



# **THE SUPPLIANTS**

**AESCHYLUS**

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# THE SUPPLIANTS

BY  
AESCHYLUS

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The Suppliants By Aeschylus.

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**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Grudge not, in telling, his name too to tell.

**LEADER**

Aegyptus: thou my lineage old hast heard-  
Strive then to aid a kindred Argive band.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Yea of a truth, in backward scope of time,  
Of Argive race ye seem: but say what chance  
Fell on you, goading you from home and land?

**LEADER**

Lord of Pelasgian men, calamity  
Is manifold and diverse; as of birds  
Feather from feather differs, so of men  
The woes are sundry. Who had dared foretell  
That this our sudden flight, this hate and fear  
Of loathly wedlock, would on Argos' shore  
Set forth a race of kindred lineage?

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

What crave ye of these gods of festival,  
Holding up newly-plucked white-tufted boughs?

**LEADER**

Ne'er to be slaves unto Aegyptus' race.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Doth your own hate, or doth the law forbid?

**LEADER**

Not as our lords, but as unloved, we chide them.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

'Tis from such wedlock that advancement comes,

**LEADER**

How easy is it, from the weak to turn!

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

How then toward you can I be conscience-clear?

**LEADER**

Deny us, though Aegyptus' race demand.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

A heavy task thou namest, a rash war.

**LEADER**

But Justice champions them who strike for her.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Yea, if their side was from the outset hers.

**LEADER**

Revere the gods thus crowned, who steer the State.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Awe thrills me, seeing these shrines with leafage crowned.

*The whole CHORUS now sings its responses to the KING.*

**CHORUS**

*strophe 1*

Yea, stern the wrath of Zeus, the suppliants' lord.

Child of Palaichthon, royal chief

Of thy Pelasgians, hear!

Bow down thine heart to my relief-

A fugitive, a suppliant, swift with fear,

A creature whom the wild wolves chase

O'er toppling crags; in piteous case

Aloud, afar she lows,

Calling the herdsman's trusty arm to save her from her foes!

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Lo, with bowed heads beside our city shrines

Ye sit 'neath shade of new-plucked olive-boughs.

Our distant kin's resentment Heaven forefend!

Let not this hap, unhoped and unforeseen,

Bring war on us: for strife we covet not.

**CHORUS**

*antistrophe 1*

Justice, the daughter of right-dealing Zeus,  
 Justice, the queen of suppliants, look down,  
 That this our plight no ill may loose  
 Upon your town!  
 This word, even from the young, let age and wisdom learn:  
 If thou to suppliants show grace,  
 Thou shalt not lack Heaven's grace in turn,  
 So long as virtue's gifts on heavenly shrines have place.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Not at my private hearth ye sit and sue;  
 And if the city bear a common stain,  
 Be it the common toil to cleanse the same:  
 Therefore no pledge, no promise will I give,  
 Ere counsel with the commonwealth be held.

**CHORUS***strophe 2*

Nay, but the source of sway, the city's self, art thou,  
 A power unjudged! thine, only thine,  
 To rule the right of hearth and shrine!  
 Before thy throne and sceptre all men bow!  
 Thou, in all causes lord, beware the curse divine!

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

May that curse fall upon mine enemies!  
 I cannot aid you without risk of scathe,  
 Nor scorn your prayers-unmerciful it were.



Perplexed, distraught I stand, and fear alike  
The twofold chance, to do or not to do.

### **CHORUS**

*antistrophe 2*

Have heed of him who looketh from on high,  
The guard of woeful mortals, whosoe'er  
Unto their fellows cry,  
And find no pity, find no justice there.  
Abiding in his wrath, the suppliants' lord  
Doth smite, unmoved by cries, unbent by prayerful word.

### **THE KING OF ARGOS**

But if Aegyptus' children grasp you here,  
Claiming, their country's right, to hold you theirs  
As next of kin, who dares to counter this?  
Plead ye your country's laws, if plead ye may,  
That upon you they lay no lawful hand.

### **CHORUS**

*strophe 3*

Let me not fall, O nevermore,  
A prey into the young men's hand;  
Rather than wed whom I abhor,  
By pilot-stars I flee this land;  
O king, take justice to thy side,  
And with the righteous powers decide!

### **THE KING OF ARGOS**

Hard is the cause-make me not judge thereof.  
 Already I have vowed it, to do nought  
 Save after counsel with my people ta'en,  
 King though I be; that ne'er in after time,  
 If ill fate chance, my people then may say-  
 In aid of strangers thou the State hast slain.

### **CHORUS**

*antistrophe 3*

Zeus, lord of kinship, rules at will  
 The swaying balance, and surveys  
 Evil and good; to men of ill  
 Gives evil, and to good men praise,  
 And thou-since true those scales do sway-  
 Shalt thou from justice shrink away?

