These sorrows may be ours.
BALTIS

Ah Heaven, my son!
I did not wake him when this news of horror
Plucked me from sleep.

GARDAS

My wife and little daughter
Are in my cottage where perhaps the monster
Vomits his fiery breath against the door.
I will go back.

MORUS

Let us go back, Damoetes.

DAMOETES

I'll not go back for twenty thousand wives
And children. Life is sweet.

MANY VOICES

Let us not go.

They stop Gardas.

MEGAS

What noise is that?

BALTIS

Run, run, 'tis some new horror.
All are beginning to run. Therops enters.

THEROPS

Where will you run? Poseidon’s wrath is near you
And over you and behind you and before you.
His monsters from the ooze ravage howling
Along our shores, and the indignant sea
Swelled to unnatural tumultuous mountains
Is climbing up the cliffs with spume and turmoil.
DAMOETES
O let us run a hundred leagues and live.

THEROPS
Before you is another death. Last night
The Assyrians at three points came breaking in
Across the border and the frontier forces
Are slain. They torture, burn and violate:
Young girls and matrons, men and boys are butchered.
Salvation is not in your front and flight
Casts you from angry gods to men more ruthless.
I wonder not that you are silent, stunned
With fear: but will you listen, countrymen,
And I will show you a cure for these fierce evils.

VOICES
Oh tell us, tell us, you shall be our king.

MEGAS
We’ll set thy image by the great Poseidon’s
And worship it.

THEROPS
What is the unexampled cause of wrath
Which whelms you with these horrors? Is’t not the bold
Presumptuous line of Cepheus? Is’t not your kings
Whose pride, swollen by your love and homage, Syrians,
Insults the gods, rescues Poseidon’s victims
And with a sacrilegious levity
Exposes all your lives to death and woe?
There is the fount of all your misery, Syrians,
For this the horror eats you up, — your kings.

CRIES
Away with them! throw them into the sea — let Poseidon swallow them!
Act IV, Scene 1

THEROPS
But most I blame the fell Chaldean woman
Who rules you. What is this Cepheus but a puppet
Dressed up in royal seemings, pushed forth and danced
At her caprice? Unhappy is the land
That women rule, that country more unhappy
That is to heartless foreigners a prey.
But thou, O ill-starred Syria, two worst evils
Hast harboured in a single wickedness.
What cares the light Chaldean for your gods,
Your lives, your sons, your daughters? She lives at ease
Upon the revenues of your hard toil,
Depending on favourites, yes, on paramours, —
For why have women favourites but to ease
Their sensual longings? — and insults your deities.
Do you not think she rescued the Chaldeans
Because they were her countrymen, and used
Her daughter, young Andromeda, for tool
That her fair childish beauty might disarm
Wrath and suspicion? then, the crime unearthed,
Braved all and set her fierce Chaldeans' swords
Against the good priest Polydaon's heart, —
You did not hear that? — the good Polydaon
Who serves Poseidon with such zeal! Therefore
The god is angry: your wives, sisters, daughters
Must suffer for Chaldean Cassiopea.

CRIES
Let us seize her and kill, kill, kill, kill her!

DAMOETES
Burn her!

MORUS
Roast her!
MEGAS
Tear her into a million fragments.

CHABRIAS
But are they not our kings? We must obey them.

THEROPS
Wherefore must we obey them? Kings are men,
And they are set above their fellow-mortals
To serve us, friends, — not, surely, for our hurt!
Why should our sons and daughters bleed for them,
Syrians? Is not our blood as dear, as precious,
As human? Why should these kings, these men, go clad
In purple and in velvet while you toil
For little and are hungry and are naked?

CRIES
True, true, true!

GARDAS
This is a wonderful man, this Therops. He has a brain, country-men.

DAMOETES
A brain! He is no cleverer than you or I, Morus.

MORUS
I should think not, Damoetes!

DAMOETES
We knew these things long ago and did not need wind-bag
Therops to tell us!

MORUS
We have talked them over often, Damoetes.
MEGAS
We'll have no more kings, countrymen.

CRIES
No kings, no kings!

GARDAS
Or Therops shall be king.

CRIES
Yes, Therops king! Therops king!

DAMOETES
Good king Lungs! Oh, let us make him king, Morus,—he will not pass wind in the market-place so often.

THEROPS
Poseidon is our king; we are his people.
Gods we must worship; why should we worship men
And set a heavenly crown on mortal weakness?
They have offended against great Poseidon,
They are guilty of a fearful sacrilege.
Let them perish.

CRIES
Kill them! let us appease Poseidon.

CHABRIAS
Worship Heaven’s power but bow before the king.

THEROPS
What need have we of kings? What are these kings?

CHABRIAS
They are the seed of gods.
Then, let them settle
Themselves their quarrel with their Olympian kindred.
Why should we suffer? Let Andromeda
Be exposed and Iolaus sacrificed:
Then shall Poseidon’s wrath retire again
Into the continent of his vast billows.

CHABRIAS
If it must be so, let it come by award
Of quiet justice.

THEROPS
Justice! They are the judges
Who did the crime. Wherefore dost thou defend them?
Thou favourest then Poseidon’s enemies?

CRIES
Kill him too, kill Chabrias. Poseidon, great Poseidon! we are
Poseidon’s people.

DAMOETES
Let him join his son and by the same road.

MORUS
Beat his brains out — to see if he has any. Ho! ho! ho!

THEROPS
Let him alone: he is a fool. Here comes
Our zealous good kind priest, our Polydaon.

Polydaon enters.

CRIES
Polydaon! Polydaon! the good Polydaon! Save us, Polydaon!

POLYDAON
Ah, do you call me now to save you? Last night
Act IV, Scene 1

You did not save me when the foreign swords 
Were near my heart.

MEGAS
Forgive us and protect.

DAMOETES
You, lead us to the palace, be our chief.

MORUS
We'll have no kings: lead, you: on to the palace!

MEGAS
Poseidon shall be king, thou his vicegerent.

GARDAS
Therops at thy right hand!

cries
Yes, Therops! Therops!

POLYDAON
Oh, you are sane now, being let blood by scourgings!
Unhurt had been much better. But Poseidon 
Pardons and I will save.

cries
Polydaon for ever, the good Polydaon, Poseidon’s Viceroy!

POLYDAON
Swear then to do Poseidon’s will.

cries
We swear!

DAMOETES
Command and watch the effect!
POLYDAON
Will not the tongue
Of Cassiopea once more change you, people?

DAMOETES
We'll cut it out and feed her dogs with it.

POLYDAON
Shall Iolaus bleed? Andromeda
Be trailed through the city and upon the rocks,
As the god wills, flung naked to his monsters?
Cepheus and Cassiopea die?

CRIES
They shall!

MEGAS
Not one of them shall live.

POLYDAON
Then come, my children.

DAMOETES
But the beast! Will it not tear us on the road?

POLYDAON
It will not hurt you who do Poseidon's will.
I am your safeguard; I will march in front.

CRIES
To the palace, to the palace! We'll kill the Chaldeans, strangle
Cepheus, tear the Queen to pieces.

POLYDAON
In order, in good order, my sweet children.

The mob surges out following Polydaon
and Therops: only Damoetes, Chabrias,
Baltis and Pasithea are left.
DAMOETES
Come, Chabrias, we’ll have sport.

CHABRIAS
My dead son calls me.
He goes out in another direction.

BALTIS
Pasithea, rise and come: you’ll see her killed
Who is the murderess of your daughter.

PASITHEA
Let me
Stay here and die.

DAMOETES
Lift her up. Come, fool.
They go out, leading Pasithea.
Scene 2

Cydone’s Garden.
Cydone, Iolaus, Perseus.

Cydone
Perseus, you did not turn him into stone?

Iolaus
You cruelty! must one go petrifying
One’s fellows through the world? ’Twould not be decent.

Cydone
He would have been so harmless as a statue!

Perseus
The morning has broken over Syria and the sun
Mounts royally into his azure kingdom.
I feel a stir within me as if great things
Were now in motion and clear-eyed Athene
Urging me on to high and helpful deeds.
There is a grandiose tumult in the air,
A voice of gods and Titans locked in wrestle.

Diomede enters.

Diomede
Ah, prince!

She bursts into tears.

Iolaus
Diomede, what calamity?
DIOMEDE
Flee, flee from Syria, save thyself.

IOLAUS
From Syria!
Am I alone in peril? Then I’ll sit
And wait.

DIOMEDE
Poseidon’s monsters from the deep
Arise to tear us for our sin. The people
In fury, led by Polydaon, march
Upon the palace, crying, “Slay the King,
Butcher the Queen, and let Andromeda
And Iolaus die.” O my sweet playmate,
They swear they’ll bind her naked to the rocks
Of the sea-beach for the grim monster’s jaws
To tear and swallow.

IOLAUS
My sword, my sword, Cydone!

DIOMEDE
Oh, go not to the fierce and bloody people!
Praxilla stole me out, hiding my face
In her grey mantle: I have outrun the wind
To warn you. Had the wild mob recognised me,
They would have torn me into countless pieces,
And will you venture near whose name they join
With death and cursings? Polydaon leads them.

CYDONE
Had he been only stone!

IOLAUS
My sword!
_Cydone gives him the sword._
_Perseus goes out to the cottage._
DIOMEDE
You’ll go?
What will you do alone against ten thousand?

IOLAUS
To die is always easy. This canaille
I do not fear; it is a coward rabble.

DIOMEDE
But terror gives them fierceness: they are dangerous.

IOLAUS
Keep Diomede for your service, love,
If I am killed; escape hence with your mother
To Gaza; she has gold: you may begin
A life as fair there. Sometimes remember me.

CYDONE
Diomede, will you comfort my dear mother?
Tell her I am quite safe and will be back
By nightfall. Hush! this in your ear, Diomede.
Escape with her under the veil of night,
For I shall not come back. Be you her daughter
And comfort her sad lonely age, Diomede.

IOLAUS
What do you mean, Cydone?

CYDONE
Are you ready?
Let us be going.

IOLAUS
Us, sweet lunatic?

CYDONE
Often you’ve said that you and I are only one,
I shall know now if you mean it.
IOLAUS

You shall not give
To the rude mob’s ferocious violence
The beautiful body I have kissed so often.
You’ll not obey me?

CYDONE

No.

IOLAUS

Leave this you shall not.

CYDONE

I do not know how you will stop me.

