

# Euripides *Helen*

## *Helen*

By Euripides, translation by E. P. Coleridge

Revised by the Helen Heroization team (Hélène Emeriaud, Claudia Filos, Janet M. Oszolak, Sarah Scott, Jack Vaughan)

*Before the palace of Theoklymenos in Egypt. It is near the mouth of the Nile. The tomb of Proteus, the father of Theoklymenos, is visible. Helen is discovered alone before the tomb.*

### **Helen**

These are the lovely pure streams of the Nile, which waters the plain and lands of Egypt, fed by white melting snow instead of rain from heaven. Proteus was king [*turannos*] of this land when he was alive, [5] living [*oikeîn*] on the island of Pharos and lord of Egypt; and he married one of the daughters of the sea, Psamathe, after she left Aiakos' bed. She bore two children in his palace here: a son Theoklymenos, [because he spent his life in reverence of the gods,] [10] and a noble daughter, her mother's pride, called Eido in her infancy. But when she came to youth, the season of marriage, she was called Theonoe; for she knew whatever the gods design, both present and to come, [15] having received these honors [*tîmai*] from her grandfather Nereus.

My own fatherland, Sparta, is not without fame, and my father is Tyndareus; but there is indeed a story that Zeus flew to my mother Leda, taking the form of a bird, a swan, [20] which accomplished the deceitful union, fleeing the pursuit of an eagle, if this story is true. My name is Helen; I will tell the evils [*kaka*] I have suffered [*paskhein*]. For the sake of beauty, three goddesses came to a deep valley on Mount Ida, to Paris: [25] Hera and Kypris, and the virgin daughter of Zeus, wishing to have the judgment [*krisis*] of their loveliness decided. Kypris offered my beauty, if misfortune is beautiful, for Paris to marry, and so she won. Paris,

the shepherd of Ida, left his ox-stalls [30] and came to Sparta, to have me in marriage.

But Hera, indignant at not defeating the goddesses, made an airy nothing of my marriage with Paris; she gave to the son of king [*turannos*] Priam not me, but an image, alive and breathing, that she fashioned out of the sky and made to look like me; [35] and he thinks he has me—an idle fancy, for he doesn't have me. And in turn the plans of Zeus added further troubles [*kaka*] to these; for he brought a war upon the land of the Hellenes and the unhappy Phrygians, so that he might lighten mother earth [40] of her crowded mass of mortals, and bring fame to the bravest man of Hellas. So I was set up as the Hellenes' spear-prize [*athlos*]<sup>1</sup>, to test the courage of the Trojans; or rather not me, but my name. Hermes caught me up in the folds of the air and [45] hid me in a cloud—for Zeus was not neglectful of me—and he set me down here in the house [*oikos*] of Proteus, having selected the most moderate [most *sōphrōn*] of all mankind, so that I might save [*sōzein*] my bed unadulterated for Menelaos. And so I am here, while my wretched husband [50] has gathered an army and gone over to the towers of Ilion to hunt down and recover me. And many lives [*psūkhai*] have been lost for my sake by the streams of Skamandros; and I who have endured all this am accursed, and have in appearance betrayed my husband [55] and brought a great war to the Hellenes. Why then am I still alive? I heard the utterance [*epos*] of the god Hermes declare that I would yet live in the glorious country of Sparta, with my husband—for Hermes knew I never went to Ilion—so that I would not go to bed with another man. [60] Well, as long as Proteus saw this light of the sun, I was safe from marriage; but now that he is hidden in the dark earth, the dead man's son hunts after a marriage with me. But I, honoring [verb of *tīmē*] my husband of long ago, am throwing myself down as a suppliant before this tomb [*mnēma*] of Proteus, [65] for him to keep my bed safe [*dia-sōzein*] for my husband, so that, if I bear a name infamous throughout Hellas, at least my body may not incur disgrace here.

*Teucer enters.*

### **Teucer**

Who holds power over this fortified house? The dwelling [*oikos*] is worthy of comparison with Ploutos', [70] its royal enclosures and towering buildings. Ah! Oh gods, what sight is

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1 Here *athlos* refers to a prize for a struggle.

here? I see the most hateful [most *ekhthrē*] deadly likeness of the woman who ruined me and all the Achaeans. May the gods spurn you, so much do you look like [75] Helen! If I were not in a foreign [*xenē*] land, you would have died by this well-aimed arrow as a reward for your likeness to the daughter of Zeus.

**Helen**

What is it, poor man—who are you, that you have turned away from me and loathe me for the misfortunes of that one?

**Teucer**

[80] I was wrong; I gave way to my anger more than I should, for all Hellas hates that daughter of Zeus. Forgive me for what I said, lady.

**Helen**

Who are you? Where have you come from, to visit this land?

**Teucer**

I am one of those wretched [*athlios*] Achaeans, lady.

**Helen**

[85] Then it is no wonder that you loathe Helen. But who are you and where do you come from? Whose son should I call you?

**Teucer**

My name is Teucer, my father is Telamon, and Salamis is the land that nurtured me.

**Helen**

Then why are you visiting these lands of the Nile?

**Teucer**

[90] I am an exile, driven out of my native land.

**Helen**

You must be unhappy! Who banished you from your fatherland?

**Teucer**

My father Telamon. Could you find anyone more dear [*philos*] to me?

**Helen**

But why? This matter is surely an unfortunate one.

**Teucer**

The death of my brother Ajax at Troy was my ruin.

**Helen**

[95] How so? You didn't take his life with your sword, did you?

**Teucer**

He threw himself on his own sword and died.

**Helen**

Was he mad? For what balanced [*sōphrōn*] man would dare such a thing?

**Teucer**

Do you know a certain Achilles, the son of Peleus?

**Helen**

Yes; he came to woo Helen once, so I hear.

**Teucer**

[100] When he died, he left a conflict [*eris*] over his armor to his allies.

**Helen**

Well, if he did, what trouble [*kakon*] is this to Ajax?

**Teucer**

When someone else got the arms, he took his own life.

**Helen**

Then are you ill through his pains [*pēma*]?

**Teucer**

Yes, because I did not die together with him.

**Helen**

[105] So you went to the famous city [*polis*] of Iliion, stranger [*xenos*]?

**Teucer**

Yes, and by helping to sack it, I destroyed myself as well.

**Helen**

Has it already been set alight and completely consumed by fire?

**Teucer**

So that not even a trace of the walls is evident.

**Helen**

O miserable Helen! Because of you, the Phrygians have been destroyed.

**Teucer**

[110] And also the Achaeans; great evils [*kaka*] have been committed.

**Helen**

How long is it since the city [*polis*] was sacked?

**Teucer**

Almost seven years have gone full circle, with their harvests.

**Helen**

And how much longer were you waiting at Troy?

**Teucer**

For many months; the moon held its course through ten years.

**Helen**

[115] And did you capture the Spartan woman?

**Teucer**

Menelaos caught her by the hair to drag her away.

**Helen**

Did you yourself see the wretched creature? Or do you speak from hearsay?

**Teucer**

I saw her with my own eyes, just as I see you, no less.

**Helen**

Consider whether you had some fancy, sent by the gods.

**Teucer**

[120] Bring to mind [*memnēmai*] some other topic, not that woman still!

**Helen**

Are you so sure this fancy was reliable?

**Teucer**

I saw it with my own eyes; and the mind [*noos*] has sight.

**Helen**

Is Menelaos already at home [*oikoi*] with his wife?

**Teucer**

No; he is neither in Argos nor by the streams of the Eurotas.

**Helen**

[125] Oh my! This is evil [*kakon*] news for those to whom you speak evil [*kakon*].

**Teucer**

He is said to have disappeared with his wife.

**Helen**

Wasn't there the same passage for all the Argives?

**Teucer**

Yes; but a tempest scattered them in every direction.

**Helen**

On which surface of the salty ocean?

**Teucer**

[130] While they were crossing the Aegean in mid-channel.

**Helen**

And from that time does no one know of Menelaos' arrival?

**Teucer**

No one; but throughout Hellas he is reported to be dead.

**Helen**

I am wholly lost. Is the daughter of Thestios alive?

**Teucer**

You speak of Leda? She is dead and gone, indeed.

**Helen**

[135] It wasn't Helen's disgraceful fame [*kleos*] that killed her, surely?

**Teucer**

Yes, they say she tied a noose around her noble neck.

**Helen**

Are the sons of Tyndareus still alive or not?

**Teucer**

They are dead, and not dead: it is a double story.

**Helen**

Which report is the stronger? I am so unhappy at these evils [*kaka*]!

**Teucer**

[140] Men say that they are gods in the likeness of stars.

**Helen**

That is good news; but what is the other story?

**Teucer**

That they killed themselves because of their sister. But enough of such speeches [*mūthoi*!] I do not need to grieve twice. As to why I came to this royal palace, [145] wanting to see the prophetess Theonoe, you be my patron, so I might obtain an oracle: how I should steer a favorable course to the island of Cyprus, where Apollo has declared I am to dwell [*oikeîn*], giving it the island name of [150] Salamis for the sake of [*kharis*] that fatherland over there.

**Helen**

The voyage itself will indicate [*sēmainein*] that, stranger [*xenos*]; leave this land and escape, before the son of Proteus, the ruler of this land, catches sight of you; now he is away with his trusty hounds tracking his savage quarry to the death; [155] for he kills every stranger [*xenos*] from Hellas that he catches. Do not seek to learn his reason, and I will not say; for how could I help you?

**Teucer**

Lady, you have spoken well. May the gods grant you a return for your goodness [*esthla*]! [160] Although you have a body like Helen's, your heart [*phrenes*] is not like hers, but very different. May she die miserably, and never reach the streams of Eurotas! But may you always have good fortune, lady.

*Teucer departs. The Chorus of captive Greek women enter. They sing responsively with Helen*

**Helen**

Oh, as I begin the great lament of my great sorrow [*akhos*], [165] what mourning shall I strive to utter? or what Muse shall I approach with tears or songs of death or grief [*penthos*]? Alas!

**Helen**

Winged maidens, virgin daughters of Earth, the Sirens, may you come to my mourning [170] with Libyan flute or pipe or lyre, tears to match my lamentable troubles [*kaka*]; grief for grief and mournful chant for chant, may Persephone send deadly songs that are in harmony with my laments [175], so that she may receive gratitude [*kharites*] from me, in response to my tears, a paean for the departed dead beneath her nocturnal halls.

### **Chorus**

Beside the deep-blue water [180] and on the tangled grass, I happened to be drying purple robes in the sun's golden blaze near the young reed shoots; from my mistress, from where she cried aloud her misery, [185] I heard a sound, a mournful song not fit for the lyre, because she was then shrieking, lamenting with her wails; just as a Naiad nymph, who sends a song of woe ringing over the hills, cries out, under the rocky hollows, with screams [190] at Pan's lewd advances.