### **THE KING OF ARGOS**

A deep, a saving counsel here there needs-  
 An eye that like a diver to the depth  
 Of dark perplexity can pass and see,  
 Undizzied, unconfused. First must we care  
 That to the State and to ourselves this thing  
 Shall bring no ruin; next, that wrangling hands  
 Shall grasp you not as prey, nor we ourselves  
 Betray you thus embracing sacred shrines,  
 Nor make the avenging all-destroying god,  
 Who not in hell itself sets dead men free,  
 A grievous inmate, an abiding bane.  
 -Spake I not right, of saving counsel's need?

### **CHORUS**

*strophe 4*

Yea, counsel take and stand to aid  
 At justice' side and mine.  
 Betray not me, the timorous maid  
 Whom far beyond the brine  
 A godless violence cast forth forlorn.

*antistrophe 4*

O King, wilt thou behold-  
 Lord of this land, wilt thou behold me torn  
 From altars manifold?  
 Bethink thee of the young men's wrath and lust,  
 Hold off their evil pride;

*strophe 5*

Steel not thyself to see the suppliant thrust  
 From hallowed statues' side,  
 Haled by the frontlet on my forehead bound,  
 As steeds are led, and drawn  
 By hands that drag from shrine and altar-mound  
 My vesture's fringed lawn.

*antistrophe 5*

Know thou that whether for Aegyptus' race  
 Thou dost their wish fulfil,  
 Or for the gods and for each holy place-  
 Be thy choice good or ill,  
 Blow is with blow requited, grace with grace.  
 Such is Zeus' righteous will.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Yea, I have pondered: from the sea of doubt  
 Here drives at length the bark of thought ashore;  
 Landward with screw and windlass haled, and firm,  
 Clamped to her props, she lies. The need is stern;  
 With men or gods a mighty strife we strive  
 Perforce, and either hap in grief concludes.  
 For, if a house be sacked, new wealth for old  
 Not hard it is to win-if Zeus the lord  
 Of treasure favour-more than quits the loss,  
 Enough to pile the store of wealth full high;  
 Or if a tongue shoot forth untimely speech,  
 Bitter and strong to goad a man to wrath,  
 Soft words there be to soothe that wrath away:  
 But what device shall make the war of kin  
 Bloodless? that woe, the blood of many beasts,  
 And victims manifold to many gods,  
 Alone can cure. Right glad I were to shun  
 This strife, and am more fain of ignorance  
 Than of the wisdom of a woe endured.  
 The gods send better than my soul foretells!

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

Of many cries for mercy, hear the end.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Say on, then, for it shall not 'scape mine ear.

**LEADER**

Girdles we have, and bands that bind our robes.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Even so; such things beseem a woman's wear.

**LEADER**

Know, then, with these a fair device there is-

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Speak, then: what utterance doth this foretell?

**LEADER**

Unless to us thou givest pledge secure

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

What can thy girdles' craft achieve for thee?

**LEADER**

Strange votive tablets shall these statues deck.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Mysterious thy resolve-avow it clear.

**LEADER**

Swiftly to hang me on these sculptured gods!

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Thy word is as a lash to urge my heart.

**LEADER**

Thou seest truth, for I have cleared thine eyes.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Yea, and woes manifold, invincible,  
 A crowd of ills, sweep on me torrent-like.  
 My bark goes forth upon a sea of troubles  
 Unfathomed, ill to traverse, harbourless.  
 For if my deed shall match not your demand,  
 Dire, beyond shot of speech, shall be the bane  
 Your death's pollution leaves unto this land.  
 Yet if against your kin, Aegyptus' race,  
 Before our gates I front the doom of war,  
 Will not the city's loss be sore? Shall men  
 For women's sake incarnadine the ground?  
 But yet the wrath of Zeus, the suppliants' lord,  
 I needs must fear: most awful unto man  
 The terror of his anger. Thou, old man,  
 The father of these maidens, gather up  
 Within your arms these wands of suppliance,  
 And lay them at the altars manifold  
 Of all our country's gods, that all the town  
 Know, by this sign, that ye come here to sue.  
 Nor, in thy haste, do thou say aught of me.  
 Swift is this folk to censure those who rule;  
 But, if they see these signs of suppliance,  
 It well may chance that each will pity you,  
 And loathe the young men's violent pursuit;  
 And thus a fairer favour you may find:  
 For, to the helpless, each man's heart is kind.

**DANAUS**

To us, beyond gifts manifold it is  
 To find a champion thus compassionate;  
 Yet send with me attendants, of thy folk,  
 Rightly to guide me, that I duly find  
 Each altar of your city's gods that stands  
 Before the fane, each dedicated shrine;  
 And that in safety through the city's ways  
 I may pass onwards: all unlike to yours  
 The outward semblance that I wear-the race  
 That Nilus rears is all dissimilar  
 To that of Inachus. Keep watch and ward  
 Lest heedlessness bring death: full oft, I ween,  
 Friend hath slain friend, not knowing whom he slew.