IOLAUS

Shrew!
You shall be stopped by bonds. Here you’ll remain
Tied to a tree-trunk by your wilful wrists
Till all is over.

Perseus returns, armed.

CYDONE

I'll bring the tree and all and follow you.

IOLAUS

Oh, will you, Hercules?

PERSEUS

Forbid her not,
My Iolaus; no tress of her shall fall.
I have arisen and all your turbulent Syria
Shall know me for the son of Zeus.

IOLAUS

Perseus,
Art thou indeed a god? What wilt thou do,
One against a whole people? What way hast thou?

**PERSEUS**
This is no hour to speak or plan, but to act.
A presence sits within my heart that sees
Each moment’s need and finds the road to meet it.
Dread nothing; I am here to help and save.

**IOLAUS**
I had almost forgotten; the might thou hast shown
Is a sufficient warrant.

**CYDONE**
I shall come back,
Diomedes.

**PERSEUS**
   My grip is firm on Herpe,
   Athene’s aegis guards my wrist; herself
   The strong, omnipotent and tranquil goddess
   Governs my motions with her awful will.
   Have trust in me. Borne on my bright-winged sandals
   Invisibly I will attend your course
   On the light breezes.

_He goes out followed by Iolaus and Cydone._

**DIOMEDE**
   I am too tired to follow,
   Too daunted with their mad-beast howls. Here let me hide
   Awaiting what event this war of gods
   May bring to me and my sweet-hearted lady.
   O my Andromeda! my little playmate!
   _She goes out towards the cottage weeping._
Scene 3

A room commanding the outer Court of the Palace. Nebassar, Praxilla.

PRAXILLA
I have seen them from the roof; at least ten thousand
March through the streets. Do you not hear their rumour,
A horrid hum as of unnumbered hornets
That slowly nears us?

NEBASSAR
If they are so many,
It will be hard to save the princess.

PRAXILLA
Save her!
It is too late now to save anyone.

NEBASSAR
I fear so.

PRAXILLA
But never is too late to die
As loyal servants for the lords whose bread
We have eaten. At least we women of the household
Will show the way to you Chaldeans.

NEBASSAR
We are soldiers,
Praxilla, and need no guidance on a road
We daily tread in prospect. I'll bring my guards.

He goes out saluting Cassiopea who enters.
CASSIOPEA
Swift Diomede must have reached by now, Praxilla.

PRAXILLA
I hope so, madam.
She goes out to the inner apartments.

CASSIOPEA
Then Iolaus
Is safe. My sad heart has at least that comfort.
O my Andromeda, my child Andromeda,
Thou wouldst not let me save thee. Hadst thou too gone,
I would have smiled when their fierce fingers rent me.
Cepheus enters.

CEPHEUS
The mob is nearing; all my Syrian guards
Have fled; we cannot hope for safety now.

CASSIOPEA
Then what is left but to set rapid fire
To the rafters and prevent on friendly swords
The rabble’s outrage?

CEPHEUS
Was it for such a fate
Thou camest smiling from an emperor’s palace,
O Cassiopea, Cassiopea!

CASSIOPEA
For me
Grieve not.

CEPHEUS
O Lady, princess of Chaldea,
Pardon me who have brought thee to this doom.
Yet I meant well and thought that I did wisely:
But the gods wrest our careful policies
To their own ends until we stand appalled
Remembering what we meant to do and seeing
What has been done.

CASSIOPEA
With no half soul I came
To share thy kingdom and thy joys; entirely
I came, to take the evil also with thee.

CEPHEUS
Is there no truth in our high-winging ideals?
My rule was mild as spring, kind as the zephyr:
It tempered justice with benevolence
And offered pardon to the rebel and sinner;
I showed mercy, the rare sign of gods and kings.
In this too difficult world, this too brief life
To serve the gods with virtue seemed the best.
A nation’s happiness was my only care:
I made the people’s love my throne’s sure base
And dreamed the way I chose true, great, divine.
But the heavenly gods have other thoughts than man’s;
Their awful aims transcend our human sight.
Another doom than I had hoped they gave.

CASSIOPEA
A screened Necessity drives even the gods.
Over human lives it strides to unseen ends;
Our tragic failures are its stepping-stones.

CEPHEUS
My father lived calm, just, pitiless, austere,
As a stern god might sway a prostrate world:
Admired and feared, he died a mighty king.
My end is this abominable fate.
CASSIOPEA
Another law than mercy’s rules the earth.

CEPHEUS
If I had listened to thee, O Cassiopea,
Chance might have taken a fairer happier course.
Always thou saidst to me, “The people’s love
Is a glimmer on quicksands in a gliding sea:
Today they are with thee, tomorrow turn elsewhere.
Wisdom, strength, policy alone are sure.”
I thought I better knew my Syrian folk.
Is this not my well-loved people at my door,
This tiger-hearted mob with bestial growl,
This cry for blood to drink, this roar of hate?
Always thou spok’st to me of the temple’s power,
A growing danger menacing the State,
Its ambition’s panther crouch and serpent pride
And cruel craft in a priest’s sombre face:
I only saw the god and sacred priest.
To priest and god I am thrown a sacrifice.
The golden-mouthed orator of the market-place,
Therops, thou bad’st me fear and quell or win
Gaining his influence to my side. To me
He seemed a voice and nothing but a voice.
Too late I learn that human speech has power
To change men’s hearts and turn the stream of Time.
Thy eyes could read in Phineus’ scheming brain.
I only thought to buy the strength of Tyre
Offering my daughter as unwilling price.
He has planned my fall and watches my agony.
At every step I have been blind, have failed:
All was my error; all’s lost and mine the fault.

CASSIOPEA
Blame not thyself; what thou hadst to be, thou wert,
And never yet came help from vain remorse.
It is too late, too late. To die is left;
Fate and the gods concede us nothing more.

CEPHEUS
But strength to meet the doom is always ours.
In royal robes and crowned we will show ourselves
To our people and look in the eyes of death and fate.
What is this armoured tramp?

The Chaldean guards enter with
Nebassar at their head.

CAPTAINS
O King, we come
To die with thee, the soldiers of Chaldea;
For all in Syria have abandoned thee.

CEPHEUS
I thank you, soldiers.

CRIES OUTSIDE
Poseidon, great Poseidon! we are Poseidon’s people. In, in, in!
Kill the cuckold Cepheus, tear the harlot Cassiopea.

CEPHEUS
Voices of insolent outrage
Proclaim the heartless rabble. On the steps
Of our own palace we’ll receive our subjects.

CASSIOPEA
This, this becomes thee, monarch.

NEBASSAR
Soldiers, form
With serried points before these mighty sovereigns.

The mob surges in, Therops and Perissus at their head, Polydaon a little behind, Damoses, Morus and the rest. Praxilla and others of the household come running in.
MOB
On them! on them! Cut the Chaldeans to pieces!

THEROPS
Halt, people, halt: let there be no vain bloodshed.

CASSIOPEA
Here is a tender-hearted demagogue!

THEROPS
Cepheus and Cassiopea, 'tis vain and heinous
To dally with your fate; it will only make you
More criminal before the majesty
Of the offended people.

CEPHEUS
Majesty!

CASSIOPEA
An unwashed majesty and a wolf-throated!

THEROPS
Insolent woman, to thee I speak not. Cepheus,—

CEPHEUS
Use humbler terms. I am thy King as yet.

THEROPS
The last in Syria. Tell me, wilt thou give up
Thy children to the altar, and thyself
Surrender here with this Chaldean woman
For mercy or judgment to the assembled will
Of Syria?

CASSIOPEA
A tearing mercy, a howling judgment!
POLYDAON
Therops, why do you treat with these? Chaldeans!
And you, Praxilla! women of the household!
Bring out the abominable Andromeda
Who brought the woe on Syria. Why should you vainly
Be ripped and mangled?

CRIES OF WOMEN
Bring out Andromeda!
Bring out the harlot’s daughter, bring her out!

CRIES OF MEN
Andromeda! Andromeda! Andromeda!
Bring out this vile Andromeda to die!

Andromeda enters from the inner Palace, followed
by slave-girls entreating and detaining her.

PRAXILLA (sorrowfully)
Wilt thou be wilful even to the end?

CASSIOPEA
Alas, my child!

ANDROMEDA
Mother, weep not for me. Perhaps my death
May save you; and ’tis good that I should die,
Not these poor innocent people. Against me
Their unjust god is wroth.

CEPHEUS
O my poor sunbeam!

ANDROMEDA (advancing and showing herself to the people)
O people who have loved me, you have called me
And I am here.

A fierce roar from the mob.
THEROPS
How she shrinks back appalled!

PRAXILLA
God! What a many-throated howl of demons!
Their eyes glare death. These are not men and Syrians.
The fierce Poseidon has possessed their breasts
And breathed his awful blood-lust into all hearts
Deafening the voice of reason, slaying pity:
Poseidon’s rage glares at us through these eyes,
It is his ocean roar that fills our streets.

Cries from the mob.

BALTIS
Seize her! seize her! the child of wickedness!

VOICES OF WOMEN
Throw her to us! throw her to us! We will pick
The veins out of her body one by one.

DAMOETES
Throw her to us! We will burn her bit by bit.

MORUS
Yes, cook her alive; no, Damoetes? Ho, ho, ho!

VOICES OF MEN
She has killed our sons and daughters: kill her, kill her!

VOICES OF WOMEN
She is the child of her wicked mother: kill her!

MOB
Throw her to us! throw her to us!

MEGAS
We’ll tear her here, and the furies shall tear her afterwards for ever in Hell.
THEROPS
Peace, people! she is not yours, she is Poseidon’s.

ANDROMEDA
Alas, why do you curse me? I am willing
To die for you. If I had known this morn
The monster’s advent, I would have gone and met him
While you yet slept, and saved your poor fair children
Whose pangs have been my own. Had I died first,
I should not then have suffered. O my loved people,
You loved me too: when I went past your homes,
You blessed me always; often your girls and mothers
Would seize and bind me to their eager breasts
With close imprisonment, kiss on their doorways
And with a smiling soft reluctance leave.
O do not curse me now! I can bear all,
But not your curses.

PERISSUS
Alack, my pretty lady!
What madness made you do it?

POLYDAON
She has rewarded
Your love by bringing death upon you, Syrians,
And now she tries to melt you by her tears.