### **Helen**

Oh! Oh! Maidens of Hellas, the prey of barbarian sailors! An Achaean sailor [195] came, he came bringing tears upon tears to me. Ilium has been destroyed and is left to the enemy's fire through me, the death-giver, through my name, full of suffering. [200] Leda sought death by hanging, in anguish over my disgrace. My husband, after much wandering in the sea, has died and is gone; [205] and Castor [Kastor] and his brother, twin glory of their native land, have vanished, vanished, leaving the plains that shook to their galloping horses, [210] and the schools of reed-fringed Eurotas, scene of youthful labors [*ponos* plural]

### **Chorus**

Alas, alas! for the mournful super-human force [*daimōn*] who controls your destiny [*moira*], lady! You were fated, fated to have a life full of pain, when Zeus begot you on your mother, [215] shining through the air on the wings of a snow-white swan. What evils [*kaka*] are not yours? What life have you not endured? Your mother is dead; [220] the twin beloved [*phila*] children of Zeus do not enjoy happiness; and you do not see your fatherland, while through the cities [*polis*] a rumor goes, mistress, which hands you over [225] to the bed of a barbarian; your husband has lost his life in the salty waves, and never again will you bring joy to your father's halls and Athene of the Bronze House.

## Helen

Ah! Who was it, either from Phrygia [230] or from Hellas, who cut the pine that brought tears to Ilion? From this wood the son of Priam built his deadly ship, and sailed by barbarian oars [235] to my home, to that most ill-fated beauty, to win me as his wife; and with him sailed deceitful and murderous Kypris, bearing death for the Danaans. [240] Oh, unhappy in my misfortune! But Hera, the holy beloved of Zeus on her golden throne, sent the swift-footed son of Maia. I was gathering fresh rose leaves in the folds of my robe, [245] so that I might go to the goddess of the Bronze House; he carried me off through the air to this luckless land, and made me an object of miserable strife [*eris*], of strife [*eris*] between Hellas and the sons of Priam. And my name [250] beside the streams of Simoïs bears a false rumor.

## Chorus Leader

You have sorrows, I know; but it is best to bear as lightly as we can the necessary evils of life.

## Helen

[255] Dear [*philai*] friends, to what a fate am I yoked? Did my mother bear me as a wonder to mankind? [For no other woman, Hellene or barbarian, gives birth to a white vessel of chicks, in which they say Leda bore me to Zeus.] [260] My life and all I do is a wonder, partly because of Hera, and partly my beauty is responsible [*aitios*]. If only I could be rubbed out like a painting, and have again in turn a plainer form instead of beauty, and the Hellenes would have forgotten the evil [*kakai*] fate that I now have, [265] and would save [*sōzein*] in memory what part of my life is not evil [*kakai*], as they now save [*sōzein*] in memory what is evil [*kakai*].

When someone looks to one event only, and is ill-treated by the gods, it is hard, but all the same it can be borne. But I am involved in countless troubles. [270] First, although I never acted wrongly, my good name is gone. And this trouble [*kakon*] is stronger than the truth [*alētheia*], if someone incurs blame for evils [*kaka*] that are not his own. Next, the gods have removed me from my native country to barbarian customs, and bereft of friends [*philoī*] [275] I have become a slave although I am free by birth; for among barbarians all are slaves except one. And the only anchor of my fortunes is gone, the hope that my husband would come one day and free me of my troubles [*kaka*]*—*he is dead, he no longer exists.

[280] My mother is dead, and I am called her murderer—unjustly [without *dikē*], but that injustice [*a-dikos*] is mine to bear; while the one who was born the glory of the house, my daughter, is growing gray as a virgin, without a husband; and those two Dioskouroi, called the sons of Zeus, are no more. [285] But with all my misfortunes, I am as good as dead in my circumstances, though not in fact. And this is the last evil of all: if ever I should come home, I would be shut out by barred doors, for people would think I was that Helen of Troy, coming back with Menelaos. [290] If my husband were still alive, we could have recognized each other by recourse to tokens which are evident to us alone. But now this is not so, and he can never be saved [*sōzein*].

Why then do I still live? What fortune do I have left? Shall I choose marriage in exchange for evils [*kaka*], [295] and dwell [*oikeîn*] with a barbarian man, seated at his sumptuous table? But whenever a husband she hates lives with a woman, her own body is also hateful to her. It is best to die; how could this not be well done? [To hang oneself, high in the air, is unseemly, [300] even slaves consider it undignified; but to stab oneself is noble and good, and the moment of rending life from the body is short.] For I have entered such a sea of troubles [*kaka*]; other women have good fortune from their beauty, [305] but the same thing has destroyed me.

### **Chorus Leader**

Helen, do not suppose that stranger [*xenos*] who came here, whoever he was, has spoken all true things [*alēthēs*].

### **Helen**

And yet he said very clearly that my husband was dead.

### **Chorus Leader**

Many words [*epea*] might be said in falsehood also.

### **Helen**

[310] And the opposite of falsehood is clear in its truth [*alētheia*].

**Chorus Leader**

You are carried towards misfortune instead of what is good [*agathon*].

**Helen**

Yes, for terror has embraced me and leads me to the thing I fear.

**Chorus Leader**

How much goodwill is there in this house for you?

**Helen**

All are my friends [*philoī*], except the one who hunts me in marriage.

**Chorus Leader**

[315] Then do you know what you should do? Leave your seat at the tomb [*mnēma*]—

**Helen**

What sort of word [*mūthos*] or advice are you coming to?

**Chorus Leader**

Go into the house [*oikos*] and question the daughter of the sea-nymph, Theonoe, who knows all things, about your husband, whether he is still alive, or has left the light of day; [320] and when you know for certain, rejoice or be full of mourning, according to your fortune. Before you know anything correctly, what good would it do you to grieve? But be persuaded by me; leave this tomb and join the girl; [325] when you have someone in this house [*oikos*] from whom you can learn the whole truth [*alēthēs*], why do you look further? And I myself want to go in and ask about the prophecies of the maiden with you; for, truly, women ought to help each other.

**Helen**

[330] Dear friends [*philai*], I welcome your advice. Come in, come into the house [*oikos*], to learn within about my struggles.

**Chorus**

You are calling on one who is wholly willing.

**Helen**

[335] Oh, what an unhappy day! What tearful word shall I hear, unhappy as I am?

**Chorus**

Do not be a prophetess of sorrow, dear friend [*phila*], anticipating lamentation.

**Helen**

[340] What has my poor husband suffered? Does he see the light and the sun's chariot and the paths of the stars? Or does he have a lasting fate [345] among the dead beneath the earth?

**Chorus**

Take a brighter view of the future, whatever will happen.

**Helen**

For I call on you, I swear to you, Eurotas green with watery reeds, [350] if this rumor of my husband's death is true—and what was obscure in those words?—I will stretch a deadly noose about my neck, or drive inward a murderous thrust of slaughter that gushes from the throat, [355] a contest of the blade through my flesh, as a sacrifice to the three goddesses and to the son of Priam, who once sat on the hollows of Ida, near the ox-stalls.

**Chorus**

[360] May troubles [*kaka*] be turned aside elsewhere, and may your lot be fortunate!

**Helen**

Oh, unhappy Troy! Through deeds not done by yourself, you are ruined, and have suffered

pitiably; for the gifts that Kypris gave me has caused much blood [365] and many a tear; it has added grief [*akhos*] to grief [*akhos*] and tears to tears, sufferings [*pathos*]. . . .<sup>2</sup> Mothers have lost their children and virgin sisters of the slain have cut off their hair by the swollen tide of Phrygian Skamandros. [370] And Hellas has cried aloud, aloud, and broken forth in wailing, beating her head, and drenching her soft-skinned cheek with the bloody strokes of her nails.

[375] O maiden Kallisto, blessed [*makar*] once in Arcadia, who climbed into the bed of Zeus on four paws, how much happier was your lot than my mother's, you who in the form of a shaggy-limbed beast—the bearing of a lioness with your fierce eye—changed your burden of sorrow; [380] and also the one whom Artemis once drove from her chorus, as a deer with horns of gold, the Titan girl, daughter of Merops, because of her loveliness; but the beauty of my body has destroyed the Dardanian towers, it has destroyed them and [385] the lost Achaeans.

*Helen and the chorus go into the palace. After the doors have closed upon them, Menelaos enters. He is alone and clad in rags.*

### **Menelaos**

O Pelops, who once held that chariot-race contest with Oinomaos over Pisa, if only, when you were persuaded to make a banquet for the gods, you had left your life then, inside the gods, [390] before you ever begot my father, Atreus, to whom were born, from his marriage with Airope, Agamemnon and myself, Menelaos, a famous pair; for I believe that I carried a mighty army—and I say this not in boast—in ships to Troy, [395] no *turannos* commanding any troops by force [*biā*], but leading the young men of Hellas by voluntary consent. And some of these can be counted no longer alive, others as having a joyful escape from the sea, bringing home [*oikos* plural] again names thought to be of the dead. [400] But I wander miserably over the swelling waves of the gray ocean, ever since I sacked the towers of Ilion; and although I long to come home, I am not thought worthy by the gods to achieve this. I have sailed to Libya's deserts and all its inhospitable landing-places; [405] and whenever I draw near my native land, the blast drives me back again, and no favoring wind has ever entered my sails to let me come home.

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<sup>2</sup> The Greek is unclear here: possibly there are lines missing.

And now I am cast up on this shore, a miserable shipwrecked sailor who has lost his friends; and my ship is [410] broken into many pieces against the rocks. But out of its cleverly-wrought fastenings the keel was left, on which I was barely saved [*sōzein*] by an unexpected chance, and also Helen with me, whom I dragged away from Troy. But I do not know the name of this country [415] and its people; for I was embarrassed to burst into a crowd and make inquiries, and so I concealed these shabby clothes, in shame [*aidōs*] over my misfortune. For whenever a man of high degree is badly off, he falls into an unaccustomed state which is worse [more *kakos*] than that of one who has long been unfortunate [*dus-daimōn*]. [420] But poverty is wearing me away; for I have neither food, nor clothes around my body; one can compare what I am wearing to rags cast out of the ship. The sea [*pontos*] snatched away all the robes I once wore, splendid clothes and ornaments. Deep in a cave [425] I hid the woman who caused all my troubles [*kaka*], and have come here, after compelling those of my friends [*philoī*] who survived to guard my wife. I have come alone, seeking help for those friends [*philoī*] there, if I may find it somehow after careful search. [430] When I saw this home, surrounded by walls, and the majestic gateways of some prosperous [*olbios*] man, I came near; sailors can hope to get something from wealthy homes; but from those who have no livelihood—they could not help us, even if they wanted to. [435]

Hello! Is there some gatekeeper who might come from the house and announce my troubles [*kaka*] within?

*An old woman comes out of the palace in answer to his call.*

### **Old woman**

Who's at the door? Get away from the house and don't annoy my master by standing at the court-yard gate! Or else you will die because you are [440] a Hellene, and they have no business here.