### **THE KING OF ARGOS**

Go at his side, attendants,-he saith well.  
 On to the city's consecrated shrines!  
 Nor be of many words to those ye meet,  
 The while this suppliant voyager ye lead.

*DANAUS departs with attendants.*

### **LEADER**

Let him go forward, thy command obeying.  
 But me how biddest, how assurest thou?

### **THE KING OF ARGOS**

Leave there the new-plucked boughs, thy sorrow's sign.

### **LEADER**

Thus beckoned forth, at thy behest I leave them.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Now to this level precinct turn thyself.

**LEADER**

Unconsecrate it is, and cannot shield me.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

We will not yield thee to those falcons' greed.

**LEADER**

What help? more fierce they are than serpents fell.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

We spake thee fair-speak thou them fair in turn.

**LEADER**

What marvel that we loathe them, scared in soul?

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Awe towards a king should other fears transcend.

**LEADER**

Thus speak, thus act, and reassure my mind.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**



Not long thy sire shall leave thee desolate.  
 But I will call the country's indwellers,  
 And with soft words th' assembly will persuade,  
 And warn your sire what pleadings will avail.  
 Therefore abide ye, and with prayer entreat  
 The country's gods to compass your desire;  
 The while I go, this matter to provide,  
 Persuasion and fair fortune at my side.

*The KING OF ARGOS departs with his retinue. The CHORUS forms to sing its prayer to Zeus.*

## **CHORUS**

### *strophe 1*

O King of Kings, among the blest  
 Thou highest and thou happiest,  
 Listen and grant our prayer,  
 And, deeply loathing, thrust  
 Away from us the young men's lust,  
 And deeply drown  
 In azure waters, down and ever down,  
 Benches and rowers dark,  
 The fatal and perfidious bark!

### *antistrophe 1*

Unto the maidens turn thy gracious care;  
 Think yet again upon the tale of fame,  
 How from the maiden loved of thee there sprung  
 Mine ancient line, long since in many a legend sung!  
 Remember, O remember, thou whose hand  
 Did lo by a touch to human shape reclaim.  
 For from this Argos erst our mother came  
 Driven hence to Egypt's land,

Yet sprung of Zeus we were, and hence our birth we claim.

*strophe 2*

And now have I roamed back  
 Unto the ancient track  
 Where Io roamed and pastured among flowers,  
 Watched o'er by Argus' eyes,  
 Through the lush grasses and the meadow bowers.  
 Thence, by the gadfly maddened, forth she flies  
 Unto far lands and alien peoples driven  
 And, following fate, through paths of foam and surge,  
 Sees, as she goes, the cleaving strait divide  
 Greece, from the Eastland riven.

*antistrophe 2*

And swift through Asian borders doth she urge  
 Her course, o'er Phrygian mountains' sheep-clipt side;  
 Thence, where the Mysian realm of Teuthras lies,  
 Towards Lydian lowlands hies,  
 And o'er Cilician and Pamphylian hills  
 And ever-flowing rills,  
 And thence to Aphrodite's fertile shore,  
 The land of garnered wheat and wealthy store.

*strophe 3*

And thence, deep-stung by wild unrest,  
 By the winged fly that goaded her and drave,  
 Unto the fertile land, the god-possessed  
 (Where, fed from far-off snows,  
 Life-giving Nilus flows,  
 Urged on by Typho's strength, a fertilizing wave),  
 She roves, in harassed and dishonoured flight,

Scathed by the blasting pangs of Hera's dread despite.

*antistrophe 3*

And they within the land  
 With terror shook and wanned,  
 So strange the sight they saw, and were afraid-  
 A wild twy-natured thing, half heifer and half maid.

Whose hand was laid at last on Io, thus forlorn,  
 With many roamings worn?  
 Who bade the harassed maiden's peace return?

*strophe 4*

Zeus, lord of time eterne.  
 Yea, by his breath divine, by his unscathing strength,  
 She lays aside her bane,  
 And softened back to womanhood at length  
 Sheds human tears again.  
 Then, quickened with Zeus' veritable seed,  
 A progeny she bare,  
 A stainless babe, a child of heavenly breed.

*antistrophe 4*

Of life and fortune fair.  
 His is the life of life-so all men say,-  
 His is the seed of Zeus.  
 Who else had power stern Hera's craft to stay,  
 Her vengeful curse to loose?

Yea, all from Zeus befel!  
 And rightly wouldst thou tell  
 That we from Epaphus, his child, were born:

Justly his deed was done;

*strophe 5*

Unto what other one,  
 Of all the gods, should I for justice turn?  
 From him our race did spring;  
 Creator he and King,  
 Ancient of days and wisdom he, and might.  
 As bark before the wind,  
 So, wafted by his mind,  
 Moves every counsel, each device aright.