MOB
Kill her, kill her! Cut the Chaldeans to pieces! We will have her!

PASITHEA
O do not hurt her! She is like my child
Whom the fierce monster tore.

MEGAS
Unnatural mother!
Would you protect her who’s cause your child was eaten?
PASITHEA
Will killing her give back my child to me?

MEGAS
No, it will save the children of more mothers.

DAMOETES
Gag up her puling mouth, the white-faced fool!

VOICES
Tear, tear Andromeda! Seize her and tear her!

WOMEN
Let us only get at her with our teeth and fingers!

NEBASSAR
Use swords, Chaldeans.

POLYDAON
Order, my children, order!
Chaldean, give us up Andromeda,
And save your King and Queen.

NEBASSAR
What, wilt thou spare them?

CASSIOPEA
Thou wilt not give my child to him, Nebassar?
Thou dar’st not!

NEBASSAR
Queen, ’tis better one should die
For all.

POLYDAON
I swear to thee, I will protect them.
CASSIOPEA
Trust not his oaths, his false and murderous oaths.

NEBASSAR
He is a priest: if we believe him, nothing
We lose, something may gain.

MEGAS
What wilt thou do?
The people do not like it. See, they mutter.

POLYDAON
Let me have first their daughter in my grip,
Be sure of the god’s dearest victim. People,
I am Poseidon’s priest and your true friend.
Leave all to me.

CRIES
Leave all to Polydaon! the good priest knows what he is doing.

POLYDAON
Soldier, give up the Princess.

NEBASSAR
Shall she be only given to Poseidon?
Will you protect her from worse outrage?

POLYDAON
I will.

PRAXILLA
Look! what a hideous triumph lights the eyes
Of that fierce man. He glares at her with greed
Like a wild beast of prey, and on his mouth
There is a cruel unclean foam. Nebassar,
O do not give her.
NEBASSAR
If there were any help!
Go forth, O princess, O Andromeda.

CASSIOPEA
My child! my child!

ANDROMEDA
Give me one kiss, my mother.
We shall yet meet, I think. My royal father,
Andromeda farewells you, whom you loved
And called your sunbeam. But the night receives me.

CEPHEUS
Alas!

DAMOETES
How long will these farewells endure?
They are not needed: you shall meet presently
If Death’s angels can collect your tattered pieces.

CASSIOPEA
O savage Syrians, let my curses brood
Upon your land, an anguished mother’s curse.
May the Assyrian come and flay you living,
Impale your sons, rip up your ravished daughters
Before your agonising eyes and make you feel,
Who drag my child from me to butcher her,
The horror that you do. I curse you, Syrians.

ANDROMEDA
Hush, mother, mother! what they demand is just.

NEBASSAR
Lead back the King and Queen into the Palace,
Women. We too will from this sad surrender
Remove our eyes.
CASSIOPEA
I will not go. Let them tear her
Before me: then surely Heaven will avenge me.

CEPHEUS
Come, Cassiopea, come: our death’s delayed
By a few minutes. I will not see her slain.

_Cepheus and Praxilla go in, forcibly leading Cassiopea;
they are followed by the slave-girls and then by Nebassar
and the Chaldeans: Andromeda is left alone on the steps._

CRIES OF THE MOB SURGING FORWARD
Drag her, kill her, she is ours.

POLYDAON
Therops and thou, Perissus, stand in front
And keep the people off, or they will tear her,
Defraud Poseidon.

PERISSUS
Cheer up, my princess, come!
You shall be cleanly killed.

THEROPS
People of Syria,
Rob not Poseidon of his own! ’tis not the way
To turn his anger.

VOICES
Right, right! leave her to Poseidon: out with her to the sea-
monster.

GARDAS
Therops is always right.

DAMOETES
We will have her first: we will dress his banquet for him: none
shall say us nay.
MORUS
Good; we will show Poseidon some excellent cookery. Ho, ho, ho!

MEGAS
No, no, no! To the rocks with her! Strip her, the fine dainty princess, and hang her up in chains on the cliff-face.

A WOMAN
Strip her! Off with her broidered robe and her silken tunic! Why should she wear such, when my daughter carries only coarse woollen?

A WOMAN (shaking her fist)
Curse the white child’s face of thee: it has ruined Syria. Die, dog’s daughter.

DAMOETES
Is she to die only once who has killed so many of us? I say, tie her to one of these pillars and flog her till she drops.

MORUS
That’s right, skin her with whips: peel her for the monster, ho, ho, ho!

BALTIS
Leave her: Hell’s tortures shall make the account even.

POLYDAON
In order, children: let all be done in order.

THEROPS
She droops like a bruised flower beneath their curses, And the tears lace her poor pale cheeks like frost Glittering on snowdrops. I am sorry now I had a hand in this.
ANDROMEDA
You two have faces
Less cruel than the others. I am willing
To die, — oh, who would live to be so hated?
But do not let them shame or torture me.

PERISSUS
Off! off! thick-brained dogs, loud-lunged asses! What do you do, yelping and braying here? Will you give a maimed meal to Poseidon’s manhound? Do you know me not? Have you never heard of Perissus, never seen Perissus the butcher? I guard Poseidon’s meat, and whoever touches a morsel of it, I will make meat of him with my cleaver. I am Perissus, I am the butcher.

VOICES
It is Perissus, the good and wealthy butcher. He is right. To the rocks with her!

VOICES OF WOMEN
Bind her first: we will see her bound!

PERISSUS
In all that is rational, I will indulge you.
Where is a cord?

CRIES
A cord, who has a cord?

DAMOETES
Here is one, Perissus. ’Tis rough and strong and sure.

PERISSUS
Come, wear your bracelets.

ANDROMEDA
O bind me not so hard!
You cut my wrists.

She weeps.
PERISSUS
You are too soft and tender.
There, dry your eyes,—but that, poor slip, you cannot.
See, I have tied you very lightly: say not
That this too hurts.

ANDROMEDA
I thank you; you are kind.

PERISSUS
Kind! Why should I not be kind? Because I am a butcher must
I have no bowels? Courage, little Princess: none shall hurt thee
but thy sea-monster and he, I am sure, will crunch thy little
bones very tenderly. Never had man-eater such sweet bones to
crunch. Alack! but where is the remedy?

POLYDAON
Now take her to the beach and chain her there
Upon the rocks to bear her punishment.
Perissus, lead her forth! We’ll follow you.

CRIES
Not I! not I!

 DAMOETES
You’d kill us, Polydaon?
Poseidon’s anger walks by the sea-beaches.

POLYDAON
The fierce sea-dragon will not hurt you, friends,
Who bring a victim to Poseidon’s altar
Of the rude solemn beaches. I’ll protect you.

CRIES
We’ll go with Polydaon! with the good Polydaon!

POLYDAON
Perissus, go before. We’ll quickly come.
PERISSUS
Make way there or I'll make it with my cleaver.
Heart, little Princess! None shall touch thee. Heart!

Perissus and others make their way out with Andromeda.

POLYDAON
Hem, people, hem the Palace in with myriads:
We'll pluck out Cepheus and proud Cassiopea.

CRIES
Kill Cepheus the cuckold, the tyrant! Tear the harlot Cassiopea.

THEROPS
Is this thy sacred oath? Had not Nebassar
Thy compact, priest?

POLYDAON
I swore not by Poseidon.
Wilt thou oppose me?

THEROPS
Thy perjury too much
Favours my private wishes. Yet would I not
Be thou with such a falsehood on my conscience.

POLYDAON
Why, Therops, be thyself and thou shalt yet
Be something great in Syria.

DAMOETES
Where’s Iolaus?
Shall he not also die?

POLYDAON
Too long forgotten!
O that I should forget my dearest hatred!
By this he has concealed himself or fled
And I am baulked of what I chiefly cherished.

THEROPS
Oh, do them justice! the great house of Syria
Were never cowards. The prince has been o’erwhelmed
On his way hither with rash sword to rescue:
So Aligattas tells, who came behind us.
He’s taken to the temple.

POLYDAON
Heard you?

MOB
Hurrah!

BALTIS
But what’s the matter now with our good priest?
His veins are all out and his face is blood-red!

DAMOETES
This joy is too great for him.

POLYDAON
I am a god,
A god of blood and roaring victory.
Oh, blood in rivers! His heart out of his breast,
And his mother there to see it! and I to laugh
At her, to laugh!

THEROPS
This is not sanity.

POLYDAON (controlling himself with a great effort)
The sacrilegious house is blotted out
Of Cepheus. Let not one head outlive their ending!
Andromeda appoints the way to Hades
Act IV, Scene 3

Who was in crime the boldest, then her brother
Yells on the altar: last Cepheus and his Queen—

CRIES
Tear her! let the Chaldean harlot die.

POLYDAON
She shall be torn! but not till she has seen
The remnants of the thing that was her daughter:
Not till her sweet boy’s heart has been plucked out
Under her staring eyes from his red bosom.
Till then she shall not die. But afterwards
Strew with her fragments every street of the city.

CRIES
Hear, hear Poseidon’s Viceroy, good Polydaon!

MEGAS
In! in! cut off their few and foreign swordsmen.

CRIES
In! in! let not a single Chaldean live.

\textit{The mob rushes into the Palace; only Therops and Polydaon remain.}

POLYDAON
Go, Therops, take good care of Cassiopea,
Or she will die too mercifully soon.

THEROPS (aside)
How shall we bear this grim and cruel beast
For monarch, when all’s done? He is not human.

\textit{He goes into the Palace.}

POLYDAON
I have set Poseidon’s rage in human hearts;
His black and awful Influence flows from me.
Thou art a mighty god, Poseidon, yet
And mightily thou hast avenged thyself.
The drama’s nearly over. Now to ring out
The royal characters amid fierce howlings
And splendid, pitiless, crimson massacre,—
A great finale! Then, then I shall be King.

(As he speaks, he gesticulates more wildly
and his madness gains upon him.)