### **Menelaos**

My good woman, you can say these same words [*epea*] in a different tone, for I shall be

persuaded; but let go your angry speech.

**Old woman**

Go away! Stranger [*xenos*], my orders are to let no Hellene come near this house.

**Menelaos**

[445] Ah! Do not push me, or thrust me away by force [*biā*].

**Old woman**

You are responsible [*aitios*], for not heeding what I say.

**Menelaos**

Announce to your master inside—

**Old woman**

I think someone would be sorry, if I announced your words.

**Menelaos**

I come as a shipwrecked man and guest [*xenos*]; such people [*genos*] are safe from violence.

**Old woman**

[450] Well, go to some other house [*oikos*] instead of this one.

**Menelaos**

No; I am going inside. You listen to me.

**Old woman**

Know that you're only causing trouble; and soon you'll be thrown out by force [*biā*].

**Menelaos**

Alas! Where are those glorious armies of mine?

**Old woman**

Perhaps you were grand somewhere, but not here.

**Menelaos**

[455] O *daimōn*, how we have been unworthily dishonored.

**Old woman**

Why are your eyes wet with tears? To whom are you lamenting?

**Menelaos**

To my fortunes, which were happy before this.

**Old woman**

Well then, why don't you go away and give these tears to your friends [*philoî*].

**Menelaos**

What is this land? Whose palace is this?

**Old woman**

[460] Proteus dwells [*oikeîn*] here, the land is Egypt.

**Menelaos**

Egypt? O wretched, that I have sailed here!

**Old woman**

And why do you blame the bright gleam of the Nile?

**Menelaos**

I do not blame it; I am sighing for my fate.

**Old woman**

Many people are doing badly; you are not the only one.

**Menelaos**

[465] Is the king you name in the house [*oikos*]?

**Old woman**

This is his tomb [*mnēma*]; his son rules the land.

**Menelaos**

And where might he be? Abroad, or in the house?

**Old woman**

He is not inside; he is most bitterly opposed to the Hellenes.

**Menelaos**

What cause [*aitiā*] does he have? I have felt the consequences of it!

**Old woman**

[470] Helen, the daughter of Zeus, is in this house [*oikos*].

**Menelaos**

What do you mean? What *mūthos* did you say? Tell me again.

**Old woman**

The daughter of Tyndareus, who once lived in Sparta.

**Menelaos**

Where did she come from? What is the meaning of this?

**Old woman**

She came here from the land of Lacedaemonia.

**Menelaos**

[475] When? Surely I have not been robbed of my wife from the cave?

**Old woman**

Before the Achaeans went to Troy, stranger [*xenos*]. But get away from the house [*oikos*]; for something is happening within, by which the royal [*turannos*] palace is thrown into confusion. You have not come at the right time; and if my master [480] catches you, death will be your guest-gift [*xeniā*]. For I am well-disposed to Hellenes, for all that I spoke harshly to you in fear of my master.

*The old woman goes back into the palace.*

**Menelaos**

What can I say? For after my former troubles, this present event that I hear of is an unhappy one, [485] if I have come here, bringing my wife who was taken from Troy, and she is kept safe [*sōzein*] in the cave, but some other woman who has the same name as my wife lives in this house. She said the woman was born the child of Zeus. [490] Can there be a man with the name of Zeus by the banks of Nile? For there is only one in heaven. Where in the world is there a Sparta, except by the streams of Eurotas, with its lovely reeds? The name of Tyndareus is the name of one alone. [495] Is there any land of the same name as Lacedaemonia or Troy? I do not know what to say; for there are probably many things in the wide world that have the same names, both cities [*polis*] and women; there is nothing, then, to marvel at. [500] Besides, I will not run away from something terrible [*deinon*] to a servant; for no man is so barbaric at heart [*phrenes*] as to refuse me food when he has heard my name. The fire of Troy is famous, and I, Menelaos, who lighted it, am well known in every land. [505] I will wait for the master of the house; he gives me two things to look out for: if he is a cruel

sort of person, I will keep myself hidden and go back to the shipwreck; but if he shows any softening, I will ask for help in my present state. [510] This are the worst evils [*kaka*] for me in my ordeals [*āthloi*], to beg the means of life from other kings [*turannoi*], when I am myself a king; but it is necessary. The saying is not mine, but it is a wise [*sophon*] word [*epos*]: nothing is stronger than dreadful [*deinē*] necessity.

*Helen and the chorus enter from the palace. They do not notice Menelaos.*

### **Chorus**

[515] I have heard the prophetic maiden, who gave a clear answer within the royal [*turannoi*] palace: Menelaos is not yet dead and buried, gone to the land of shadows where darkness takes the place of light; [520] but he is still wearing out his life on the ocean swell and has not yet reached the haven of his country, wretched in his wandering life, [525] friendless [*a-philos*] and bereft of friends [*philoī*], approaching every land in his sea-going ship from the land of Troy.

### **Helen**

Here I am, once again coming back to the sanctuary of this tomb, after learning the dear [*philoī*] words of Theonoe, [530] who knows all things truly [adv. *alēthēs*]; she says my husband is alive and sees the light of day; he is roaming here and there on countless voyages, not without practice in wandering, and he shall come here when he finds an end [*telos*] to his suffering [*pēma*]. [535] But she left one thing unsaid: if he will come here and be saved [*sōzein*]? And I refrained from asking that question clearly; I was so glad when she told me he was saved [*sōzein*]. She said that he was near this land somewhere, cast up, shipwrecked, with a few friends [*philoī*]. [540] Oh, when will you come? How much I long for your arrival!

*She catches sight of Menelaos*

Ah! Who is this? I am not being ambushed by the plots of Proteus' impious son, am I? Shall I not, like a young racehorse or a worshipper of Bacchus, reach the tomb? There is something wild [545] about the looks of this man who is hunting me down.

**Menelaos**

You there! the one trying with fearful [*deinon*] effort to reach the base of the tomb and the pillars of burnt sacrifice, stay where you are. Why do you flee? I am amazed and speechless at the sight of your body.

**Helen**

[550] Women, I am being ill-treated. This man is keeping me from the tomb, and he wants to take me and give me to the kings [*turannoi*], whose wooing I was seeking to avoid.

**Menelaos**

I am no thief, nor a servant of evil men [*kakoi*].

**Helen**

And yet the clothes you are wearing are unsightly enough.

**Menelaos**

[555] Put fear aside and stop your rapid flight.

**Helen**

I do so, now that I have reached this spot.

**Menelaos**

Who are you? Whom do I see in you, lady?

**Helen**

But who are you? The same reason prompts us both.

**Menelaos**

I never saw a closer resemblance.

**Helen**

[560] O gods! For the recognizing of friends [*philoï*] is a god.

**Menelaos**

Are you a woman from Hellas, or a native of this land?

**Helen**

From Hellas; but I want to learn your story too.

**Menelaos**

You seem to me very much like Helen, lady.

**Helen**

And you seem to me like Menelaos; I don't know what to say.

**Menelaos**

[565] Well, you have correctly recognized a most unfortunate man.

**Helen**

Oh, at last you have come to the arms of your wife!

**Menelaos**

What do you mean by wife? Do not touch my robe.

**Helen**

The one whom Tyndareus, my father, gave to you.

**Menelaos**

O torch-bearing Hekatē, send visions that are favorable!

**Helen**

[570] You see in me no specter of the night, attendant on the queen of phantoms.

**Menelaos**

As one man, I am certainly not the husband of two women.

**Helen**

You are the master of what other wife?

**Menelaos**

The one hidden in the cave, whom I am bringing from Troy.

**Helen**

You have no other wife but me.

**Menelaos**

[575] Can it be that I am in my right mind, but my sight is failing?

**Helen**

Don't you think that when you look at me you see your wife?

**Menelaos**

Your body resembles hers, but the real truth robs me of this belief.

**Helen**

Look; what more do you need? Who is more *sophos* than you?

**Menelaos**

You are like her; I will not deny that at least.

**Helen**

[580] Who then shall teach you, if not your own eyes?

**Menelaos**

It is there that I am ailing, because I have another wife.

**Helen**

I did not go to Troy; that was a phantom.

**Menelaos**

And who fashions living bodies?

**Helen**

The air, out of which you have a wife that the gods labored over.

**Menelaos**

[585] What god's handiwork? You are saying things beyond hope.

**Helen**

Hera's, as a substitute, so that Paris would not have me.

**Menelaos**

How then could you be here and in Troy at the same time?

**Helen**

The name may be in many places, though not the body.

**Menelaos**

Let me go! I have come here with enough pain.

**Helen**

[590] Will you leave me, and take that phantom bride away?

**Menelaos**

Yes, and fare well, for your likeness to Helen.

**Helen**

I am ruined! I found you, my husband, but I will not have you.

**Menelaos**

The greatness of my troubles [*ponoi*] over there convinces me; you do not.

**Helen**

Ah me! Who was ever more wretched [adj. *āthlos*] than I am? [595] Those who are most dear [*philoī*] to me are leaving me, and I shall never reach the Hellenes or my own country.

*The first messenger enters in haste.*

**Messenger**

Menelaos, I find you, after taking great trouble to look for you, wandering over the whole of this foreign land; I am sent by the comrades whom you left behind.

**Menelaos**

[600] What is it? Surely you are not being plundered by the foreigners?

**Messenger**

It is a miracle; what I say is of less account than what happened.

**Menelaos**

Tell me; for, judging by this eagerness, you are certainly bringing something new.

**Messenger**

I say that you have suffered countless pains [*pēma*] in vain.

**Menelaos**

You are mourning over old sorrows; what is your message?

**Messenger**

[605] Your wife has disappeared, taken up into the folds of the unseen air; she is hidden in heaven, and as she left the hallowed cave where we were keeping her safe [*sōzein*], she said this: “Miserable Phrygians, and all the Achaeans! On my account you were dying by the banks of Skamandros, [610] through Hera's contrivance, for you thought that Paris had Helen when he didn't. But I, since I have stayed my appointed time, and having kept to [*sōzein*] my destiny, will now depart into the sky, my father; but the unhappy daughter of Tyndareus, [615] guilty [*aitia*] in no way, has borne evil [*kakai*] rumors without reason.”

*Catching sight of Helen*

Welcome, daughter of Leda, were you here after all? I was just announcing your departure up to the hidden starry realms, not knowing that you had a winged body. I will not let you mock us like this again, [620] for you gave your fill of ordeals [*ponos* plural] to your husband and his allies in Ilium.

**Menelaos**

This is the meaning of that; the words of this woman have turned out to be true [*alēthēs*]. O longed-for day, that has given you to my arms!

*In the following scene, most of Menelaos' lines are spoken, most of Helen's are sung.*

**Helen**

[625] O Menelaos, dearest [most *philos*] of men, the time was long, but delight is just now ours.

With joy I have found my husband, friends [*philai*], I have embraced my dear one, after long days of blazing light.

**Menelaos**

[630] And I have found you; but I have many questions about those years; now I do not know what to begin with first.