*antistrophe 5*

Beneath no stronger hand  
 Holds he a weak command,  
 No throne doth he abase him to adore;  
 Swift as a word, his deed  
 Acts out what stands decreed  
 In counsels of his heart, for evermore.

*DANAUS re-enters.*

**DANAUS**

Take heart, my children: the land's heart is kind,  
 And to full issue has their voting come.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

All hail, my sire; thy word brings utmost joy.  
 Say, to what issue is the vote made sure,  
 And how prevailed the people's crowding hands?

**DANAUS**

With one assent the Argives spake their will,  
 And, hearing, my old heart took youthful cheer.  
 The very sky was thrilled when high in air  
 The concourse raised right hands and swore their oath:-  
 Free shall the maidens sojourn in this land.  
 Unharried, undespoiled by mortal wight:  
 No native hand, no hand of foreigner  
 Shall drag them hence; if any man use force-  
 Whoe'er of all our countrymen shall fail  
 To come unto their aid, let him go forth,  
 Beneath the people's curse, to banishment.  
 So did the king of this Pelasgian folk  
 Plead on behalf of us, and bade them heed  
 That never, in the after-time, this realm  
 Should feed to fulness the great enmity  
 Of Zeus, the suppliants' guard, against itself!  
 A twofold curse, for wronging stranger-guests  
 Who are akin withal, confrontingly  
 Should rise before this city and be shown  
 A ruthless monster, fed on human doom.  
 Such things the Argive people heard, and straight,  
 Without proclaim of herald, gave assent:  
 Yea, in full conclave, the Pelasgian folk  
 Heard suasive pleas, and Zeus through them resolved.

*The CHORUS now sings a prayer of thankfulness.*

**CHORUS**

Arouse we now to chant our prayer  
 For fair return of service fair  
 And Argos' kindly will.  
 Zeus, lord of guestright, look upon

The grace our stranger lips have won.  
 In right and truth, as they begun,  
 Guide them, with favouring hand, until  
 Thou dost their blameless wish fulfil!

*strophe 1*

Now may the Zeus-born gods on high  
 Hear us pour forth  
 A votive prayer for Argos' clan!-  
 Never may this Pelasgian earth,  
 Amid the fire-wrack, shrill the dismal cry  
 On Ares, ravening lord of fight,  
 Who in an alien harvest mows down man!  
 For lo, this land had pity on our plight,  
 And unto us were merciful and leal,  
 To us, the piteous flock, who at Zeus' altar kneel!

*antistrophe 1*

They scorned not the pleas of maidenhood,  
 Nor with the young men's will hath their will stood.  
 They knew right well  
 Th' unearthly watching fiend invincible,  
 The foul avenger-let him not draw near!  
 For he, on roofs ill-starred,  
 Defiling and polluting, keeps a ghastly ward!  
 They knew his vengeance, and took holy heed  
 To us, the sister suppliants, who cry  
 To Zeus, the lord of purity:  
 Therefore with altars pure they shall the gods revere.  
 Thus, through the boughs that shade our lips, fly forth in air,

*strophe 2*

Fly forth, O eager prayer!  
 May never pestilence efface  
 This city's race,  
 Nor be the land with corpses strewed,  
 Nor stained with civic blood!  
 The stem of youth, unpluckt, to manhood come,  
 Nor Ares rise from Aphrodite's bower,  
 The lord of death and bane, to waste our youthful flower.

*antistrophe 2*

Long may the old  
 Crowd to the altars kindled to consume  
 Gifts rich and manifold-  
 Offered to win from powers divine  
 A benison on city and on shrine:  
 Let all the sacred might adore  
 Of Zeus most high, the lord  
 Of guestright and the hospitable board,  
 Whose immemorial law doth rule Fate's scales aright:  
 The garnerers of earth's store  
 Be full for evermore,  
 And grace of Artemis make women's travail light;

*strophe 3*

No devastating curse of fell disease  
 This city seize;  
 No clamour of the State arouse to war  
 Ares, from whom afar  
 Shrinketh the lute, by whom the dances fail-  
 Ares, the lord of wail.  
 Swarm far aloof from Argos' citizens  
 All plague and pestilence,  
 And may the Archer-God our children spare!

*antistrophe 3*

May Zeus with foison and with fruitfulness  
 The land's each season bless,  
 And, quickened with Heaven's bounty manifold,  
 Teem grazing flock and fold.  
 Beside the altars of Heaven's hallowing  
 Loud let the minstrels sing,  
 And from pure lips float forth the harp-led strain in air!

*strophe 4*

And let the people's voice, the power  
 That sways the State, in danger's hour  
 Be wary, wise for all;  
 Nor honour in dishonour hold,  
 But-ere the voice of war be bold-  
 Let them to stranger peoples grant  
 Fair and unbloody covenant-  
 Justice and peace withal;

*antistrophe 4*

And to the Argive powers divine  
 The sacrifice of laurelled kine,  
 By rite ancestral, pay.  
 Among three words of power and awe,  
 Stands this, the third, the mighty law-  
 Your gods, your fathers deified,  
 Ye shall adore. Let this abide  
 For ever and for aye.