Thou luckless Phineus, wherefore didst thou leave
So fortunate a man for thy ally?
The world shall long recall King Polydaon.
I will paint Syria gloriously with blood.
Hundreds shall daily die to incarnadine
The streets of my city and my palace floors,
For I would walk in redness. I'll plant my gardens
With heads instead of lilacs. Hecatombs
Of men shall groan their hearts out for my pleasure
In crimson rivers. I'll not wait for shipwrecks.
Assyrian captives and my Syrian subjects,
Nobles and slaves, men, matrons, boys and virgins
At matins and at vespers shall be slain
To me in my magnificent high temple
Beside my thunderous Ocean. I will possess
Women each night, who the next day shall die,
Encrimsoned richly for the eyes' delight.
My heart throngs out in words! What moves within me?
I am athirst, magnificently athirst,
And for a red and godlike wine. Whence came
The thirst on me? It was not here before.
'Tis thou, 'tis thou, O grand and grim Poseidon,
Hast made thy scarlet session in my soul
And growest myself. I am not Polydaon,
I am a god, a mighty dreadful god,
The multitudinous mover in the sea,
The shaker of the earth: I am Poseidon
And I will walk in three tremendous paces
Climbing the mountains with my clamorous waters
And see my dogs eat up Andromeda,
My enemy, and laugh in my loud billows.
The clamour of battle roars within the Palace!
I have created it, I am Poseidon.
Sitst thou, my elder brother, charioted
In clouds? Look down, O brother Zeus, and see
My actions! they merit thy immortal gaze.

*He goes into the Palace.*
Scene 4

On the road to the sea-shore.
Phineus and his Tyrians.

PHINEUS
A mightier power confounds our policies.
Is’t Heaven? is’t Fate? What’s left me, I will take.
’Tis best to rescue young Andromeda
From the wild mob and bear her home to Tyre.
She, when the roar is over, will be left
My claim to Syria’s prostrate throne, which force,
If not diplomacy shall re-erect
And Tyre become the Syrian capital.
I hear the trampling of the rascal mob.

CRIES OUTSIDE
Drag her more quickly! To the rocks! to the rocks!
Glory to great Poseidon!

PHINEUS
Tyrians, be ready.
Perissus and a number of Syrians
enter leading Andromeda bound.

SYRIANS
To the rocks with her, to the rocks! bind her on the rocks.

PHINEUS
Pause, rabble! Yield your prey to Tyrian Phineus.
Lift up thy lovely head, Andromeda!
For thou art saved.
PERISSUS
Who art thou with thy nose and thy fellows and thy spits?

PHINEUS
Knowst thou me not? I am the royal Phineus.
Yield up the Princess, fair Andromeda.

PERISSUS
Art thou the royal Phineus and is this long nose thy sceptre? I am Perissus, the butcher. Stand aside, royal Phineus, or I will chop thee royally with my cleaver.

ANDROMEDA
What wilt thou with me, King of Tyre?

PHINEUS
Sweet rose,
I come to save thee. I will carry thee,
My bride, far from these savage Syrian tumults
To reign in loyal Tyre. Thou art safe.

ANDROMEDA (sorrowfully)
Safe!
My father and my mother are not safe
Nor Iolauus: nor is Syria safe.
Will you protect my people, when the god,
Not finding me, his preferable victim,
Works his fierce will on these?

PHINEUS
Thou car’st for them?
They have o’erwhelmed thee with foul insult, bound thee,
Threatened thy lovely limbs with rascal outrage
And dragged to murder!

ANDROMEDA
But they are my people.
Perissus, lead me on. I will not go with him.

PHINEUS
Thou strange and beautiful and marvellous child,
Wilt thou or wilt thou not, by force I'll have thee.
Golden enchantment! thou art too rare a thing
For others to possess. Run, rascal rabble!
On, Tyrians!

PERISSUS
Cleavers and axes to their spits!

ANDROMEDA
King Phineus, pause! I swear I will prefer
Death's grim embrace rather than be thy wife
Abandoning my people. 'Tis a dead body
Thou wilt rescue.

PHINEUS
Is thy resolve unshakable?

ANDROMEDA
It is.

PHINEUS
Die then! To Death alone I yield thee.

PERISSUS
So then thou art off, royal Phineus! so thou hast evaporated,
bold god of the Hittites! Thou hast saved thy royal nose from
my cleaver.

SYRIANS
On to the rocks! Glory to great Poseidon.

*He goes out with his Tyrians.*

*They go leading Andromeda.*
Scene 5

The sea-shore.
Andromeda, dishevelled, bare-armed and unsandalled, stripped of all but a single light robe, stands on a wide low ledge under a rock jutting out from the cliff with the sea washing below her feet. She is chained to the rock behind her by her wrists and ankles, her arms stretched at full length against its side. Polydaon, Perissus, Damoetes and a number of Syrians stand near on the great rocky platform projecting from the cliff of which the ledge is the extremity.

POLYDAON
There meditate affronts to dire Poseidon.
Rescue thyself, thou rescuer of victims!
I am sorry that thy marriage, sweet Andromeda,
So poorly is attended. I could have wished
To have all Syria gazing at thy nuptials
With thy rare Ocean bridegroom! Thy mother most
Should have been here to see her lovely princess
So meetly robed for bridal, with these ornaments
Upon her pretty hands and feet. She has
Affairs too pressing. We do some surgery
Upon thy brother Iolaus’ heart
To draw the bad blood out and make it holy,
And she must watch the skilful operation.
Do not weep, fair one. Soon, be confident,
They’ll meet thee in that wide house where all are going.
Think of these things until thy lover comes.
Farewell.

PERISSUS
Art thou mad, priest Polydaon? How thou grinnest and drawest
back thy black lips from thy white teeth in thy rapture! Hast thou gone clean mad, my skilful carver of hearts! art thou beside thyself, my ancient schoolmate and crony?

SYRIANS
To the temple! To the temple!

POLYDAON
Let one remain above the cliff
And watch the monster’s advent and his going.
Till I have news of dead Andromeda
The sacrifice cannot begin. Who stays?

DAMOETES
Not I!

ALL
Nor I! nor I! nor I!

DAMOETES
As well stay here with the girl and be torn with her!

PERISSUS
Do you quake, my brave shouters? must you curl your tails in between your manly legs? I will stay, priest, who fear neither dog nor dragon. I am Perissus, I am the butcher.

POLYDAON
I’ll not forget thy service, good Perissus.

PERISSUS
Will you then make me butcher-in-chief to your viceroy in Damascus and shall I cut my joints under the patronage of King Polydaon? To the temple, Syrian heroes! I will go and cross my legs on the cliff-top.

They go. Andromeda is left alone.
Curtain
Act V

Scene 1

The sea-shore.  
Andromeda chained to the cliff.

ANDROMEDA
O iron-throated vast un pitying sea,
Whose borders touch my feet with their cold kisses
As if they loved me! yet from thee my death
Will soon arise, and in some monstrous form
To tear my heart with horror before my body.
I am alone with thee on this wild beach
Filled with the echo of thy roaring waters.
My fellowmen have cast me out: they have bound me
Upon thy rocks to die. These cruel chains
Weary the arms they keep held stiffly out
Against the rough cold jagged stones. My bosom
Hardly contains its thronging sobs; my heart
Is torn with misery: for by my act
My father and my mother are doomed to death,
My dear kind brother, my sweet Iolaus,
Will cruelly be slaughtered; by my act
A kingdom ends in miserable ruin.
I thought to save two fellowmen: I have slain
A hundred by their rescue. I have failed
In all I did and die accursed and hated.
I die alone and miserably, no heart
To pity me: only your hostile waves
Are listening to my sobs and laughing hoarsely
With cruel pleasure. Heaven looks coldly on.
Yet I repent not. O thou dreadful god!
Yes, thou art dreadful and most mighty; perhaps
This world will always be a world of blood
And smiling cruelty, thou its fit sovereign.
But I have done what my own heart required of me,
And I repent not. Even if after death
Eternal pain and punishment await me
And gods and men pursue me with their hate,
I have been true to myself and to my heart,
I have been true to the love it bore for men,
And I repent not.

She is silent for a while.

Alas! is there no pity for me? Is there
No kind bright sword to save me in all this world?
Heaven with its cold unpitying azure roofs me,
And the hard savage rocks surround: the deaf
And violent Ocean roars about my feet,
And all is stony, all is cold and cruel.
Yet I had dreamed of other powers. Where art thou,
O beautiful still face amid the lightnings,
Athene? Does a mother leave her child?
And thou, bright stranger, wert thou only a dream?
Wilt thou not come down glorious from thy sun,
And cleave my chains, and lift me in thine arms
To safety? I will not die! I am too young,
And life was recently so beautiful.
It is too hard, too hard a fate to bear.

She is silent, weeping. Cydone enters: she comes
and sits down at Andromeda's feet.

CYDONE
How beautiful she is, how beautiful!
Her tears bathe all her bosom. O cruel Syrians!

ANDROMEDA
What gentle touch is on my feet? Who art thou?
Act V, Scene 1

CYDONE
I am Cydone. Iolaus loves me.

ANDROMEDA
My brother! lives he yet?

CYDONE
He lives, dear sweetness, And sent me to you.

ANDROMEDA (joyfully)
It was a cruel lie! He’s free?

CYDONE
No, bound and in the temple. Weep not.

ANDROMEDA
Alas! And you have left him there alone?

CYDONE
The gods are with him, sister. In a few hours We shall be all together and released From these swift perils.

ANDROMEDA
Together and released! Oh yes, in death.

CYDONE
I bid you hope. O child, How beautiful you are, how beautiful, Iolaus’ sister! This one white slight garment Fluttering about you in the ocean winds, You look like some wind-goddess chained in play By frolic sisters on the wild sea-beaches. I think all this has happened, little sister,
Just that the gods might have for one brief hour
You for a radiant vision of childish beauty
Exposed against this wild stupendous background.

ANDROMEDA
You make me smile in spite of all my grief.
Did you not bid me hope, Cydone?

CYDONE
And now
I bid you trust: for you are saved.

ANDROMEDA
I am.
I feel it now.

CYDONE
Your name’s Andromeda?

ANDROMEDA
Iolaus calls me so.

CYDONE
I think he cheats me.
You are Iolaus changed into a girl.
Come, I will kiss you dumb for cheating me
With changes of yourself.

Kisses her.

If I could have
My Iolaus always chained like this
To do my pleasure with, I would so plague him!
For he abuses me and calls me shrew,
Monster and vixen and names unbearable,
Because he’s strong and knows I cannot beat him.

ANDROMEDA
The world is changed about me.
Act V, Scene 1

CYDONE

Heaven’s above.
Look up and see it.

ANDROMEDA

There is a golden cloud
Moving towards me.

CYDONE

It is Perseus. Sweetheart,
I go to Iolaüs in the temple,—
I mean your other fair boy-self. Kiss me,
O sweet girl-Iolaüs, and fear nothing.