**Helen**

I am so happy, the hair rises on my head and my tears run down. I fling my arms around your neck, [635] dear husband, to have my delight.

**Menelaos**

O most dear [*phila*] sight! I have no fault to find: I have my wife, the daughter of Zeus and Leda; your brothers on their snow-white steeds [640] blessed you, blessed you at an earlier time, while torches blazed, but the god who took you from my home is driving us on to another fortune, better than this. An evil [*kakon*] that was good [*agathon*] brought you together with me, your husband [645] after a long time, but may I still benefit by my good luck.

**Chorus**

May you benefit indeed, and I join in the same prayer; for when there are two, it is not possible for one to be unhappy and the other not.

**Helen**

Friends [*philai*], my dear friends [*philai*], I no longer sigh or grieve over what is past. [650] I have my husband, for whom I have been waiting to come from Troy for many years.

**Menelaos**

You have me, and I have you; although it was hard to live through so many days, I now understand the actions of the goddess. My joy is tearful; it has more [655] pleasure [*kharis*] than sorrow.

**Helen**

What can I say? What mortal could ever have hoped for this? I hold you to my heart, little as I ever thought to.

**Menelaos**

And I hold you, whom we thought to have gone to Ida's city [*polis*] and the unhappy towers of Ilium. [660] By the gods, how were you taken from my home?

**Helen**

Ah! ah! You are setting out on a bitter beginning. Ah! ah! You are asking about a bitter tale.

**Menelaos**

Speak; all gifts from the super-human powers [*daimones*] should be heard.

**Helen**

I detest the story I am now about to tell.

**Menelaos**

[665] Tell it anyway. It is sweet to hear of troubles.

**Helen**

Not to the bed of the young barbarian, on the wings of oars, on the wings of desire for an unjust [*a-dikos*] marriage—

**Menelaos**

What super-human power [*daimōn*] or fate tore you from your country?

**Helen**

[670] Ah, my husband! The son of Zeus, of Zeus, brought me to the Nile.

**Menelaos**

Amazing! Who sent you there? O *deinoi* words!

**Helen**

I have wept bitterly, and my eyes are wet with tears; the wife of Zeus ruined me.

**Menelaos**

[675] Hera? Why did she want to bring trouble [*kakon*] to the two of us?

**Helen**

Alas for those baths and springs, where the goddesses brightened the beauty from which the judgment [*krisis*] came.

**Menelaos**

Regarding the judgment [*krisis*], Hera made it a cause of these troubles [*kaka*] for you?

**Helen**

[680] To take me away from Paris—

**Menelaos**

How? Tell me.

**Helen**

To whom Kypris had promised me.

**Menelaos**

O unhappy one!

**Helen**

Unhappy, unhappy; and so she brought me to Egypt.

**Menelaos**

Then she gave him a phantom instead, as I hear from you.

**Helen**

Sorrow, sorrow to your house, [685] mother, alas.

**Menelaos**

What do you mean?

**Helen**

My mother is no more; through shame of my disgraceful marriage she tied a noose around her neck.

**Menelaos**

Alas! Is our daughter Hermione alive?

**Helen**

Ah, my husband! Unmarried, without children, she mourns my [690] fatal marriage.

**Menelaos**

O Paris, who utterly destroyed my whole house, these things ruined you also, and countless bronze-clad Danaans.

**Helen**

The god cast me out, ill-fated and accursed, from my country, [695] from my city [*polis*], and from you, when I left my home and bed—yet I did not leave them—for a shameful marriage.

**Chorus Leader**

If indeed you should become blessed with a good *daimōn* [*eudaimōn*] in the future, it would be a match for the past.

**Messenger**

[700] Menelaos, give me as well a share of that joy which I understand, but not clearly.

**Menelaos**

Come and take part in our talk, old man, you too.

**Messenger**

This woman is not the arbitrator of all the trouble in Troy?

**Menelaos**

She is not; I was tricked by the gods [705] and had in my arms the baneful image of a cloud.

**Messenger**

What are you saying? We have had ordeals [*ponoi*] in vain for the sake of a cloud?

**Menelaos**

It was the work of Hera, and the strife [*eris*] of the three goddesses.

**Messenger**

And the one who is truly [*alēthēs*] your wife is this woman here?

**Menelaos**

[710] This is she; trust my word for that.

**Messenger**

O daughter, how intricate and hard to trace out is the nature of the god! In some way that is good, he twists everything about, now up, now down; one man suffers, and one who has not suffered comes afterwards to a bad end, [715] having no security in his current fortune. You and your husband have had your share of troubles [*ponos* plural], you in repute, he in the heat of battle. In his eagerness, while he was eager, he got nothing; but now that he has achieved the most fortunate good things [*agatha*] on his own. [720] You did not, after all, bring shame

upon your old father or on the twin sons of Zeus, nor did you do such things as were spoken of. Now again I renew your wedding rites and remember [*mnemnēmai*] the blazing torch I bore, running beside the four yoked horses; and you, [725] in the chariot as a bride, were leaving your blessed [*olbios*] home with this man here. Whoever pays no reverence to his master's affairs, rejoicing with him and grieving with his troubles [*kaka*], is worthless. Although I was born a servant, let me still be numbered among honest [730] slaves; my mind [*noos*] is free, if not my name. For this is better than to suffer two evils [*kaka*] as one man: to have bad [*kakai*] *phrenes* and, being a slave, to owe obedience to any other.

### **Menelaos**

Come, old man—often by my shield [735] you have had your full share of trouble and hard work—now also have a share in my success, and go tell the friends [*philoī*] I left behind the state of matters here, as you found them, and how my fortune stands; and bid them wait at the beach and watch eagerly for the [740] struggle which I expect awaits me; and if we should be able somehow to steal this woman away from the land, tell them to keep good watch so that we may share the luck and escape safely [*sōzein*], if we can, from the barbarians.

### **Messenger**

It shall be done, lord. Now indeed I see how worthless [745] the seers' [*mantis* plural] doings are, and how full of falsehood; there was no health in the blaze of sacrifice after all, or in the cry of winged birds; even to think that birds can help mankind is certainly foolish. For Calchas gave no word nor indicated by signs [*sēmainein*] to the army, [750] when he saw his friends [*philoī*] dying on behalf of a cloud, nor did Helenos; but the city [*polis*] was taken by storm in vain. You might say: because the god did not want them to? Then why do we consult prophets? We ought to sacrifice to the gods and ask for good things [*agatha*], but leave divination alone; [755] for this was invented otherwise, as a bait for a livelihood, and no man grows rich by sacrifices if he is idle. But sound judgment and discernment are the best [*aristē*] seer [*mantis*].

*The messenger departs.*

### **Chorus Leader**

My views about seers [*mantis* plural] agree exactly with this old man's; whoever has the gods as friends [*philoï*] [760] would have the best [*aristē*] prophecy at home.

### **Helen**

All right; so far all is well. But how you were saved [*sōzein*], my poor husband, from Troy, there is no gain [*kerdos*] in knowing, yet friends [*philoï*] have a desire [*pothos*] to learn the troubles [*kaka*] of their friends [*philoï*].

### **Menelaos**

[765] Truly you have asked a great deal all at once. Why should I tell you about our losses in the Aegean, and Nauplios' beacons on Euboea, and my visits to Crete and the cities [*polis* plural] of Libya, and the mountain-peaks of Perseus? For I would not satisfy you with the tale [*mūthos*], [770] and by telling you these evils [*kaka*] I would suffer [*paskhein*] still, as I did when I experienced them; and so my grief would be doubled.

### **Helen**

Your answer is better than my question. Leave out the rest, and tell me only this: how long were you a weary wanderer over the surface of the sea [*pontos*]?

### **Menelaos**

[775] Besides those ten years in Troy, I went through seven cycles of years on board ship.

### **Helen**

Alas, poor man, you have spoken of a long time; and, saved [*sōzein*] from there, you have come here to the slaughter.

### **Menelaos**

What do you mean? What will you say? Ah, my wife, you have ruined me.

### **Helen**

[780] Escape from this land and flee as quickly as possible. The man who lives in this house

will kill you.

**Menelaos**

What have I done to deserve such a fate?

**Helen**

You have come unexpectedly to hinder my marriage.

**Menelaos**

What! Does someone plan to marry my wife?

**Helen**

[785] And to commit [verb from *hubris*] outrage [*hubris*] against me, which I have endured.

**Menelaos**

Does he have private power, or is he the ruler [*turannos*] of the country?

**Helen**

He is the lord of this land, the son of Proteus.

**Menelaos**

This is that riddle [*ainigma*] I heard from the servant.

**Helen**

Which one of the barbarian's gates were you standing beside?

**Menelaos**

[790] This one, from which I was being driven away like a beggar.

**Helen**

You were surely not begging for food, were you? How unhappy I am!

**Menelaos**

That was the deed, though it did not have that name.

**Helen**

Then you know everything, it seems, about my marriage.

**Menelaos**

I do. But if you have escaped his bed—that I do not know.

**Helen**

[795] Know that I have saved [*sōzein*] myself untouched for you.

**Menelaos**

What is the persuasion of this? If you speak things that are clear, they are dear [*phila*].

**Helen**

Do you see my wretched [*athlios*] sanctuary at this tomb?

**Menelaos**

I see a miserable bed of straw, but what do you have to do with it?

**Helen**

Here, as a suppliant, I am asking for an escape from his bed.

**Menelaos**

[800] For want of an altar, or because it is the barbarians' customs [*nomos plural*]?

**Helen**

This was as good a protection to me as the temples of the gods.

**Menelaos**

Then it's not possible for me to take you home [*oikos*] by ship?

**Helen**

A sword is waiting for you, rather than my bed.

**Menelaos**

So I would be the most wretched [*athlios*] of mortals.

**Helen**

[805] Do not feel shame now, but escape from this land.

**Menelaos**

Leaving you behind? I ravaged Troy for your sake [*kharis*].

**Helen**

Yes, for that is better than that our union should cause your death.

**Menelaos**

Oh! these are coward's words, unworthy of those days at Troy.

**Helen**

You could not kill the king [*turannos*], which perhaps you are eager to do.

**Menelaos**

[810] Does he then have a body that cannot be wounded by a sword?

**Helen**

You will hear. But to undertake impossibilities is no mark of a wise [*sophos*] man.

**Menelaos**

And so I am to offer my hands to be bound, in silence?

**Helen**

You are in a dilemma; we need some contrivance.

**Menelaos**

Yes, for it is sweeter to die in action than by not acting.

**Helen**

[815] There is one hope, and only one, for our being saved [*sōzein*].

**Menelaos**

Are we to buy it, or dare it, or win it with words?

**Helen**

If the king [*turannos*] were not to learn of your arrival.

**Menelaos**

Will any one tell him about me? He will certainly not know who I am.

**Helen**

He has within an ally equal to the gods.

**Menelaos**

[820] A voice that has settled in the inmost parts of his house [*oikos*]?

**Helen**

No, but his sister; she is called Theonoe.