**DANAUS**



Dear children, well and wisely have ye prayed;  
 I bid you now not shudder, though ye hear  
 New and alarming tidings from your sire.  
 From this high place beside the suppliants' shrine  
 The bark of our pursuers I behold,  
 By divers tokens recognized too well.  
 Lo, the spread canvas and the hides that screen  
 The gunwale; lo, the prow, with painted eyes  
 That seem her onward pathway to descry,  
 Heeding too well the rudder at the stern  
 That rules her, coming for no friendly end.  
 And look, the seamen-all too plain their race-  
 Their dark limbs gleam from out their snow-white garb;  
 Plain too the other barks, a fleet that comes  
 All swift to aid the purpose of the first,  
 That now, with furled sail and with pulse of oars  
 Which smite the wave together, comes aland.  
 But ye, be calm, and, schooled not scared by fear,  
 Confront this chance, be mindful of your trust  
 In these protecting gods. And I will hence,  
 And champions who shall plead your cause aright  
 Will bring unto your side. There come perchance  
 Heralds or envoys, eager to lay hand  
 And drag you captive hence; yet fear them not;  
 Foiled shall they be. Yet well it were for you  
 (If, ere with aid I come, I tarry long)  
 Not by one step this sanctuary to leave.  
 Farewell, fear nought: soon shall the hour be born  
 When he that scorns the gods shall rue his scorn.

**CHORUS** *chanting*

Ah, but I shudder, father!-ah, even now,  
 Even as I speak, the swift-winged ships draw nigh!

*strophe 1*

I shudder, I shiver, I perish with fear:  
 Overseas though I fled,  
 Yet nought it avails; my pursuers are near!

**DANAUS**

Children, take heart; they who decreed to aid  
 Thy cause will arm for battle, well I ween.

**CHORUS**

But desperate is Aegyptus' ravening race,  
 With fight unsated; thou too know'st it well.

*antistrophe 1*

In their wrath they o'ertake us; the prow is deep-dark  
 In the which they have sped,  
 And dark is the bench and the crew of the bark!

**DANAUS**

Yea but a crew as stout they here shall find,  
 And arms well steeled beneath a noon-day sun.

**CHORUS**

Ah yet, O father, leave us not forlorn!  
 Alone, a maid is nought, a strengthless arm.

*strophe 2*

With guile they pursue me, with counsel malign,

And unholy their soul;  
 And as ravens they seize me, unheeding the shrine!

### **DANAUS**

Fair will befall us, children, in this chance,  
 If thus in wrath they wrong the gods and you.

### **CHORUS**

Alas, nor tridents nor the sanctity  
 Of shrines will drive them, O my sire, from us!

### *antistrophe 2*

Unholy and daring and cursed is their ire,  
 Nor own they control  
 Of the gods, but like jackals they glut their desire!

### **DANAUS**

Ay, but Come wolf, flee jackal, saith the saw;  
 Nor can the flax-plant overbear the corn.

### **LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

Lustful, accursed, monstrous is their will  
 As of beasts ravening-'ware we of their power

### **DANAUS**

Look you, not swiftly puts a fleet to sea,  
 Nor swiftly to its moorings; long it is  
 Or e'er the saving cables to the shore  
 Are borne, and long or e'er the steersmen cry,

The good ship swings at anchor-all is well.  
 Longest of all, the task to come aland  
 Where haven there is none, when sunset fades  
 In night. To pilot wise, the adage saith,  
 Night is a day of wakefulness and pain.  
 Therefore no force of weaponed men, as yet,  
 Scatheless can come ashore, before the bark  
 Lie at her anchorage securely moored.  
 Bethink thee therefore, nor in panic leave  
 The shrine of gods whose succour thou hast won.  
 I go for aid-men shall not blame me long,  
 Old, but with youth at heart and on my tongue.

*DANAUS departs as the CHORUS sings in terror.*

## **CHORUS**

### *strophe 1*

O land of hill and dale, O holy land,  
 What shall befall us? whither shall we flee,  
 From Apian land to some dark lair of earth?

O would that in vapour of smoke I might rise to the clouds of the sky,  
 That as dust which flits up without wings I might pass and evanish and die!

### *antistrophe 1*

I dare not, I dare not abide: my heart yearns, eager to fly;  
 And dark is the cast of my thought; I shudder and tremble for fear.  
 My father looked forth and beheld: I die of the sight that draws near.  
 And for me be the strangling cord, the halter made ready by Fate,  
 Before to my body draws nigh the man of my horror and hate.  
 Nay, ere I will own him as lord, as handmaid to Hades I go!