She goes out over the rocks.

ANDROMEDA

I shall be saved! What is this sudden trouble
That lifts the bosom of the tossing deep,
Hurling the waves against my knees? Save me!
Where art thou gone, Cydone? Cydone?
What huge head
Rises itself on the affrighted seas?
Where art thou, O my saviour? Come! His eyes
Glare up at me from the grey Ocean trough
Hideous with brutish longing. Like great sharp rocks
His teeth are in a bottomless dim chasm.

She closes her eyes in terror. Perseus enters.

PERSEUS

Look up, O sunny-curled Andromeda!
Perseus, the son of Danaë, is with thee
To whom thou now belongest. Fear no more
Sea-monsters nor the iron-souled Poseidon,
Nor the more monstrous flinty-hearted rabble
Who bound thee here. This huge and grisly enemy
That rises from the flood, need not affright thee.
Thou art as safe as if thy mother’s arms
Contained thee in thy brilliant guarded palace
When all was calm, O white Andromeda!
Lift up thy eyes' long curtains: aid the azure
With thy regards, O sunshine. Look at me
And see thy safety.

ANDROMEDA
O thou hast come to me!
It was not only a radiant face I dreamed of.

PERSEUS
In time to save thee, my Andromeda,
Sole jewel of the world. I go to meet
Thy enemy, confronting grim Poseidon.

ANDROMEDA
O touch me ere you go that I may feel
You are real.

PERSEUS
Let my kiss, sweet doubting dreamer,
Convince thee. Now I dart like a swift hawk
Upon my prey and smite betwixt the billows.
Watch how I fight for thee. I will come soon
To gather thee into my grasp, my prize
Of great adventure.

He goes out.

ANDROMEDA
The music of his name
Was in my brain just now. What must I call thee?
Perseus, the son of Danaë! Perseus!
Perseus, Athene’s sword! Perseus, my sungod!
O human god of glad Andromeda!
Forgive, Athene, my lack of faith. Thou art!
How like a sudden eagle he has swooped
Upon the terror, that lifts itself alarmed,
Swings its huge length along the far-ridged billows
And upwards yawns its rage. O great Athene!
It belches fiery breath against my Perseus
And lashes Ocean in his face. The sea
Is tossed upon itself and its huge bottoms
Catch chinks of unaccustomed day. But the aegis
Of Perseus hurls the flame-commingled flood
Back in the dragon’s eyes: it shoots its lightnings
Into the horizon like fire-trailing arrows.
The world surprised with light gazes dismayed
Upon the sea-surrounded war, ringed in
With foam and flying tumult. O glorious sight,
Too swift and terrible for human eyes!
I will pray rather. Virgin, beautiful
Athene, virgin-mother of my soul!
I cannot lift my hands to thee, they are chained
To the wild cliff, but lift my heart instead,
Virgin, assist thy hero in the fight.
Descend, armipotent maiden, child of Zeus,
Shoot from his godlike brain the strength of will
That conquers evil: in one victorious stroke
Collecting hurl it on the grisly foe.
Thou, thou art sword and shield, and thou the force
That uses shield and sword, virgin Athene.
The tumult ceases and the floods subside.
I dare not look. And yet I will. O death,
Thou tossest there inertly on the flood,
A floating mountain. Perseus comes to me
Touching the waves with airy-sandalled feet,
Bright and victorious.

Perseus returns.

PERSEUS
The grisly beast is slain that was thy terror,
And thou mayst sun the world with smiles again,
Andromeda.
ANDROMEDA
Thou hast delivered me, O Perseus, Perseus,
My sovereign!

PERSEUS
Girl, I take into my arms
My own that I have won and with these kisses
Seal to me happy head and smiling eyes,
Bright lips and all of thee, thou sunny Syrian.
All thy white body is a hero’s guerdon.

ANDROMEDA
Perseus!

PERSEUS
Sweetly thou tak’st my eager kisses
With lovely smiles and glorious blushing cheeks
Rejoicing in their shame.

ANDROMEDA
I am chained, Perseus,
And cannot help myself.

PERSEUS
O smile of sweetness!
I will unravel these unworthy bonds
And rid thee of the cold excuse.

ANDROMEDA
My chains?
They do not hurt me now, and I would wear them
A hundred times for such a happy rescue.

PERSEUS
Thou tremblest yet!
ANDROMEDA

Some sweet and sudden fear
O’ertakes me! O what is it? I dare not look
Into thy radiant eyes.

PERSEUS

Sweet tremors, grow
Upon her. Never shall harsher fears again
O’ertake you, rosy limbs, in Perseus’ keeping.
How fair thou art, my prize Andromeda!
O sweet chained body, chained to love not death,
That with a happy passiveness endures
My touch, once more, once more. And now fall down
Clashing into the deep, you senseless irons,
That took a place my kisses only merit.
Princess of Syria, child of imperial Cepheus,
Step forward free.

ANDROMEDA (falling at his feet and embracing them)

O Perseus, O my saviour!
Wilt thou not also save those dear to me
And make this life thou givest worth the giving?
My father, mother, brother, all I love,
Lie for my fault shuddering beneath the knife.

PERSEUS

It was a glorious fault, Andromeda.
Tremble not for thy loved ones. Wilt thou trust
Thy cherished body in my arms to bear
Upward, surprising Heaven with thy beauty?
Or wilt thou fear to see the blue wide Ocean
Between thy unpropped feet, fathoms below?

ANDROMEDA

With you I fear not.
PERSEUS

Cling to me then, sweet burden,
And we will meet our enemies together.

He puts his arms round her to lift
her and the curtain falls.
Scene 2

The Temple of Poseidon.
Polydaios, Therops, Dercetes, Cydone, Damoetes and a great number of Syrians, men and women. Iolaus stands bound, a little to the side: Cepheus and Cassiopea, surrounded by armed men.

POLYDAON
Cepheus and Cassiopea, man and woman,
Not sovereigns now, you see what end they have
Who war upon the gods.

CASSIOPEA
To see thy end
My eyes wait only.

POLYDAON
Let them see something likelier.
Is’t not thy son who wears those cords, and that
An altar? What! the eyes are drowned in tears
Where fire was once so ready? Where is thy pride,
O Cassiopea?

CASSIOPEA
There are other gods
Than thy Poseidon. They shall punish thee.

POLYDAON
If thou knewst who I am, which is most secret,
Thou wouldst not utter vain and foolish wishes.
When thou art slain, I will reveal myself.
CASSIOPEA
Thou hast revealed thyself for what thou art
Already, a madman and inhuman monster.

CEPHEUS
My queen, refrain from words.

DAMOETES
Perissus comes.

CASSIOPEA
Ah God!

THEROPS
Look, the Queen swoons! Oh, look to her!

Perissus enters.

POLYDAON
Yes, raise her up, bring back her senses: now
I would not have them clouded. News, Perissus!
Thy face is troubled and thy eyes stare wildly.

PERISSUS
Stare, do they? They may stare, for they have cause.
You too will stare soon, Viceroy Polydaon.

THEROPS
What rare thing happened? The heavens were troubled strangely,
Although their rifts were blue. What hast thou seen?

PERISSUS
I have seen hell and heaven at grips together.

POLYDAON
What do I care for hell or heaven? Your news!
Did the sea-monster come and eat and go?
PERISSUS
He came but went not.

POLYDAON
Was not the maiden seized?

PERISSUS
Ay, was she, in a close and mighty grasp.

POLYDAON
By the sea-beast?

PERISSUS
'Tis said we all are animals;
Then so was he: but 'twas a glorious beast.

POLYDAON
And was she quite devoured?

PERISSUS
Why, in a manner, —
If kisses eat.

POLYDAON
Ha! ha! such soft caresses
May all my enemies have. She was not torn?
What, was she taken whole and quite engulfed?

PERISSUS
Something like that.

POLYDAON
You speak with difficult slowness
And strangely. Where's your blithe robustness gone,
Perissus?
PERISSUS
  Coming, with the beast. He lifted her
Mightily from the cliff to heaven.

POLYDAON
  So, Queen,
Nothing is left thee of Andromeda.

PERISSUS
  Why, something yet, a sweet and handsome piece.

POLYDAON
  You should have brought it here, my merry butcher,
  That remnant of her daughter.

PERISSUS
  It is coming.

POLYDAON
  Ho, ho! then you shall see your daughter, Queen.

DERCETES
  This is a horrid and inhuman laughter.
  Restraine thy humour, priest! My sword’s uneasy.

THEROPS
  It is a scandal in Poseidon’s temple.

POLYDAON
  Do you oppose me?
  (to Therops)
  Wilt thou resist Poseidon,
  Misguided mortal?

DERCETES
  He glares and his mouth works.
  This is a maniac. Does a madman rule us?
Act V, Scene 2

THEROPS
There has been much of violence and mad fierceness,
Such as in tumults may be pardoned. Now
It is the tranquil hour of victory
When decency should reign and mercy too.
What do we gain by torturing this poor Queen
And most unhappy King?

POLYDAON
Hear him, O people!
He favours great Poseidon’s enemies.
Therops turns traitor.

DAMOETES
He rails at the good priest.

CRIES
Therops a traitor!

MEGAS
Therops, thou favour kings?
Thou traitor to Poseidon and his people?

GARDAS
I say, hear Therops. He is always right,
Our Therops; he has brains.

CRIES
Hear Therops, Therops!

THEROPS
Let them be punished, but with exile only.
I am no traitor. I worked for you, O people,
When this false priest was with the King of Tyre
Plotting to lay on you a foreign chain.
cries
Is it so? Is it the truth? Speak, Polydaon.

Polydaon
Must I defend myself? Was it not I
Who led you on to victory and turned
The wrath of dire Poseidon? If you doubt me,
Be then the sacrifice forbidden; let Cepheus
And Cassiopea reign; but when the dogs
Of grim Poseidon howl again behind you,
Call not to me for help. I will not always pardon.

cries
Polydaon, Polydaon, Poseidon's mighty Viceroy! Kill Therops!
Iolaus upon the altar!

Polydaon
Now you are wise again. Leave this Therops.
Bring Iolaus to the altar here.
Lay bare his bosom for the knife.

Therops
Shall this be allowed?