**Menelaos**

The name is prophetic; tell me what she does.

**Helen**

She knows everything, and she will tell her brother that you are here.

**Menelaos**

We must die; for I cannot escape her notice.

**Helen**

[825] Perhaps we might persuade her by supplication—

**Menelaos**

To do what? What hope are you leading me to?

**Helen**

Not to tell her brother that you are here in this land.

**Menelaos**

If we persuade her, could we get away from this country?

**Helen**

Easily, in common with her; but secretly we could not.

**Menelaos**

[830] The task is yours; it is suitable for women to deal with women.

**Helen**

Be sure that I will clasp her knees.

**Menelaos**

Well, then, what if she rejects our proposals?

**Helen**

You will die. And I, the unhappy one, will be married by force [*biā*].

**Menelaos**

You would be a traitor; that force [*biā*] of yours is an excuse.

**Helen**

[835] But I have sworn a sacred oath by your life—

**Menelaos**

What do you mean? To die? And never to take his bed in exchange for mine?

**Helen**

Yes, by the same sword; I will lie at your side.

**Menelaos**

Then on these conditions touch my right hand.

**Helen**

I touch it, swearing that I will leave the light of day if you die.

**Menelaos**

[840] And I will make an end [*telos*] to my life if I lose you.

**Helen**

How then shall we die so as to gain fame?

### **Menelaos**

I will kill you on the tomb's surface, and then kill myself. But first I will fight a great contest [*agōn*] for your bed. Let anyone who wishes come near! [845] For I will not disgrace my Trojan fame [*kleos*], nor, on my return to Hellas, will I receive great blame—I who robbed Thetis of Achilles, and saw the slaughter of Ajax, son of Telamon, and the son of Neleus made childless; [850] shall I not resolve to die for my wife? Most certainly; for if the gods are wise [*sophoi*], they lightly bury in the earth a brave man who has been killed by his enemies, while they cast up ignoble men [*kakoi*] out of the earth onto a harsh rock.

### **Chorus Leader**

[855] O gods, may the descendants [*genos*] of Tantalos be fortunate at last, and may it be set free from evils [*kaka*]!

### **Helen**

Ah, I am unhappy, for so is my fate! Menelaos, we are destroyed. The prophetess Theonoe is coming out of the house; it resounds as the [860] bolts are unfastened. Try to escape! But what is the use of trying? For whether she is absent or present she knows of your arrival here. Oh, I am lost, unfortunate! Saved [*sozein*] from Troy and from a barbarian land, you have come only to fall upon barbarian swords.

*Theonoe enters, attended by hand-maidens carrying torches.*

### **Theonoe**

[865] Please lead the way with blazing torches, and purify, according to the sacred law, the inmost corners of the air, so I may receive the pure breath of heaven; and you in turn, if someone has harmed the path by treading with unholy foot, submit it to the cleansing fire, [870] and strike the torch in front of me, so that I may pass through. And when you have paid back to the gods my customary observance [*nomos*], take the household flame within.

Helen, what about my prophecy—how is it? This man, your husband Menelaos, has openly arrived, [875] robbed of his ships and of your counterfeit. O unhappy man! What ordeal [*ponos*] you have escaped to come here; nor do you know whether you are to return home [*nostos*] or to stay here. For there will be strife [*eris*] among the gods, and a solemn assembly held by Zeus on your account this very day. [880] Hera, who was hostile to you before, is now friendly and wants to bring you safely home [*sozein*], with this woman, so that Hellas may learn that the marriage of Paris, Kypris' gift, was false; but Kypris wishes to ruin your homecoming [*nostos*], [885] so that she may not be convicted, or seem to have bought the prize of beauty by a marriage that was profitless as regards Helen. In the end [*telos*] the decision rests with me, whether to ruin you, as Kypris wishes, by telling my brother of your presence here, or to save your life by taking Hera's side, [890] concealing it from my brother, whose orders are for me to tell him, whenever you happen to come to this land.

One of you, go indicate [*semainein*] to my brother this man is here, so that I may secure my safety.

### **Helen**

Maiden, I fall at your knees as a suppliant, [895] and seat myself in this sad posture on behalf of myself and of this man; I am on the point of seeing him slain, after I have found him with such difficulty. Please do not tell your brother that my husband has returned to my loving [most *philai*] arms, [900] but save [*sozein*] us, I beseech you; do not forsake the piety that was once yours for your brother's sake, buying favors [*kharites*] that are wicked and unjust [*adikoi*]. For the god hates violence [*biā*], and commands everyone to have their possessions without robbery. [905] [Wealth that is unjust, though it may bring some power, ought to be avoided.] Heaven is common to all mortals, and so is the earth, where people ought to fill up their homes without having another's property, or taking it away by force [*biā*]. [910] At a critical time, but unhappily for me, Hermes gave me to your father to keep safe [*sozein*] for my husband, this man who is here and wishes to have me back. But how could he recover me if he is dead? How could your father ever restore the living to the dead? Now examine the will of the god and of your father; [915] would the *daimōn* and your dead father be willing to give back again their neighbor's goods, or would they not? I think they would. Therefore you should not esteem a thoughtless brother more than a good father. If you, who are a prophet

[*mantis*] and believe in divine affairs, [920] ruin the lawful [*dikaïos*] intention of your father and give gratification [*kharis*] to your lawless [not *dikaïos*] brother, it is disgraceful that you should have full knowledge of divine matters, both what is and what will be, and yet not know what is right [*dikaia*]. Save me, the unhappy one, enveloped in these troubles [*kaka*], [925] and grant me this trivial consequence of chance; for there is no mortal who does not hate Helen; I am famous throughout Hellas as the one who betrayed my husband and lived [*oikeîn*] in Phrygia's golden halls. If I come to Hellas and set foot once more in Sparta, [930] they will hear and see how they were ruined by the wiles of gods, while I was no traitor to my friends [*philoî*] after all; and so they will lead me back to being moderate [*sōphrōn*] again, and I shall betroth my daughter, whom no man now will marry; and, leaving this bitter beggar's life here, shall enjoy the goods that are in my home [*oikos*]. [935] And if this man were dead and slaughtered on a funeral pyre, I would be cherishing his memory with tears far away; but shall I be robbed of him when he is now alive and saved [*sozein*]?

Ah! not that, maiden, I beseech you: [940] grant me this favor [*kharis*], and imitate the character of a just [*dikaïos*] father; for this is the fairest glory [*kleos*] for children, when the child of a good father resembles its parents in character.

### **Chorus Leader**

The arguments here proposed are worthy of pity, [945] and so are you. But I have a longing [*pothos*] to hear what Menelaos will say to save his life [*psūkhē*].

### **Menelaos**

I could not endure to fall at your knees, or wet my eyes with tears; for if I were cowardly, I would greatly dishonor Troy. [950] And yet they say that it is fitting for a noble man to let tears fall from his eyes in misfortune. But I will not choose this honorable course, if it is honorable, in preference to bravery. But, if you think it right to save [*sozein*] a stranger [*xenos*] [955] seeking justly to regain his wife, then restore her and save [*sozein*] us in addition; if not, I would be wretched, not now for the first time but as often before, and you will seem to be an evil [*kakē*] woman. What I consider honest and worthy of me, [960] and what will touch your heart most closely, these things I will say at the tomb [*mnēma*] of your father, with yearning [*pothos*] for him.

Old man, dwelling [*oikeîn*] in this tomb of stone, give her back, I demand of you my wife, whom Zeus sent here for you to save [*sozein*] for me. [965] I know you will never restore her to me yourself, for you are dead; but this woman here will not think it right that her father, invoked from below, once so glorious, should bear a tarnished name; for she is the one in authority now.

You, too, Hādēs of the world below, I call as an ally; [970] you who have received so many bodies slain by my sword for Helen's sake, you have your payment; either restore them to life again now, or compel this woman to show herself better than her pious father, and give me back my wife. [975] But if you will rob me of her, I will tell you what she omitted in her speech. So that you may know, maiden, I am bound by an oath, first to go into battle with your brother; he or I must die; the matter is simple. [980] If he refuses to meet me face to face, but hunts us down, two suppliants at the tomb, by starvation, I am resolved to kill this woman, and then to plunge this two-edged sword through my heart, on the surface of the tomb, so that streams of blood may [985] run down the grave; we will lie, two corpses side by side upon this polished slab, a deathless grief to you, and a reproach to your father. Your brother will never marry this woman, nor will any other; but I will carry her off, [990] if not to my house [*oikos*], at any rate to death.

Why do I say this? If I turned to women's ways with tears, rather than being active, I would be pitied more. Kill me, if it seems good to you; you will not kill those who are without fame; but it is better to yield to what I say, [995] so that you may do may be just [*dikaiē*], and I may have my wife.

### **Chorus Leader**

You must judge these arguments, maiden. Decide [*krinein*] in such a way as to please all.

### **Theonoe**

My nature and my inclination lean towards piety; and I respect myself, and I would not defile [1000] my father's fame [*kleos*], or give gratification [*kharis*] to my brother at the cost of

creating pollution [*miasma*]. There is a great temple of justice [*dikē*] in my nature; and having this heritage from Nereus, I will try to save [*sozein*] it, Menelaos. [1005] Since Hera wishes to serve you, I will cast my vote on her side. May Kypris be gracious to me; but she has had nothing to do with me, and I will try to remain a virgin always. As for your reproaches against my father at this tomb, [1010] I have the same words [*mūthos*] to say. I would be doing wrong if I do not give her back; for that man, if he were alive, would have given her back for you to have, and you to her.

For truly there is retribution for these things, both among the dead and among all men living. The mind [*noos*] [1015] of the dead does not live, yet it has eternal thought as it falls into eternal ether. So as not to give advice at length, I will be silent as to what you have entreated, and I will never aid my brother's folly with my counsel. [1020] For I am doing him a service, though he does not think it, if I turn him from his godless life to holiness. You yourselves devise some course of action; I will stand out of your way by my silence. Begin with the gods, and beg [1025] Kypris to allow you to achieve a return [*nostos*] to your country, and that the intent of salvation [*sōtēriā*] that Hera has for you and your husband remain as it was. And you, my own dead father, never, as far as I have strength, shall you be called impious instead of pious. Theonoe and her attendants enter the palace.

### **Chorus Leader**

[1030] No one born lawless [without *dikē*] ever prospered, but in a just [*dikaios*] cause there is hope of *sōtēriā*.

### **Helen**

Menelaos, as far as the maiden is concerned, we are saved [*sozein*]. For the rest, you must contribute your advice and frame a device to bring us *sōtēriā*.

### **Menelaos**

[1035] Then listen; you have been in the house for a long time and are intimate with the king's servants.

**Helen**

What do you mean by that? You are offering hope, as if you were really about to do something useful for both of us.

**Menelaos**

Could you persuade someone in charge of the wagons [1040] and horses to give us a chariot?

**Helen**

I might; but how will we escape, in our ignorance of the country and the barbarian land?