### *strophe 2*

And oh, that aloft in the sky, where the dark clouds are frozen to snow,  
 A refuge for me might be found, or a mountain-top smooth and too high  
 For the foot of the goat, where the vulture sits lonely, and none may descry  
 The pinnacle veiled in the cloud, the highest and sheerest of all,  
 Ere to wedlock that rendeth my heart, and love that is loveless,  
 I fall!

*antistrophe 2*

Yea, a prey to the dogs and the birds of the mount will I give me to be,-  
 From wailing and curse and pollution it is death, only death, sets me free:  
 Let death come upon me before to the ravisher's bed I am thrust;  
 What champion, what saviour but death can I find, or what refuge  
 from lust?

*strophe 3*

I will utter my shriek of entreaty, a prayer that shrills up to the sky,  
 That calleth the gods to compassion, a tuneful, a pitiful cry,  
 That is loud to invoke the releaser. O father, look down on the fight;  
 Look down in thy wrath on the wronger, with eyes that are eager for right.  
 Zeus, thou that art lord of the world, whose kingdom is strong over all,  
 Have mercy on us! At thine altar for refuge and safety we call.

*antistrophe 3*

For the race of Aegyptus is fierce, with greed and with malice afire;  
 They cry as the questing hounds, they sweep with the speed of desire.  
 But thine is the balance of fate, thou rulest the wavering scale,  
 And without thee no mortal emprise shall have strength to achieve  
 or prevail.

*The CHORUS rushes to the altar during the final part of the song.*

Alack, alack! the ravisher-  
 He leaps from boat to beach, he draweth near!  
 Away, thou plunderer accurst!  
 Death seize thee first,  
 Or e'er thou touch me-off! God, hear our cry,  
 Our maiden agony!  
 Ah, ah, the touch, the prelude of my shame.  
 Alas, my maiden fame!  
 O sister, sister, sister, to the altar cling,  
 For he that seizeth me,  
 Grim is his wrath and stern, by land as on the sea.  
 Guard us, O king!

*The HERALD OF AEGYPTUS enters with attendants. The lines in the following scene between the HERALD and the CHORUS are sung and are accompanied by a frenzied symbolic dance.*

### **HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

Hence to my barge-step swiftly, tarry not.

### **CHORUS**

Alack, he rends-he rends my hair! O wound on wound!  
 Help! my lopped head will fall, my blood gush o'er the ground!

### **HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

Aboard, ye cursed-with a new curse, go!

### **CHORUS**

Would God that on the wand'ring brine  
 Thou and this braggart tongue of thine  
 Had sunk beneath the main-  
 Thy mast and planks, made fast in vain!

Thee would I drive aboard once more,  
A slayer and a dastard, from the shore!

### **HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

Be still, thou vain demented soul;  
My force thy craving shall control.  
Away, aboard! What, clingest to the shrine?  
Away! this city's gods I hold not for divine.

### **CHORUS**

Aid me, ye gods, that never, never  
I may again behold  
The mighty, the life-giving river,  
Nilus, the quickener of field and fold!  
Alack, O sire, unto the shrine I cling-  
Shrine of this land from which mine ancient line did spring!

### **HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

Shrines, shrines, forsooth!-the ship, the ship be shrine  
Aboard, perforce and will-ye nill-ye, go!  
Or e'er from hands of mine  
Ye suffer torments worse and blow on blow.

### **CHORUS**

Alack, God grant those hands may strive in vain  
With the salt-streaming wave,  
When 'gainst the wide-blown blasts thy bark shall strain  
To round Sarpedon's cape, the sandbank's treach'rous grave.

### **HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

Shrill ye and shriek unto what gods ye may,  
 Ye shall not leap from out Aegyptus' bark,  
 How bitterly soe'er ye wail your woe.

### **CHORUS**

Alack, alack my wrong!  
 Stern is thy voice, thy vaunting loud and strong.  
 Thy sire, the mighty Nilus, drive thee hence,  
 Turning to death and doom thy greedy violence!

### **HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

Swift to the vessel of the double prow,  
 Go quickly! let none linger, else this hand  
 Ruthless will hale you by your tresses hence.

### **CHORUS**

Alack, O father! from the shrine  
 Not aid but agony is mine.  
 As a spider he creeps and he clutches his prey,  
 And he hales me away.  
 A spectre of darkness, of darkness. Alas and alas! well-a-day!  
 O Earth, O my mother! O Zeus, thou king of the earth, and her child!  
 Turn back, we pray thee, from us his clamour and threatenings wild!

### **HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

Peace! I fear not this country's deities.  
 They fostered not my childhood nor mine age.

### **CHORUS**



Like a snake that is human he comes, he shudders and crawls to my side:  
 As an adder that biteth the foot, his clutch on my flesh doth abide.  
 O Earth, O my mother! O Zeus, thou king of the earth, and her child!  
 Turn back, we pray thee, from us his clamour and threatenings wild!