Dercetes
We must not dare offend
Poseidon. But when it's over, I'll break in
With all my faithful spears and save the King
And Cassiopea. Therops, 'twould be a nightmare,
The rule of that fierce priest and fiercer rabble.

Therops
With all the better sort I will support thee.

Perissus
Therops, my crowd-compeller, my eloquent Zeus of the marketplace, I know thy heart is big with the sweet passion of
repentance, but let it not burst into action yet. Keep thy fleet
sharp spears at rest, Dercetes. There are times, my little captain,
and there is a season. Watch and wait. The gods are at work
and Iolaus shall not die.

POLYDAON
We only wait until our mighty wrath
Is shown you in the mangled worst offender
Against our godhead. Then, O Cassiopea,
I'll watch thy eyes.

PERISSUS
Behold her, Polydaon.

Perseus and Andromeda enter the temple.

cries
Andromeda! Andromeda! who has unchained her? It is An-

Dercetes
'Tis he who baffled us upon the beach.
I see the gods are busy in our Syria.

Andromeda runs to Cassiopea and clasps and kisses
her knees, the soldiers making way for her.

CASSIOPEA (taking Andromeda's face between her hands)
O my sweet child, thou livest!
ANDROMEDA
Mother, mother!
I live and see the light and grief is ended.

CASSIOPEA (lifting Andromeda into her arms)
I hold thee living on my bosom. What grief
Can happen now?

CEPHEUS
Andromeda, my daughter!

POLYDAON (awaking from his amazement)
Confusion! Butcher, thou hast betrayed me. Seize them!
They shall all die upon my mighty altar.
Seize them!

PERSEUS (confronting him)
Priest of Poseidon and of death,
Three days thou gav’st me: it is but the second.
I am here. Dost thou require the sacrifice?

POLYDAON
Art thou a god? I am a greater, dreadfuller.
Tremble and go from me: I need thee not.

PERSEUS
Expect thy punishment. Syrians, behold me,
The victim snatched from grim Poseidon’s altar.
My sword has rescued sweet Andromeda
And slain the monster of the deep. You asked
For victims? I am here. Whose knife is ready?
Let him approach.

THEROPS
Who art thou, mighty hero?
Declare unto this people thy renown
And thy unequalled actions. What high godhead
Befriends thee in battle?

PERSEUS

Syrians, I am Perseus,
The mighty son of Zeus and Danaë.
The blood of gods is in my veins, the strength
Of gods is in my arm: Athene helps me.
Behold her aegis, which if I uncover
Will blind you with its lightnings; and this sword
Is Herpe, which can pierce the earth and Hades.
What I have done, is by Athene's strength.
Borne from Seriphos through pellucid air
Upon these wingèd shoes, in the far west
I have traversed unknown lands and nameless continents
And seas where never came the plash of human oars.
On torrid coasts burned by the desert wind
I have seen great Atlas buttressing the sky,
His giant head companion of the stars,
And changed him into a hill; the northern snows
Ilimitable I have trod, where Nature
Is awed to silence, chilled to rigid whiteness;
I have entered caverns dim where death was born:
And I have taken from the dim-dwelling Graiae
Their wondrous eye that sees the past and future:
And I have slain the Gorgon, dire Medusa,
Her head that turns the living man to stone
Locking into my wallet: last, today,
In Syria by the loud Aegean surges
I have done this deed that men shall ever speak of.
Ascending with winged feet the clamorous air
I have cloven Poseidon's monster whose rock-teeth
And fiery mouth swallowed your sons and daughters.
Where now has gone the sea-god's giant stride
That filled with heads of foam your fruitful fields?
I have dashed back the leaping angry waters;
His Ocean-force has yielded to a mortal.
Even while I speak, the world has changed around you.
Syrians, the earth is calm, the heavens smile;
A mighty silence listens on the sea.
All this I have done, and yet not I, but one greater.
Such is Athene's might and theirs who serve her.
You know me now, O Syrians, and my strength
I have concealed not. Let no man hereafter
Complain that I deceived him to his doom.
Speak now. Which of you all demands a victim?

He pauses: there is silence.

What, you have howled and maddened, bound sweet women
For slaughter, roared to have the hearts of princes,
And are you silent now? Who is for victims?
Who sacrifices Perseus?

THEROPS

Speak! is there
A fool so death-devoted?

PERSEUS

Claims any man victims?

CRIES

There's none, great Perseus.

PERSEUS

Then, I here release
Andromeda and Iolaus, Syrians,
From the death-doom: to Cepheus give his crown
Once more. Does any man gainsay my action?
Would any rule in Syria?

CRIES

None, mighty Perseus.

PERSEUS

Iolaus, sweet friend, my work is finished.

He severs his bonds.
IOLAUS
O mighty father, suffer me for thee
To take thy crown from the unworthy soil
Where rude hands tumbled it. 'Twill now sit steady.
Dercetes, art thou loyal once again?

DERCETES
For ever.

IOLAUS
Therops?

THEROPS
I have abjured rebellion.

IOLAUS
Lead then my royal parents to their home
With martial pomp and music. And let the people
Cover their foul revolt with meek obedience.
One guiltiest head shall pay your forfeit: the rest,
Since terror and religious frenzy moved
To mutiny, not their sober wills, shall all
Be pardoned.

CRIES
Iolaus! Iolaus!
Long live the Syrian, noble Iolaus!

IOLAUS
Andromeda, and thou, my sweet Cydone,
Go with them.

CEPHEUS
I approve thy sentence, son.

Dercetes and his soldiers, Therops and the
Syrians leave the temple conducting Cepheus
and Cassiopea, Andromeda and Cydone.
IOLAUS
Now, Polydaon, —

POLYDAON
I have seen all and laughed.
Iolaus, and thou, O Argive Perseus,
You know not who I am. I have endured
Your foolish transient triumph that you might feel
My punishments more bitter-terrible.
'Tis time, 'tis time. I will reveal myself.
Your horror-starting eyes shall know me, princes,
When I hurl death and Ocean on your heads.

PERSEUS
The man is frantic.

IOLAUS
Defeat has turned him mad.

PERISSUS
I have seen this coming on him for a season and a half. He was a fox at first, but this tumult gave him claws and muscles and he turned tiger. This is the end. What, Polydaon! Good cheer, priest! Roll not thy eyes: I am thy friend Perissus, I am thy old loving schoolmate; are we not now fellow-craftsmen, priest and butcher?

POLYDAON
Do you not see? I wave my sapphire locks
And earth is quaking. Quake, earth! rise, my great Ocean!
Earth, shake my foemen from thy back! clasp, sea,
And kiss them dead, thou huge voluptuary.
Come barking from your stables, my sweet monsters:
With blood-stained fangs and fiery mouths avenge me
Mocking their victory. Thou, brother Zeus,
Rain curses from thy skies. What, is all silent?
I'll tear thee, Ocean, into watery bits
And strip thy oozy basal rocks quite naked
If thou obey me not.

IOLAUS (advancing)
He must be seized
And bound.

PERSEUS
Pause. See, he foams and clutches!
Polydaon falls to the ground.
He
Is sentenced.

PERISSUS
Polydaon, old crony, grows thy soul too great within thee? dost thou kick the unworthy earth and hit out with thy noble fists at Heaven?

IOLAUS
It was a fit; it is over. He lies back white
And shaking.

POLYDAON (As he speaks, his utterance is hacked by pauses of silence. He seems unconscious of those around him, his being is withdrawing from the body and he lives only in an inner consciousness and its vision.)
I was Poseidon but this moment.
Now he departs from me and leaves me feeble:
I have become a dull and puny mortal.
(half rising)
It was not I but thou who fearest, god.
I would have spoken, but thou wert chilled and stone.
What fearest thou or whom? Wast thou alarmed
By the godhead lurking in man’s secret soul
Or deity greater than thy own appalled thee?
Forgive, forgive! pass not away from me.
Thy power is now my breath and I shall perish
If thou withdraw.... He stands beside me still
Shaking his gloomy locks and glares at me
Saying it was my sin and false ambition
Undid him. Was I not fearless as thou bad'st me?
Ah, he has gone into invisible
Vast silences!... Whose, whose is this bright glory?
One stands now in his place and looks at me.
Imperious is his calm Olympian brow,
The sea’s blue unfathom'd depths gaze from his eyes,
Wide sea-blue locks crown his majestic shape:
A mystic trident arms his tranquil might.
As one new-born to himself and to the world
He turns from me with the surges in his stride
To seek his Ocean empire. Earth bows down
Trembling with awe of his unbearable steps,
Heaven is the mirror of his purple greatness....
But whose was that dimmer and tremendous image?...
A horror of darkness is around me still,
But the joy and might have gone out of my breast
And left me mortal, a poor human thing
With whom death and the fates can do their will....
But his presence yet is with me, near to me....
Was I not something more than earthly man?...

(with a cry)
It was myself, the shadow, the hostile god!
I am abandoned to my evil self.
That was the darkness!... But there was something more
Insistent, dreadful, other than myself!
Whoever thou art, spare me!... I am gone, I am taken.
In his tremendous clutch he bears me off
Into thick cloud; I see black Hell, the knives
Fire-pointed touch my breast. Spare me, Poseidon....
Save me, O brilliant God, forgive and save.

He falls back dead.

PERSEUS
Who then can save a man from his own self?
IOLAUS
He is ended, his own evil has destroyed him.

PERSEUS
This man for a few hours became the vessel
Of an occult and formidable Force
And through his form it did fierce terrible things
Unhuman: but his small and gloomy mind
And impure dark heart could not contain the Force.
It turned in him to madness and demoniac
Huge longings. Then the Power withdrew from him
Leaving the broken incapable instrument,
And all its might was spilt from his body. Better
To be a common man mid common men
And live an unaspiring mortal life
Than call into oneself a Titan strength
Too dire and mighty for its human frame,
That only afflicts the oppressed astonished world,
Then breaks its user.

IOLAUS
But best to be Heaven’s child.
Only the sons of gods can harbour gods.

PERISSUS
Art thou then gone, Polydaon? My monarch of breast-hackers,
this was an evil ending. My heart is full of woe for thee, my
fellow-butcher.

IOLAUS
The gods have punished him for his offences,
Ambition and a hideous cruelty
Ingenious in mere horror.

PERSEUS
Burn him with rites,
If that may help his soul by dark Cocytus.
But let us go and end these strange upheavals:
Call Cireas from his hiding for reward,
Tyrnaus too, and Smerdas from his prison,
Fair Diomede from Cydone’s house.
Humble or high, let all have their deserts
Who partners were or causes of our troubles.