**Menelaos**

You are right; it is impossible. Well, what if I were to hide in the house and kill the king with this two-edged sword?

**Helen**

[1045] His sister would never be silent or allow you to intend her own brother's death.

**Menelaos**

Nor indeed is there a ship in which we might be saved [*sozein*]; for the sea holds the one we had.

**Helen**

Listen to me, if even a woman can say something wise [*sophon*]. [1050] Are you willing to be called dead in word, though you are not dead?

**Menelaos**

It is a bad [*kakos*] omen; but if I profit by it, I am ready to be called dead in word, though I am not dead.

**Helen**

And truly I would mourn you, as women do, with hair cut short and laments before this

impious man.

**Menelaos**

[1055] What *sōtēriā* does this have for us two? This plan is a little out of date.

**Helen**

I will beg the king [*turannos*] of this country for permission to bury you in an empty tomb, as if you had really died at sea.

**Menelaos**

Suppose he allows it; then how shall we be saved [*sozein*] with no ship, [1060] when we have buried my body in the empty tomb?

**Helen**

I will urge him to give me a vessel, from which I shall have the offerings from your tomb let down into the sea's embrace.

**Menelaos**

You have spoken well, except for one thing: if he commands you to make an arrangement [*kosmos*] for a tomb on the dry land, your pretext comes to nothing.

**Helen**

[1065] But I will say it is not the custom in Hellas to bury those who have died at sea on the dry land.

**Menelaos**

You are setting this right, too; then I will sail with you, and help let down the ritual adornments [*kosmos*], in the same boat.

**Helen**

You must above all be at hand, [1070] with your sailors who escaped from the wreck.

**Menelaos**

Be sure that if I have a ship at anchor, they will be posted, man beside man, each with his sword.

**Helen**

You must direct everything; only let there be winds in our sails to guide us, and a speedy ship.

**Menelaos**

[1075] It will be so; for the *daimones* will bring my troubles [*ponos* plural] to an end. But from whom will you say that you heard I was dead?

**Helen**

From you; allege that you were the only one to escape death, when you were sailing with the son of Atreus, and that you saw him dead.

**Menelaos**

It is true that these rags thrown around my body [1080] will bear witness with me as to the shipwreck.

**Helen**

They have come at the right time, although then they seemed an ill-timed loss. Perhaps that misery may turn to good fortune.

**Menelaos**

Should I enter the house [*oikos*] with you, or am I to sit serene [*hēsukhos*] here at this tomb?

**Helen**

[1085] Stay here; for if he does something harsh to you, this tomb and your sword would protect you. But I will go into the house [*oikos*], cut off my hair, exchange my white robe for a

dark one, and tear my cheek with nails that make the flesh bloody. [1090] For the contest is a great one, and I see two turns of the scale: either I must die if I am detected in my plot, or else come home and save you as well.

Lady Hera, you who lie in the bed of Zeus, grant relief from their labors [*ponos*] to two pitiable creatures; [1095] we beg you, casting our arms straight towards heaven, where you have your home [*oikos*] in an embroidery of stars. And you, who won the prize of beauty at the price of my marriage, Kypris, daughter of Dione, do not destroy me utterly. You have maltreated me enough before now, [1100] handing over my name, though not my body, to barbarians. Let me die, if you want to kill me, in my native land. Why are you so insatiable for evils [*kaka*], practising arts of love, deceits, and treacherous schemes, and magic spells that bring bloodshed on families? [1105] If you were only moderate, in other ways you are by nature the sweetest of gods for men; I don't deny it.

*Helen enters the palace and Menelaos withdraws into the background.*

### **Chorus**

Let me call on you, beneath leafy haunts, sitting in your place of song, you, the most sweetly singing bird, [1110] tearful nightingale, oh, come, trilling through your tawny throat, to aid me in my lament, as I sing the piteous ordeals [*ponos*] of Helen and [1115] the tearful fate of Trojan women under the Achaeans' spears; when he [=Paris] sped over the surging plains with foreign oar, when he came, came bringing to Priam's clan from Lacedaemon [1120] you, Helen, his unhappy bride—Paris, fatally wedded, under the guidance of Aphrodite.

### **Chorus**

Many of the Achaeans have breathed out their last amid the spears and hurling stones and have gone to unhappy Hades; their wives have cut off their hair in sorrow, [1125] and their homes are left without a bride; an Achaean man, who had only a single ship, lit a blazing beacon on sea-girt Euboea, and destroyed many of them, casting them onto the rocks called Kapherides [1130] and the sea-shores of the Aegean, by the treacherous flame he kindled. The mountains of Malea provided no harbor, in the gusts of the storm, when Menelaos sped far away from his country, bearing on his ships a token of honor [*geras*] of the barbarian

expedition, no token of honor [*geras*] but strife [*eris*] [1135] with the Danaans, Hera's holy [*hieron*] phantom.

### **Chorus**

What is god, or what is not god, or what is in between— what mortal says he has found it by searching the farthest limit, [1140] when he sees divine affairs leaping here and there again and back, in contradictory and unexpected chances? You, Helen, are the daughter of Zeus; [1145] for a winged father begot you in Leda's womb; and then you were proclaimed throughout Hellas, betrayer, faithless, unjust [*a-dikē*], godless. I do not know whatever certainty is among mortals, [1150] but the word [*epos*] of the gods I have found true [*alēthēs*].

### **Chorus**

You are fools, who try to win a reputation for virtue [*aretē*] through war and marshalled lines of spears, senselessly putting an end to mortal troubles [*ponos*]; [1155] for if a bloody quarrel is to decide [*krinein*] it, strife [*eris*] will never leave off in the cities [*polis*] of men; by it they won as their lot bed-chambers of Priam's earth, when they could have set right by discussion [1160] the strife [*eris*] over you, O Helen. And now they are below in Hādēs' keeping, and fire has darted onto the walls like the bolt of Zeus, and you are bringing woe on woe . . . .

*Theoklymenos and his hunting attendants enter.*

### **Theoklymenos**

[1165] Greetings, tomb [*mnēma*] of my father! For I buried you, Proteus, in the passageway so that I could address you; and always as I leave and enter the house, I, your son Theoklymenos, call on you, father. You servants, take the hounds and hunting nets [1170] into the palace. I have rebuked myself many times; for do we not punish worthless men [*kakoi*] with death? And now I have heard that some Hellene has come openly to the land, without the guards' notice, [1175] either as a spy or thievishly hunting after Helen; he will die if only I can catch him. Ah! But it seems I have found everything in ruins; for the daughter of Tyndareus has deserted her seat at the tomb and has been carried away from the land. [1180] Ho there! undo the bars; loose the horses from their stalls, servants, and bring out my chariot, so that the wife whom I long for may not be carried away from this land without my

notice, for want of pain [*ponos*].

Wait! for I see that the one I am pursuing [1185] is still in the house, and has not fled.

*Helen enters from the palace, clad in mourning.*

You there, why have you put black robes instead of white on your body, and cut the hair from your noble head with a sword, and why do you drench your cheeks with pale tears, [1190] lamenting? Do you mourn, persuaded by dreams in the night, or have you broken your heart [*phrenes*] with grief because you heard some voice in the house [*oikos*]?

**Helen**

My lord—for now I name you with this word [*epos*] —I am destroyed; everything of mine is gone and I am nothing.

**Theoklymenos**

[1195] In what misfortune are you plunged? What has happened?

**Helen**

Menelaos—alas, how shall I say it?—is dead, my husband.

**Theoklymenos**

I do not rejoice at your words, but it is good fortune for me. How do you know? Did Theonoe tell you this?

**Helen**

Both she, and one who was there when he perished.

**Theoklymenos**

[1200] Someone has come who announces this for certain?

**Helen**

Someone has come; and may he go where I want him to go!

**Theoklymenos**

Who is it? Where is he? so that I may learn this more clearly.

**Helen**

That one, who is sitting crouched at this tomb.

**Theoklymenos**

Apollo! He certainly has unattractive clothing.

**Helen**

[1205] Alas! I think my husband is in the same situation also.

**Theoklymenos**

What is this man's country, and where did he come from, to land here?

**Helen**

He is a Hellene, one of the Achaeans who sailed with my husband.

**Theoklymenos**

What kind of death does he say Menelaos died?

**Helen**

The most piteous, in the watery waves at sea.

**Theoklymenos**

[1210] On what part of the barbarous ocean was he sailing?

**Helen**

He was cast up on the harborless rocks of Libya.

**Theoklymenos**

How did this man not perish if he was sailing with him?

**Helen**

There are times when worthless men [*kakoi*] have more luck than the noble [*esthloi*].

**Theoklymenos**

Where did he leave the wreckage of his ship before coming here?

**Helen**

[1215] Where ruin may come upon it— but not on Menelaos!

**Theoklymenos**

He is already ruined. In what ship did this man come?

**Helen**

Sailors happened to meet him and took him up, as he says.

**Theoklymenos**

Where then is that evil thing [*kakon*] that was sent to Troy in your place?

**Helen**

You mean the cloud image? It has gone into the air.

**Theoklymenos**

[1220] O Priam, and Trojan lands, how you have perished in vain!

**Helen**

I too have shared misfortunes with Priam's race.

**Theoklymenos**

Did he leave your husband unburied, or did he hide him in the earth?

**Helen**

He is unburied; I am so unhappy in my troubles [*kaka*]!

**Theoklymenos**

It is for this that you have cut your locks of golden hair?

**Helen**

[1225] Yes, for he is dear [*philos*] to me, whoever he is, being here.

**Theoklymenos**

She rightly weeps for this misfortune. . .

**Helen**

It is certainly easy to escape your sister's notice!

**Theoklymenos**

No, indeed. Well, what now? Will you continue to live at this tomb?

**Helen**

Why do you jeer at me? Won't you let the dead man be?

**Theoklymenos**

[1230] No, for you are loyal to your husband and avoid me.

**Helen**

No longer; begin my wedding now.

**Theoklymenos**

It has come after a long time, but still I commend you for it.

**Helen**

Do you know what you should do? Let us forget what is past.

**Theoklymenos**

On what terms? One favor [*kharis*] deserves another favor [*kharis*].

**Helen**

[1235] Let us make a truce; be reconciled to me.

**Theoklymenos**

I relinquish my quarrel [*neikos*] with you; may it go away on wings.

**Helen**

Now by your knees, since you are indeed a friend [*philos*]

**Theoklymenos**

What thing do you hunt after, that you stretch out a suppliant hand to me?

**Helen**

I wish to bury my dead husband.

**Theoklymenos**

[1240] What? Is there a tomb for the absent? Or will you bury a shadow?

**Helen**

It is a custom [*nomos*] among the Hellenes, whenever someone dies at sea [*pontos*]—

**Theoklymenos**

To do what? The descendants of Pelops are certainly clever [*sophoi*] in such matters.

**Helen**

To carry out the funeral rites in empty woven robes.

**Theoklymenos**

Hold the funeral; set up the tomb wherever you wish.