### **HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

Swift each unto the ship; repine no more,  
 Or my hand shall not spare to rend your robe.

### **CHORUS**

O chiefs, O leaders, aid me, or I yield!

### **HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

Peace! if ye have not ears to hear my words,  
 Lo, by these tresses must I hale you hence.

### **CHORUS**

Undone we are, O king! all hope is gone.

### **HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

Ay, kings enow ye shall behold anon,  
 Aegyptus' sons-Ye shall not want for kings.

*The KING OF ARGOS enters with his retinue.*

### **THE KING OF ARGOS**

Sirrah, what dost thou? in what arrogance  
 Darest thou thus insult Pelasgia's realm?  
 Deemest thou this a woman-hearted town?  
 Thou art too full of thy barbarian scorn

For us of Grecian blood, and, erring thus,  
Thou dost bewray thyself a fool in all!

**HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

Say thou wherein my deeds transgress my right.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

First, that thou play'st a stranger's part amiss.

**HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

Wherein? I do but search and claim mine own.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

To whom of our guest-champions hast appealed?

**HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

To Hermes, herald's champion, lord of search.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Yea, to a god-yet dost thou wrong the gods!

**HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

The gods that rule by Nilus I revere.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Hear I aright? our Argive gods are nought?

**HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

The prey is mine, unless force rend it from me.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

At thine own peril touch them-'ware, and soon!

**HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

I hear thy speech, no hospitable word.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

I am no host for sacrilegious hands.

**HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

I will go tell this to Aegyptus' sons.

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

Well it I my pride will ponder not thy word.

**HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

Yet, that I have my message clear to say  
 (For it behoves that heralds' words be clear,  
 Be they or ill or good), how art thou named?  
 By whom despoiled of this sister-band  
 Of maidens pass I homeward?-speak and say!  
 For lo, henceforth in Ares' court we stand,  
 Who judges not by witness but by war:  
 No pledge of silver now can bring the cause

To issue: ere this thing end, there must be  
Corpse piled on corpse and many lives gasped forth.

### **THE KING OF ARGOS**

What skills it that I tell my name to thee?  
Thou and thy mates shall learn it ere the end.  
Know that if words unstained by violence  
Can change these maidens' choice, then mayest thou,  
With full consent of theirs, conduct them hence.  
But thus the city with one voice ordained-  
No force shall bear away the maiden band.  
Firmly this word upon the temple wall  
Is by a rivet clenched, and shall abide:  
Not upon wax inscribed and delible,  
Nor upon parchment sealed and stored away.-  
Lo, thou hast heard our free mouths speak their will:  
Out from our presence-tarry not, but go!

### **HERALD OF AEGYPTUS**

Methinks we stand on some new edge of war:  
Be strength and triumph on the young men's side!

### **THE KING OF ARGOS**

Nay but here also shall ye find young men,  
Unsodden with the juices oozed from grain.

*The HERALD OF AEGYPTUS and his followers withdraw.*

But ye, O maids, with your attendants true,  
Pass hence with trust into the fenced town,  
Ringed with a wide confine of guarding towers.  
Therein are many dwellings for such guests  
As the State honours; there myself am housed

Within a palace neither scant nor strait.  
 There dwell ye, if ye will to lodge at ease  
 In halls well-thronged: yet, if your soul prefer,  
 Tarry secluded in a separate home.  
 Choose ye and cull, from these our proffered gifts,  
 Whiche'er is best and sweetest to your will:  
 And I and all these citizens whose vote  
 Stands thus decreed, will your protectors be.  
 Look not to find elsewhere more loyal guard.

**CHORUS** *singing*

O godlike chief, God grant my prayer:  
 Fair blessings on thy proffers fair,  
 Lord of Pelasgia's race!  
 Yet, of thy grace, unto our side  
 Send thou the man of courage tried,  
 Of counsel deep and prudent thought  
 Be Danaus to his children brought;  
 For his it is to guide us well  
 And warn where it behoves to dwell-  
 What place shall guard and shelter us  
 From malice and tongues slanderous:  
 Swift always are the lips of blame  
 A stranger-maiden to defame-  
 But Fortune give us grace!

**THE KING OF ARGOS**

A stainless fame, a welcome kind  
 From all this people shall ye find:  
 Dwell therefore, damsels, loved of us,  
 Within our walls, as Danaus  
 Allots to each, in order due,  
 Her dower of attendants true.