IOLAUS
There’s Phineus will ask reasons.

PERSEUS
He shall be satisfied.

PERISSUS
He cannot be satisfied, his nose is too long; it will not listen to reason, for it thinks all the reason and policy in the world are shut up in the small brain to which it is a long hooked outlet.

PERSEUS
Perissus, come with me: for thou wert kind
To my fair sweetness; it shall be remembered.

PERISSUS
There was nothing astonishing in that: I am as chock-full with natural kindness as a rabbit is with guts; I have bowels, great Perseus. For am I not Perissus? am I not the butcher?

They go out: the curtain falls.
Scene 3

*The audience-chamber of the Palace.*  
*Cepheus, Cassiopea, Andromeda, Cydone, Praxilla, Medes.*

**CEPHEUS**  
A sudden ending to our sudden evils  
Propitious gods have given us, Cassiopea.  
Pursued by panic the Assyrian flees  
Abandoning our borders.

**CASSIOPEA**  
And I have got  
My children’s faces back upon my bosom.  
What gratitude can ever recompense  
That godlike youth whose swift and glorious rescue  
Lifted us out of Hell so radiantly?

**CYDONE**  
He has taken his payment in one small white coin  
Mounted with gold; and more he will not ask for.

**CASSIOPEA**  
Your name’s Cydone, child? your face is strange.  
You are not of the slave-girls.

**CYDONE**  
O I am!  
Iolaus’ slave-girl, though he calls me sometimes  
His queen: but that is only to beguile me.

**ANDROMEDA**  
Oh, mother, you must know my sweet Cydone.
I shall think you love me little if you do not
Take her into your bosom: for she alone,
When I was lonely with my breaking heart,
Came to me with sweet haste and comforted
My soul with kisses, — yes, even when the terror
Was rising from the sea, surrounded me
With her light lovely babble, till I felt
Sorrow was not in the same world as she.
And but for her I might have died of grief
Ere rescue came.

CASSIOPEA
What wilt thou ask of me,
Even to a crown, Cydone? thou shalt have it.

CYDONE
Nothing, unless ’tis leave to stand before you
And be for ever Iolaus’ slave-girl
Unchidden.

CASSIOPEA
Thou shalt be more than that, my daughter.

CYDONE
I have two mothers: a double Iolaus
I had already. O you girl-Iolaus,
You shall not marry Perseus: you are mine now.
Oh, if you have learned to blush!

ANDROMEDA (stopping her mouth)
Hush, you mad babbler!
Or I will smother your wild mouth with mine.

Perseus and Iolaus enter.

CEPHEUS
O welcome, brilliant victor, mighty Perseus!
Saviour of Syria, angel of the gods,
Kind was the fate that led thee to our shores.

CASSIOPEA (embracing Iolaus)
Iolaus, Iolaus, my son!
My golden-haired delight they would have murdered!
Perseus, hast thou a mother?

PERSEUS
One like thee
In love, O Queen, though less in royalty.

CASSIOPEA
What can I give thee then who hast the world
To move in, thy courage and thy radiant beauty,
And a tender mother? Yet take my blessing, Perseus,
To help thee: for the mightiest strengths are broken
And divine favour lasts not long, but blessings
Of those thou helpest with thy kindly strength
Upon life's rugged way, can never fail thee.

CEPHEUS
And what shall I give, seed of bright Olympus?
Wilt thou have half my kingdom, Argive Perseus?

PERSEUS
Thy kingdom falls by right to Iolaus
In whom I shall enjoy it. One gift thou hadst
I might have coveted, but she is mine,
O monarch: I have taken her from death
For my possession.

CEPHEUS
My sunny Andromeda!
But there's the Tyrian: yet he gave her up
To death and cannot now reclaim her.
IOLAUSS

Father,
The Babylonian merchants wait, and Cireas:
The people’s leaders and thy army’s captains
Are eager to renew an interrupted
Obedience.

CEPHEUS

Admit them all to me: go, Medes.

As Medes goes out, Diomede enters.

ANDROMEDA

Diomede! playmate! you too have come quite safe
Out of the storm. I thought we both must founder.

DIOMede

Oh, yes, and now you’ll marry Perseus, leave me
No other playmate than Praxilla’s whippings
To keep me lively!

ANDROMEDA

Therefore ’tis you look
So discontent and sullen? Clear your face,
I’ll drag you to the world’s far end with me,
And take in my own hands Praxilla’s duty.
Will that please you?

DIOMede

As if your little hand could hurt!
I’m off, Praxilla, to pick scarlet berries
In Argolis and hear the seabirds’ cries
And Ocean singing to the Cyclades.
I’ll buy you brand new leather for a relic
To whip the memory of me with sometimes,
Praxilla.
Act V, Scene 3

PRAXILLA
You shall taste it then before you go.
You’ll make a fine fair couple of wilfulnesses.
I pity Perseus.

ANDROMEDA
You are well rid of us,
My poor Praxilla.

PRAXILLA
Princess, little Princess,
My hands will be lighter, but my heart too heavy.

Therops and Dercetes enter with the Captains of the army, Cireas, Tyrnaus and Smerdas.

ALL
Hail, you restored high royalties of Syria.

THEROPS
O King, accept us, be the past forgotten.

CEPHEUS
It is forgotten, Therops. Welcome, Dercetes.
Thy friend Nebassar is asleep. He has done His service for the day and taken payment.

CASSIOPEA
His blood is a deep stain on Syria’s bosom.

DERCETES
On us the stain lies, Queen: but we will drown it In native streams, when we go forth to scourge The Assyrian in his home.

THEROPS
Death for one’s King
Only less noble is than for one’s country.
This foreign soldier taught us that home lesson.

**CASSIOPEA**
Therops, there are kings still in Syria?

**THEROPS**

Great Queen,

Remember not my sins.

**CASSIOPEA**

They are buried deep, 
Thy bold rebellion, — even thy cruel slanders, 
If only thou wilt serve me as my friend 
True to thy people in me. Will this be hard for thee?

**THEROPS**

O noble lady, you pay wrongs with favours! 
I am yours for ever, I and all this people.

**CIREAS (to Diomede)**
This it is to be an orator! We shall hear him haranguing the people next market-day on fidelity to princes and the divine right of queens to have favourites.

**IOLAUSS**

Cireas, old bribe-taker, art thou living? Did Poseidon forget thee?

**CIREAS**

I pray you, Prince, remind me not of past foolishness. I have grown pious. I will never speak ill again of authorities and divinities.

**IOLAUSS**

Thou art grown ascetic? thou carest no longer then for gold? I am glad, for my purse will be spared a very heavy lightening.
_act v, scene 3

CIREAS
Prince, I will not suffer my young piety to make you break old promises; for if it is perilous to sin, it is worse to be the cause of sin in others.

IOLAUS
Thou shalt have gold and farms. I will absolve Andromeda’s promise and my own.

CIREAS
Great Plutus!
O happy Cireas!

IOLAUS
Merchant Tyrnaus, art thou for Chaldea?

TYRNAUS
When I have seen these troubles’ joyous end And your sweet princess, my young rescuer, Happily wedded.

IOLAUS
I will give thee a ship And merchandise enough to fill thy losses.

PERSEUS
And prayers with them, O excellent Chaldean. The world has need of men like thee.

SMYRNAS (aside) I quake.
What will they say to me? I shall be tortured And crucified. But she with her smile will save me.

IOLAUS
Smerdas, thou unclean treacherous coward soul!
SMERDAS
Alas, I was compelled by threats of torture.

IOLAUS
And tempted too with gold. Thy punishment
Shall hit thee in thy nature. Farmer Cireas!

CIREAS
Prince Plutus!

IOLAUS
Take thou this man for slave. He’s strong,
Work him upon thy fields and thy plantations.

SMERDAS
O this is worst of all.

IOLAUS
Not worse than thy desert.
For gold thou lustest? earn it for another.
Thou’lt save thy life? it is a freedman’s chattel.

SMERDAS
O speak for me, lady Andromeda!

ANDROMEDA
Dear Iolaus, —

CEPHEUS
My child, thou art all pity;
But justice has her seat, and her fine balance
Disturbed too often spoils an unripe world
With ill-timed mercy. Thy brother speaks my will.

IOLAUS
Thou hast increased thy crime by pleading to her
Whom thou betrayedst to her death. Art thou
Quite shameless? Hold thy peace!

**ANDROMEDA**
Grieve not too much.
Cireas will be kind to thee; wilt thou not, Cireas?

**CIREAS**
At thy command I will be even that
And even to him.

*Noise outside.*

**CEPHEUS**
What other dangerous clamour
Is at our gates?

*Perissus enters, brandishing his cleaver.*

**PERISSUS**
Pull out that sharp skewer of thine, comrade Perseus, or let me handle my cleaver.

**CEPHEUS**
Thou art angry, butcher? Who has disturbed thy noble serenity?

**PERISSUS**
King Cepheus, shall I not be angry? Art thou not again our majesty of Syria? And shall our majesty be insulted with noses? Shall it be prodded by a proboscis? Perseus, thou hast slaughtered yonder palaeozoic ichthyosaurus; wilt thou suffer me to chop this neozoan?

**PERSEUS**
Calmly, precisely and not so polysyllabically, my good Perissus. Tell the King what is this clamour.

**PERISSUS**
My monarch, Phineus of Tyre has brought his long-nosed royalty to thy gates and poke it he will into thy kingly presence.
His blusterings, King, have flustered my calm great heart within me.

CEPHEUS
Comes he alone?

PERISSUS
Damoetes and some scores more hang on to his long tail of hook-nosed Tyrians; but they are all rabble and proletariate, not a citizen butcher in the whole picking. They brandish skewers; they threaten to poke me with their dainty iron spits,—me, Perissus, me, the butcher!

CEPHEUS
Phineus in arms! This is the after-swell
Of tempest.

PERSEUS
Let the Phoenician enter, comrade.

Phineus enters the hall with a great company,
Tyrians with drawn swords, Damoetes, Morus and others; after them Perissus.

CEPHEUS
Welcome, Tyre.

CASSIOPEA
Thou breakest armed into our presence, Phineus.
Had they been earlier there, these naked swords Would have been welcome.

PHINEUS
I am not here for welcome,
Lady. King Cepheus, wilt thou yield me right,
Act V, Scene 3

Or shall I take it with my sword?