**Helen**

[1245] We do not give burial like this to sailors who have perished.

**Theoklymenos**

How then? I know nothing of the customs [*nomos*] in Hellas.

**Helen**

We take out of harbor to the sea [*pontos*] all that is the dead man's due.

**Theoklymenos**

Then what am I to give you for the dead man?

**Helen**

This man knows, but I have no experience, as I was fortunate before.

**Theoklymenos**

[1250] Stranger [*xenos*], of news you have brought a message that is dear [*philē*].

**Menelaos**

Not for me, certainly, nor for the dead man.

**Theoklymenos**

How do you bury those who have died at sea [*pontos*]?

**Menelaos**

Each according to his means.

**Theoklymenos**

As far as wealth goes, say what you want, for her sake [*kharis*].

**Menelaos**

[1255] There must be a blood-offering first to the dead.

**Theoklymenos**

Blood of what? Indicate [*semainein*] it to me, and I will obey.

**Menelaos**

You decide that yourself; whatever you give will suffice.

**Theoklymenos**

Among barbarians it is a custom [*nomos*] to sacrifice a horse or a bull.

**Menelaos**

If you make a gift, take care to give nothing mean.

**Theoklymenos**

[1260] I have no lack of such in my blessed [*olbios*] herds.

**Menelaos**

Next, a couch empty of the body is decked and carried in procession.

**Theoklymenos**

It will be done; what else is it customary to add?

**Menelaos**

Bronze arms; for the spear was dear [*philos*] to him.

**Theoklymenos**

These will be worthy of the descendants of Pelops, and these we will give.

**Menelaos**

[1265] And for the rest, all the lovely offspring that the earth bears.

**Theoklymenos**

How then? In what way do you let them fall into the waves?

**Menelaos**

A ship must be ready, and rowers.

**Theoklymenos**

How far from the shore does the ship put out?

**Menelaos**

So far that the foam in her wake can scarcely be seen from the land.

**Theoklymenos**

[1270] But why? Why does Hellas observe this custom?

**Menelaos**

So that the waves may not wash pollution back ashore.

**Theoklymenos**

A swift Phoenician ship will be there.

**Menelaos**

That would be well done, and would bring gratification [*kharis*] to Menelaos, too.

**Theoklymenos**

Can you not perform these rites well enough without Helen?

**Menelaos**

[1275] This task belongs to mother, or wife, or children.

**Theoklymenos**

According to you, the work of burying her husband belongs to her.

**Menelaos**

Yes indeed; piety demands that the dead be not robbed of their due.

**Theoklymenos**

Let her go; it is in my interest to foster piety in a wife. Go in the house [*oikos*] and choose ritual adornment [*kosmos*] for the dead; [1280] I will not send you away from the land empty-handed either, since you have done her a favor [*kharis*]. As you have brought me good [*esthlai*] news, you will receive clothing instead of going in rags, and food, so that you may reach your country, since now I see you doing very badly indeed. [1285] As for you, poor lady, do not wear yourself out in a hopeless case; Menelaos has met his doom, and your dead husband could not return to life.

**Menelaos**

This is your duty, young woman; you must be content with the husband at your side, and let go the one that no longer exists; [1290] for this is best [*arista*] for you, according to what has happened. And if I come to Hellas and find safety [*sōtēriā*], I will put to an end your former bad reputation, if you are such a wife as you ought to be to your husband.

### **Helen**

I will; my husband will never find fault with me; [1295] you yourself will be at hand to know it. Now go inside, unhappy man, and find the bath, and change your clothes. I will show my kindness to you without delay. For you will perform the due services with more kindly feeling for my most *philos* Menelaos, [1300] if you get from me what you ought to have.

*Theoklymenos, Helen, Menelaos enter the palace.*

### **Chorus**

Once with swift foot the mountain Mother of the gods rushed through the wooded glen, and the river's streams [1305] and the deep-thundering sea wave, in yearning [*pothos*] for her lost daughter, whose name may not be spoken. The loudly rattling castanets cried out a shrill sound, [1310] when they, swift-footed as whirlwinds, followed the goddess on her chariot yoked to wild creatures, after the girl that was snatched away from the circling chorus [*choros*] of maidens— [1315] here Artemis with her bow, and there the grim-eyed goddess, in full armor, with her spear. But Zeus, who sees clearly from his throne in heaven, brought to pass another destiny.

### **Chorus**

When the mother ceased from her wild [1320] wandering ordeal [*ponos*], searching for the treacherous rape of her daughter, she crossed the snow-capped heights of the nymphs of Mount Ida; [1325] and in sorrow [*penthos*] cast herself down in the rocky woods deep in snow; and, by not making fruitful with crops the barren fields of the earth for mortals, she destroyed that generation of people. [1330] She would not send forth the rich nourishment of leafy tendrils for the herds, and life was leaving the cities [*polis*]. No sacrifice was offered to the gods, and on the altars were no cakes to burn; [1335] she made the dew-fed springs of clear water cease flowing, the avenger in sorrow [*penthos*] for her child.

## Chorus

When she made an end to banquets for gods and the family [*genos*] of mortals, Zeus spoke out, appeasing the [1340] Mother's gloomy wrath: "Go, holy Graces [*Kharites*], go and with a loud cry take from Demeter's angry heart her grief for the maiden; [1345] and you, Muses, with song and dance [*khoros*]." Then Kypris, fairest of the blessed [*makares*] gods, first took up the rumbling voice of bronze and the drum with tight-stretched skin; and the goddess smiled, [1350] and received in her hand the deep-toned flute, pleased with its loud note.

## Chorus

You made burnt offerings that were neither cosmically ordained [*themis*] nor holy, in the chambers of the gods, [1355] and you have incurred the cosmic sanction [*mēnis*] of the great mother, child, by not honoring her sacrifices. Oh! Great is the power of dappled fawn-skin robes, [1360] and green ivy that crowns a sacred [*hieros*] thyrsos, the whirling beat of the tambourine circling in the air, hair streaming wildly for the revelry of Bromios, [1365] and the night-long festivals of the goddess. . . . You gloried in your beauty alone.

*Helen comes out of the palace alone.*

## Helen

My dear friends [*philai*], all goes well for us in the house [*oikos*]; [1370] for the daughter of Proteus, who aids us in our theft, has told her brother nothing when questioned as to my husband's coming; for my sake [*kharis*] she said that he was not alive, but dead and buried. . . . My husband has snatched up by chance fine things indeed; [1375] for he is carrying away the armor he was intending to let fall into the sea, putting his noble arm through the shield-strap and holding a spear in his right hand, on pretence of providing favor [*kharis*] to the dead. He has equipped his body with weapons conveniently for the battle, [1380] in order to set up the trophies of countless barbarians, whenever we embark on the oared ship. I adorned him with robes in place of his shipwrecked garments, and I washed him, a long-delayed bath in water from the stream. [1385] But I must be silent, for the man is coming from the house who thinks he holds my marriage ready in his hands; and I claim your goodwill and strict silence, so that, when we have saved [*sozein*] ourselves, we may be able some day to save [*sozein*] you

also.

*Theoklymenos and Menelaos enter, with a train of attendants bearing the offerings for the funeral rites.*

**Theoklymenos**

[1390] Advance in order, servants, as the stranger [*xenos*] directed, bearing the funeral gifts for the sea. But you, Helen, if you will agree with my words, be persuaded and stay here; for you will do your husband equal service whether you are present or not. [1395] For I am afraid that some sudden desire [*pothos*] should persuade you to throw your body into the swelling waves, bedazzled by the charms [*kharites*] of your former husband; you are grieving for him too much, although he is lost.

**Helen**

O my new husband, I must give honor [*tīmē*] [1400] to my first marriage-bed and the one whose company I shared as a bride; for I could even die with my husband, I loved him so much. But how could he show me gratitude [*kharis*], if I were to share death with him? Let me go and pay funeral rites to the dead in person. [1405] May the gods give to you the things I wish and also to this stranger [*xenos*] here, for his assistance! And you will have in me such a wife at home as you ought to have, since you are doing a good service to Menelaos and to me; for surely these events are leading to some good fortune. [1410] But now appoint someone to give us a ship in which to carry these gifts, so that I may have the full force of your favor [*kharis*].

**Theoklymenos**

*to an attendant*

You, go and give them a Sidonian ship of fifty oars, and rowers also.

**Helen**

This man who is ordering the funeral will be in command of the ship, won't he?

**Theoklymenos**

[1415] Most certainly; my sailors must obey him.

**Helen**

Repeat the order, so that they may clearly understand you.

**Theoklymenos**

I repeat the order, and a third time too, if it is *philon* to you.

**Helen**

May you have benefit from it—and I from my plans!

**Thoeklymenos**

Do not ruin your skin with too much weeping now.

**Helen**

[1420] This day will show my gratitude to you.

**Theoklymenos**

The state of the dead is nothingness; labor [*ponos*] for them is vain.

**Helen**

There is something of what I say both there and here.

**Theoklymenos**

You will not find in me a husband at all more *kakos* than Menelaos.

**Helen**

You are not at fault in any way; good luck is all I need.

**Theoklymenos**

[1425] That is in your power, if you show kindness to me.

**Helen**

This is not a lesson I shall have to learn now, to love my friends [*philoí*].

**Theoklymenos**

Would you like me to send out the equipment in person, working together with you?

**Helen**

Not at all! Do not become a slave to your slaves, lord.

**Theoklymenos**

Come then! I have no concern with the customs [*nomos*] of the descendants of Pelops. [1430] My house is pure; for Menelaos did not lose his life [*psūkhē*] here. Let someone go and tell my chieftains to bring marriage-offerings to my house [*oikos*]; the whole earth must ring with joyful wedding-songs [1435] in celebration of my wedding with Helen, so that it may be envied. You, stranger [*xenos*], go and give to the sea's embrace these offerings to this woman's husband, who was once alive; and then hurry back into the house [*oikos*] with my wife, so that after sharing with me her marriage-feast, you may [1440] set out for the house [*oikos*] or remain here in happiness.

*Theoklymenos and his retinue enter the palace.*

**Menelaos**

O Zeus, called father and wise [*sophos*] god, look on us and alter our troubles [*kaka*]! As we drag our fortunes to the rocky hill, make haste to join with us; if you touch us with your finger-tip only, [1445] we shall reach our longed-for goal. There has been enough distress in what we have suffered before. I have invoked you, gods, with many names, good and painful; I am not bound to be unfortunate forever, but to advance in a straight course. If you grant me one favor [*kharis*], [1450] you will make me fortunate [verb of *eudaimoniā*] hereafter.

*Menelaos, Helen and their train of attendants depart.*

### **Chorus**

O swift Phoenician ship of Sidon, dear [*philē*] to the surging waves, mother of the oar, leader of the lovely dancing [1455] of dolphins, when the sea is clear of breezes and Pontos' gray-green daughter, spirit of calm, says these words: "Spread your sails [1460] to the sea-breezes, as you go on your way, grasp your oars of pine, oh! sailors, sailors, speeding Helen on her way to the shore with good harbor, the headland of the abode [*oikos*] of Perseus."