*DANAUS re-enters. A troop of soldiers accompanies him.*

**DANAUS**

High thanks, my children, unto Argos con,  
 And to this folk, as to Olympian gods,  
 Give offerings meet of sacrifice and wine;  
 For saviours are they in good sooth to you.  
 From me they heard, and bitter was their wrath,  
 How those your kinsmen strove to work you wrong,  
 And how of us were thwarted: then to me  
 This company of spearmen did they grant,  
 That honoured I might walk, nor unaware  
 Die by some secret thrust and on this land  
 Bring down the curse of death, that dieth not.  
 Such boons they gave me: it behoves me pay  
 A deeper reverence from a soul sincere.  
 Ye, to the many words of wariness  
 Spoken by me your father, add this word,  
 That, tried by time, our unknown company  
 Be held for honest: over-swift are tongues  
 To slander strangers, over-light is speech  
 To bring pollution on a stranger's name.  
 Therefore I rede you, bring no shame on me  
 Now when man's eye beholds your maiden prime.  
 Lovely is beauty's ripening harvest-field,  
 But ill to guard; and men and beasts, I wot,  
 And birds and creeping things make prey of it.  
 And when the fruit is ripe for love, the voice  
 Of Aphrodite bruiteth it abroad,  
 The while she guards the yet unripened growth.  
 On the fair richness of a maiden's bloom  
 Each passer looks, o'ercome with strong desire,  
 With eyes that waft the wistful dart of love.  
 Then be not such our hap, whose livelong toil

Did make our pinnace plough the mighty main:  
 Nor bring we shame upon ourselves, and joy  
 Unto my foes. Behold, a twofold home-  
 One of the king's and one the people's gift-  
 Unbought, 'tis yours to hold,-a gracious boon.  
 Go-but remember ye your sire's behest,  
 And hold your life less dear than chastity.

### **LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

The gods above grant that all else be well.  
 But fear not thou, O sire, lest aught befall  
 Of ill unto our ripened maidenhood.  
 So long as Heaven have no new ill devised,  
 From its chaste path my spirit shall not swerve.

*The members of the CHORUS divide into two groups, to sing the final choral lyric responsively.*

### **SEMI-CHORUS**

*strophe 1*

Pass and adore ye the Blessed, the gods of the city who dwell  
 Around Erasinus, the gush of the swift immemorial tide.

### **SEMI-CHORUS**

Chant ye, O maidens; aloud let the praise of Pelasgia swell;  
 Hymn we no longer the shores where Nilus to ocean doth glide.

### **SEMI-CHORUS**

*antistrophe 1*

Sing we the bounteous streams that ripple and gush through the city;  
Quickening flow they and fertile, the soft new life of the plain.

### **SEMI-CHORUS**

Artemis, maiden most pure, look on us with grace and with pity-  
Save us from forced embraces: such love hath no crown but a pain.

### **SEMI-CHORUS**

*strophe 2*

Yet not in scorn we chant, but in honour of Aphrodite;  
She truly and Hera alone have power with Zeus and control.  
Holy the deeds of her rite, her craft is secret and mighty,  
And high is her honour on earth, and subtle her sway of the soul.

### **SEMI-CHORUS**

Yea, and her child is Desire: in the train of his mother he goeth-  
Yea and Persuasion soft-lipped, whom none can deny or repel:  
Cometh Harmonia too, on whom Aphrodite bestoweth  
The whispering parley, the paths of the rapture that lovers love well.

### **SEMI-CHORUS**

*antistrophe 2*

Ah, but I tremble and quake lest again they should sail to reclaim!  
Alas for the sorrow to come, the blood and the carnage of war.  
Ah, by whose will was it done that o'er the wide ocean they came,  
Guided by favouring winds, and wafted by sail and by oar?

### **SEMI-CHORUS**



Peace! for what Fate hath ordained will surely not tarry but come;  
 Wide is the counsel of Zeus, by no man escaped or withstood:  
 Only I pray that whate'er, in the end, of this wedlock he doom,  
 We, as many a maiden of old, may win from the ill to the good.

**SEMI-CHORUS**

*strophe 3*

Great Zeus, this wedlock turn from me-  
 Me from the kinsman bridegroom guard!

**SEMI-CHORUS**

Come what come may, 'tis Fate's decree.

**SEMI-CHORUS**

Soft is thy word-the doom is hard.

**SEMI-CHORUS**

Thou know'st not what the Fates provide.

**SEMI-CHORUS**

*antistrophe 3*

How should I scan Zeus' mighty will,  
 The depth of counsel undescried?

**SEMI-CHORUS**

Pray thou no word of omen ill.

**SEMI-CHORUS**

What timely warning wouldst thou teach?

**SEMI-CHORUS**

Beware, nor slight the gods in speech.

**SEMI-CHORUS**

*strophe 4*

Zeus, hold from my body the wedlock detested, the bridegroom abhorred!  
 It was thou, it was thou didst release  
 Mine ancestress Io from sorrow: thine healing it was that restored,  
 The touch of thine hand gave her peace.

**SEMI-CHORUS**

*antistrophe 4*

Be thy will for the cause of the maidens! of two ills, the lesser  
 I pray-  
 The exile that leaveth me pure.  
 May thy justice have heed to my cause, my prayers to thy mercy find way!  
 For the hands of thy saving are sure.

**THE END**

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