CEPHEUS

Phineus,
I never have withheld even from the meanest
The least thing he could call his right.

PHINEUS

Thou hast not?
Who gives then to a wandering Greek my bride,
Thy perfect daughter?

CASSIOPEA

She was in some peril,
When thou wert absent, Tyre.

PHINEUS

A vain young man,
A brilliant sworder wandering for a name,
Who calls himself the son of Danaë,
And who his father was, the midnight knows.
This is the lord thou giv’st Andromeda,
Scorning the mighty King of ancient Tyre.

CEPHEUS

He saved her from the death to which we left her,
And she was his,—his wife, if so he chose,
Or, conquered by the sword from grim Poseidon,
His then to take her as he would from that moment.

PHINEUS

Do his deeds or thy neglect annul thy promise?

IOLAUS

King Phineus, wilt thou take up and lay down
At pleasure? Who leaves a jewel in the mud,
Shall he complain because another took it?
PRAXILLA
And she was never his; she hated him.

PHINEUS
I'll hear no reasons, but with strong force have her,
Though it be to lift her o'er the dearest blood
Of all her kin. Tyrians!

Andromeda takes refuge with Perseus.
Abandon, princess,
The stripling bosom where thou tak'st thy refuge.
Thou hast mistook thy home, Andromeda.

IOLAUS
'Tis thou mistakest, Phineus, thinking her
A bride who, touched, shall be thy doom. Get hence
Unhurt.

PHINEUS
Prince Iolaus, the sword that cut
Thy contract to Poseidon, cuts not mine,—
Which if you void, thou and thy father pay for it.

PERSEUS
Phineus of Tyre, it may be thou art wronged,
But 'tis not at his hands whom thou impugnest.
Her father gave her not to me.

PHINEUS
Her mother then?
She is the man, I think, in Syria's household.

PERSEUS
Her too I asked not.

PHINEUS
Thou wooedst then the maid?
It shall not help thee though a thousand times
She kissed thee yes. Pretty Andromeda,
Wilt thou have for thy lord this vagabond,
Wander with him as beggars land and sea?
Despite thyself I'll save thee from that fate
Unworthy of thy beauty and thy sweetness,
And make thee Queen in Tyre. Minion of Argos,
Learn, ere thou grasp at other's goods, to ask
The owner, not the owned.

PERSEUS
I did not ask her.

PHINEUS
Then by what right, presumptuous, hast thou her?
Or wherefore lies she thus within thy arm?

PERSEUS
Say, by what right, King Phineus, thou wouldst take her,
Herself and all refusing?

PHINEUS
By my precontract.

PERSEUS
Thou gavest her to Death, that contract's broken.
Or if thou seekest to revoke thy gift,
Foregather then with Death and ask him for her.
The way to him is easy.

PHINEUS
Then by my sword,
Not asking her or any, because I am a king,
I'll take her.

PERSEUS
If the sword is the sole judge,
Then by my own sword I have taken her, Tyrian,
Not asking her or any, who am king
O’er her, her sovereign. This soft gold is mine
And mine these banks of silver; this rich country
Is my possession and owes to my strong taking
All her sweet revenues in honey. Phineus,
I wonder not that thou dost covet her
Whom the whole world might want. Wrest her from me,
Phoenician; to her father she belongs not.

(opening his wallet)
King Phineus, art thou ready? Yet look once more
On the blue sky and this green earth of Syria.

PHINEUS
Young man, thou hast done deeds I’ll not belittle.
Yet was it only a sea-beast and a rabble
Whom thou hast tamed; I am a prince and warrior.
Wilt thou fright me with thy aegis?

PERSEUS
Not fright, but end thee;
For thou hast spoken words deserving death.
Come forth into the open, this is no place
For battle. Marshal thy warlike crew against me,
And let thy Syrian mob-men help with shouts:
Stand in their front to lead them; I alone
Will meet their serried charge, Dercetes merely
Watching us.

PHINEUS
Thou art frantic with past triumphs:
Argive, desist. I would not rob thy mother
Of her sole joy, howe’er she came by thee.
The gods may punish her sweet midnight fault,
To whom her dainty trickery imputes it.

PERSEUS
Come now, lest here I slay thee.
Act V, Scene 3

PHINEUS
Thou art in love
With death: but I am pitiful, young Perseus;
Thou shalt not die. My men shall take thee living
And pedlars hawk thee for a slave in Tyre,
Where thou shalt see sometimes far off Andromeda,
A Queen of nations.

PERSEUS
Thou compassionate man!
But I will give thee, hero, marvellous death
And stone for monument, which thou deservest;
For thou wert a great King and famous warrior,
When still thou wert living. Forth and fight with me!
Afterwards if thou canst, come for Andromeda;
None shall oppose thy seizure. Behind me, captain,
So that the rabble here may not be tempted
To any treacherous stroke.

Phineus goes out with the Tyrians, Damoetes and the
Syrian favourers of Phineus, followed by Perseus and
Dercetes. Cireas behind them at a distance.

CEPHEUS
Sunbeam, I am afraid.

ANDROMEDA
I am not, father.

CEPHEUS
Alone against so many!

IOLAUS
Shall I go, father,
And stand by him?

CEPHEUS
He might be angry. Hark!
The voice of Phineus.

IOLAUS
He cries some confident order.

CEPHEUS
The Tyrians shout for onset; he is doomed.
   There is a moment’s pause, all listening, painfully.

IOLAUS
The shouts are stilled; there is a sudden hush.

CEPHEUS
What can it mean? This silence is appalling.

Dercetes returns.
What news? Thou treadest like one sleeping, captain.

DERCETES
O King, thy royal court is full of monuments.

CEPHEUS
What meanest thou? What happened? Where is Perseus?

DERCETES
King Phineus called to his men to take alive
The Greek; but as they charged, great Perseus cried,
“Close eyes, Dercetes, if thou car’st to live,”
And I obeyed, yet saw that he had taken
A snaky something from the wallet’s mouth
He carries on his baldric. Blind I waited
And heard the loud approaching charge. Then suddenly
The rapid footsteps ceased, the cries fell dumb
And a great silence reigned. Astonishment
For two brief moments only held me close;
But when I lifted my sealed lids, the court
Was full of those swift charging warriors stiffened
To stone or stiffening, in the very posture
Of onset, sword uplifted, shield advanced,
Knee crooked, foot carried forward to the pace,
An animated silence, life in stone.
Only the godlike victor lived, a smile
Upon his lips, closing his wallet’s mouth.
Then I, appalled, came from that place in silence.

**CEPHEUS**
Soldier, he is a god, or else the gods
Walk close to him. I hear his footsteps coming.

Perseus returns, followed by Cireas.

Hail, Perseus!

**PERSEUS**
King, the Tyrians all are dead,
Nor needst thou build them pyres nor dig them graves.
If any hereafter ask what perfect sculptor
Chiselled these forms in Syria’s royal court,
Say then, “Athene, child armipotent
Of the Olympian, hewed by Perseus’ hand
In one divine and careless stroke these statues
To her give glory.”

**CEPHEUS**
O thou dreadful victor!
I know not what to say nor how to praise thee.

**PERSEUS**
Say nothing, King; in silence praise the Gods.
Let this not trouble you, my friends. Proceed
As if no interruption had disturbed you.

**CIREAS**
O Zeus, I thought thou couldst juggle only with feathers and phosphorus, but I see thou canst give wrinkles in magic to Babylon and the Medes. (*shaking himself*) Ugh! this was a stony conjuring. I cannot feel sure yet that I am not myself a statue.
PERISSUS (who has gone out and returned)
What hast thou done, comrade Perseus? Thou hast immortalised his long nose to all time in stone! This is a woeful thing for posterity; thou hadst no right to leave behind thee for its dismay such a fossil.

CEPHEUS
What now is left but to prepare the nuptials
Of sweet young sunny-eyed Andromeda
With mighty Perseus?

PERSEUS
King, let it be soon
That I may go to my blue-ringed Seriphos,
Where my mother waits and more deeds call to me.

CASSIOPEA
Yet if thy heart consents, then three months give us,
O Perseus, of thyself and our sweet child,
And then abandon.

PERSEUS
They are given.

ANDROMEDA
Perseus,
You give and never ask; let me for you
Ask something.

PERSEUS
Ask, Andromeda, and have.

ANDROMEDA
Then this I ask that thy great deeds may leave
Their golden trace on Syria. Let the dire cult
For ever cease and victims bleed no more
On its dark altar. Instead, Athene’s name
Spread over all the land and in men’s hearts.
Then shall a calm and mighty Will prevail
And broader minds and kindlier manners reign
And men grow human, mild and merciful.

PERSEUS
King Cepheus, thou hast heard; shall this be done?

CEPHEUS
Hero, thou cam’st to change our world for us.
Pronounce; I give assent.

PERSEUS
Then let the shrine
That looked out from earth’s breast into the sunlight,
Be cleansed of its red memory of blood,
And the dread Form that lived within its precincts
Transfigure into a bright compassionate God
Whose strength shall aid men tossed upon the seas,
Give succour to the shipwrecked mariner.
A noble centre of a people’s worship,
To Zeus and great Athene build a temple
Between your sky-topped hills and Ocean’s vasts:
Her might shall guard your lives and save your land.
In your human image of her deity
A light of reason and calm celestial force
And a wise tranquil government of life,
Order and beauty and harmonious thoughts
And, ruling the waves of impulse, high-throned will
Incorporate in marble, the carved and white
Ideal of a young uplifted race.
For these are her gifts to those who worship her.
Adore and what you adore attempt to be.

CEPHEUS
Will the fiercer Grandeur that was here permit?
PERSEUS
Fear not Poseidon; the strong god is free.
He has withdrawn from his own darkness and is now
His new great self at an Olympian height.

CASSIOPEA
How can the immortal gods and Nature change?

PERSEUS
All alters in a world that is the same.
Man most must change who is a soul of Time;
His gods too change and live in larger light.

CEPHEUS
Then man too may arise to greater heights,
His being draw nearer to the gods?

PERSEUS
Perhaps.
But the blind nether forces still have power
And the ascent is slow and long is Time.
Yet shall Truth grow and harmony increase:
The day shall come when men feel close and one.
Meanwhile one forward step is something gained,
Since little by little earth must open to heaven
Till her dim soul awakes into the Light.