### **Chorus**

[1465] Perhaps you may find the daughters of Leukippos beside the swell of the river or before the temple of Pallas, when at last you join in the dances [*khoros*] or the revels of Hyakinthos [1470] in night-long joy—Hyakinthos, whom Phoebus killed with the round discus, contesting for the farthest throw—a day of the sacrifice of oxen in the Laconian land; [1475] the son of Zeus said to respect it; and you may find the girl whom you left at your house [*oikos*], Hermione, for as yet no torch has lit the way to her marriage.

### **Chorus**

Oh, that we had wings to cleave the air, where the birds of Libya go in their ranks, [1480] leaving the winter rain, obedient to the piping of their veteran leader, who raises his exultant cry [1485] as he wings his way over unmoistened and crop-bearing plains of the earth. O you winged long-necked comrades of the racing clouds, go on beneath the Pleiades in their central station [1490] and Orion of the night; deliver the message, as you settle on Eurotas' banks, that Menelaos has sacked the city [*polis*] of Dardanos, and will come home.

### **Chorus**

[1495] May you come at last, speeding over your horses' path through the sky, sons of Tyndareus, under the whirling of the radiant stars; you who dwell in heaven, Helen's saviors [*sōtēr*], [1500] go over the gray-green swell and the dark gray surge of sea-waves, sending the sailors [1505] favoring breezes from Zeus; and cast away from your sister her ill-fame from marriage with a barbarian, the punishment she received from the competition [*eris*] on Ida; [1510] but she never went to the land of Ilion, to the towers of Phoebus.

*The second messenger enters in haste, as Theoklymenos comes out of the palace.*

**Second Messenger**

. . . for you will soon hear further troubles [*kaka*] from me.

**Theoklymenos**

What is it?

**Messenger**

Go to work on the courtship of another [1515] woman; for Helen has left the country.

**Theoklymenos**

Carried up on wings, or treading on the earth?

**Messenger**

Menelaos has taken her off as plunder, out of the land; he was the one that came with the news of his own death.

**Theoklymenos**

O you are saying dreadful things [*deina*]! What ship carried her [1520] off from this land?  
Your story is unbelievable.

**Messenger**

The very one that you gave to the stranger [*xenos*]; and he has gone with your sailors, so that you may know everything in brief.

**Theoklymenos**

How? I am eager to know; for I never expected that a single hand could excel over [1525] so many sailors, with whom you were sent.

## Messenger

When the daughter of Zeus had left this royal house and started for the sea, delicately picking her way, she most skillfully [*sophos*] began to mourn her husband, though he was close at hand and not dead. [1530] When we reached the enclosure of your dockyards, we began to launch the Sidonian ship on her first voyage, with her fifty benches and full measure of rowers. Task gave way to task: one set up the mast, another set up the oars [1535] . . . and the rudders were lowered by their cross-bars. And during this labor, men of Hellas who had been fellow-voyagers with Menelaos were watching us, it seems, and they drew near to the beach, clad in the rags of shipwrecked men, [1540] handsome, but rough to look upon. And the son of Atreus, when he saw them approach, spoke to them, craftily introducing the reason for his mourning: “Unhappy sailors, how have you arrived? From the wreckage of what Achaean ship? [1545] Are you here to help bury the dead son of Atreus, whose missing body this lady, daughter of Tyndareus, is honoring with an empty grave?” They wept in a feigned manner, and went to the ship, carrying aboard the offerings to be thrown into the sea for Menelaos. We were suspicious at this, [1550] and said to each other that there would be a crowd of those additional passengers; but still we remained silent, safeguarding [*sozein*] your orders; for by bidding the stranger [*xenos*] command the vessel, you threw everything into confusion.

Well, we easily put the other victims on the ship, for they were light; [1555] but the bull did not want to go forward along the plank, but kept bellowing loudly, rolling his eyes around; and, arching his back and peering along his horns, he prevented us from touching him. But Helen's husband [1560] called out: “O you who sacked the city [*polis*] of Ilion, come pick up this bull on young shoulders, as is the custom [*nomos*] in Hellas, and cast him into the prow . . . the sacrifice to the dead man.” [1565] Then they came at his summons, and caught up the bull and carried him on to the deck. And Menelaos stroked the horse on neck and brow, coaxing it to go aboard.

In the end [*telos*], when the ship was fully loaded, [1570] Helen climbed up the ladder with elegant step, and took her seat in the middle of the rowers' benches, and he was near by, Menelaos who was called dead. The rest, equally divided on the right and left sides of the ship, sat down, each beside his man, with swords concealed beneath their cloaks, [1575] and

the waves were filled with shouting as we heard the voice of the boatswain.

Now when we had put out from land, neither very far nor very near, the helmsman asked, “Shall we sail yet further, stranger [*xenos*], or is this far enough? [1580] For the command of this ship is yours.” And he answered, “Far enough for me.” Holding a sword in his right hand, he stepped into the prow; and, standing over the bull to slay it, with no mention of any dead man, he cut its throat and prayed: “O Poseidon of the sea, [1585] who lives in the deep, and you holy daughters of Nereus, bring me and my wife safely [*sōzein*] away from this land to Nauplia's shore!” Streams of blood, a good omen for the stranger [*xenos*], darted into the waves. And someone said, “There is treachery in this voyage; [1590] let us sail back again! You, give an order for the right oar, you, turn your rudder.” But the son of Atreus, standing where he slew the bull, cried out to his comrades, “Why do you, the pick of Hellas, delay to slaughter and kill the barbarians [1595] and hurl them from the ship into the waves?” And the boatswain cried the opposite command to your rowers: “Some of you catch up planks at the end, break up the benches, or snatch the oars from the locks, and make the heads of these hostile foreigners [*xenoi*] bloody!”.

[1600] They all leapt upright, some with oars in their hands, others with swords; and the ship ran with blood. Helen cheered them on from the stern: “Where is the fame [*kleos*] you won in Troy? Show it against the barbarians!” In their eagerness, some would [1605] fall, some stood upright, you would have seen others lying dead. But Menelaos, in full armor, wherever he spied that his comrades were suffering, would go there, sword in hand; and so we dived [1610] from the ship, and he cleared the benches of your rowers. Then going to the helmsman he told him to sail a straight course to Hellas. So they set up the mast, and favoring breezes blew.

They are gone from here. But I escaped death and let myself down by the anchor into the sea; [1615] and just as I was worn out, some fisherman took me up, and put me out on land, to bring you this report. Nothing is more useful to mankind than a balanced [*sōphrōn*] distrust.

### **Chorus Leader**

I never would have believed that Menelaos could have eluded both us [1620] and you, O king,

the way he did on his arrival.

**Theoklymenos**

Caught by a woman's tricks, unhappy that I am! My bride has escaped me. If the ship could have been pursued and overtaken, I would have made an effort to catch the strangers [*xenos*] at once; but now I will avenge myself upon my treacherous sister, [1625] for she saw Menelaos in my house and did not tell me. Therefore she will never deceive another man by her oracles.

*A servant comes out of the palace.*

**Servant**

You, there! Where are you rushing off to, my lord? to what bloody deed?

**Theoklymenos**

Where justice [*dikē*] calls me. Get out of my way!

**Servant**

I will not let go of your robe, for you are striving after great evils [*kaka*].

**Theoklymenos**

[1630] Will you rule over your master, although you are a slave?

**Servant**

Yes, for I am in my right mind.

**Theoklymenos**

Not in my opinion, if you will not let me—

**Servant**

No, I will not let you!

**Theoklymenos**

Let me kill my most wicked [*kakē*] sister—

**Servant**

No, she is most pious.

**Theoklymenos**

Who betrayed me—

**Servant**

It was a noble betrayal, done with *dikē*.

**Theoklymenos**

When she gave my bride to another.

**Servant**

To the one who had a better right.

**Theoklymenos**

[1635] Who has rights over my property?

**Servant**

The one who received her from her father.

**Theoklymenos**

But fortune gave her to me.

**Servant**

And necessity took her away.

**Theoklymenos**

It is not for you to judge my affairs.

**Servant**

Yes, if my counsel is better.

**Theoklymenos**

So I am your subject, not your ruler.

**Servant**

Subject to do right, not wrong.

**Theoklymenos**

It seems you desire to be killed.

**Servant**

Kill me; [1640] you will not kill your sister with my consent, but me instead; to die for their masters is the most glorious act for noble slaves.

*The Dioskouroi appear from above.*

**Dioskouroi**

Restrain the anger that is wrongly carrying you away, Theoklymenos, king of this land. We, the twin sons of Zeus, are calling you; Leda once gave birth to us, [1645] with Helen, who has fled from your home. For you are angry about a marriage that is not destined for you; and your sister Theonoe, daughter of a Nereid goddess, does not wrong you when she gives honor [*tīmē*] to the word of the gods and her father's just commands.

[1650] For it was ordained that Helen should live in your house up to the present time; but no longer, since Troy is wholly destroyed and she has provided her name to the gods; she must

be united in her own marriage, [1655] and come home and live with her husband. But hold your black sword away from your sister, and believe that she is acting with moderation [*sōphrōn*] in this matter. Long ago, before this, we would have saved our sister, seeing that Zeus has made us gods; [1660] but we are weaker than fate and also than the gods, who decreed these things to happen in this way.

This is my bidding to you, while I say to my sister: “Sail on with your husband; and you shall have a favorable breeze; for we, your two savior [*sōtēr*] brothers, [1665] riding over the sea [*pontos*], will send you to your fatherland. And when you make the last turn of the race-course and reach the fulfillment [*telos*] of your life, you will be named as a goddess, and share libations with the Dioskouroi, and receive gifts of *xeniā* from men with us; for such is the will of Zeus. [1670] And the place where the son of Maia first set the boundary to your course through the air, when he took you away from Sparta, stealing your body so that Paris would not marry you—I mean the island stretched like a sentinel along the coast of Attica—shall be called by your name among men for the future, since it welcomed you [1675] when you were stolen from your home. And it is destined by the gods that the wanderer Menelaos will dwell in the islands of the blessed [*makares*]; for *daimones* do not hate the well-born, but the ordeals [*ponos*] of the multitude are greater.”

### **Theoklymenos**

[1680] You sons of Leda and Zeus, I will let go the past abuse [*neikos*] concerning your sister; and mine I shall no longer try to kill. Let Helen go home [*oikos*], if the gods think it right. Know that you are born from the same blood as a sister [1685] who is the best [*aristē*] and also most *sōphrōn*; may you fare well, for the sake of Helen's most well-bred mind, a quality not to be found in many women.

### **Chorus**

*chanting*

Many are the forms of divinities, and many things the gods bring to pass un hoped for. [1690] And what was expected has not reached a *telos*; for what was not expected, a god finds a way. Such was the result of this action.