

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Gre

Translated and adapted By Frank J. Morlock C 2003

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EText by Dagny

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CASSANDER, son of Antipater, king of Macedonia

ANTIGONUS, king of part of a region in Asia

STATIRA, Widow of Alexander The Great

OLYMPIAS, daughter of Statira and Alexander the Great

HIGH PRIEST who presides over the celebration of great mysteries

SOSTERNES, officer of Cassander

HERMAS, officer of Antigonus

PRIESTS

GUESTS

PRIESTESSES

SOLDIERS

POPULACE

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The action takes place in the Temple of Ephesus, where the great mysteries are being celebrated. The stage represents the temple, the peristyle and the square leading to the temple.

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ACT I

The back of the stage represents a temple whose three closed doors are decorated with large pilasters; the two wings form a vast peristyle. Sosternes is in the peristyle, the large door opens. Cassander, worried and agitated, comes to him; the large door closes.

CASSANDER:

Sosternes, they are going to finish these terrible mysteries.
Cassander hopes at last the gods will be less inflexible.
My life will be more pure, and my feelings less troubled;
I breathe.

SOSTERNES: Lord, near Ephesus are assembled
The warriors who served under the king, your father.
From my hands they've taken the customary oath.
Already your laws are recognized in Macedonia.
Ephesus has chosen between its two protectors.
This honor that Antigonus shares with you
Is an august omen of your great plans.
This reign which begins in the shadow of these altars
Will be blessed by the gods, and cherished by mortals.
This name of initiate, that is revered and loved,
Adds a new luster to the supreme grandeur.
Appear.

CASSANDER: I cannot: your eyes will be the witnesses
Of my first devotions and my first efforts.
Stay in this sanctuary. Our august priestesses
Are presenting Olympias to erected altars.
She is expiating in secret, placed between their arms,
My unfortunate crimes that she is unaware of.
From today, I am beginning a new life.
Dear and tender Olympias, may you be forever
In ignorance of this great, painfully effaced crime
And of the blood of your birth and the blood I shed.

SOSTERNES: What! lord, a child taken from the Euphrates
By your father already dedicated to service
On whom you extend so many generous cares
Could hurl Cassander into these terrible troubles!

CASSANDER: Respect this slave to whom all owe homage:
I am repairing the outrage of fate that degrades her.
My father had his reasons for hiding her rank from her.
That must give to her the splendor of her blood—
What am I saying? o memory! o times! o day of crimes!
Sosternes, he counted her in the number of his victims.
He would have sacrificed her to our safety—
Nourished in carnage and cruelty.
Alone, I took pity on her, and I softened my father.
Alone, I knew the daughter having struck the mother.
She's still unaware of my crime and my furor.
Forever keep your error, Olympias!
In Cassander you cherish a benefactor and a master.

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If you knew who you were you would detest me.

SOSTERNES: I will penetrate no further these astonishing secrets,
And I am coming to you only to speak of your interests.

Lord, of all these kings that we see pretend
With so much furor to the throne of Alexander,
Your only ally is the inflexible Antigonus.

CASSANDER: I've always respected friendship with him,
I will be faithful to him.

SOSTERNES: He must also do so to you;
But since we've seen him appear within these walls,
It seems that in secret a jealous emotion
Has altered his heart and distances him from you.

CASSANDER: (aside)
And who cares about Antigonus! o manes of Alexander!
Manes of Statira! great shade! august ashes!
Remains of a demi-god, justly incensed,
Does my remorse and my passion avenge you enough?
Olympias, obtain from their appeased shade
That peace so long refused to my heart.
And let your virtue, dissipating my terror,
Be my protection here, and speak to the gods for me.
Eh, what! towards this sanctuary, just hardly opened
Antigonus is approaching, and preceding the dawn!
(Enter Antigonus and Hermas.)

ANTIGONUS: (to Hermas at the back of the stage)
This secret pesters me, it must be torn out.
I will read in his heart what he thinks to hide from me.
Go, don't go too far away.

CASSANDER: (to Antigonus) When day's hardly lit,
What subject is so pressing that it brings you to me?

ANTIGONUS: Our interests, Cassander. After your expiations
Hereabouts have satisfied the gods,
It is time to think of sharing the earth.

From Ephesus in these grand days they spare war.
Your secret mysteries, respected by nations,
Suspend discord and calamities.

It's a time of rest for the furors of princes
But this repose is short, and soon our provinces
Return to the prey of flames and battles
That the gods stop and that they don't extinguish.

Antipater is no more; your efforts, your courage,
No doubt, will finish his important work.
He would never have permitted that ingrate Seleucus,
The insolent Lagidus, the traitorous Antiochus,
Devouring the conquests of entombed Alexander,
Dare to brave us and march on our heads.

CASSANDER: Would to the gods that Alexander on these ambitious
Were from the height of his throne to lower his eyes.
Would to the gods that he lived!

ANTIGONUS: I cannot comprehend you.
Is it for the son of Antipater to weep for Alexander?

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What can inspire you with such an urgent remorse?

After all, you are innocent of his death.

CASSANDER: Ah! I caused his death.

ANTIGONUS: It was legitimate.

All the Greeks were demanding this great victim.

The universe was weary of his ambition.

Athena, Athena even sent the poison.

Perdiccas received it; they charged Craterus with it.

It was placed in your hands, by the hands of your father.

Without his confiding in you this important plan

You were still young; you served at the festival,

At this last feast of the tyrant of Asia.

CASSANDER: No, stop excusing this impious sacrilege.

ANTIGONUS: This sacrilege! Eh, what! your downtrodden spirit's

Setting up as a god the assassin of Cleitus,

The bloody executioner of the great Parmenio,

This proud fool who, stigmatizing his mother,

Really dared to aspire to the rank of the son of gods

And dishonored his mother to make himself adored?

He alone acted a sacrilege, and when at Babylon

We had overturned his altars and his throne,

When the fatal blow had ended his fate,

They avenged the gods and the human race.

CASSANDER: I confess his faults, but whatever he may have been,

He was a great man and he was our master.

ANTIGONUS: A great man!

CASSANDER: Yes, without doubt.

ANTIGONUS: Ah! it's our valor,

Our arms, our blood, which founded his grandeur;

He was just an ingrate.

CASSANDER: O my tutelary gods!

What mortals were more ungrateful than our fathers?

All wanted to climb to this superb rank.

But why pierce the flank of his wife?

His wife! his children! Ah! what a day, Antigonus!

ANTIGONUS: After fifteen years, this scruple astonishes me.

Jealous of his friends, the son-in-law of Darius,

He was becoming Persian; we were the vanquished.

Would you really want that, the proud Statira

Avenging Alexander's ashes in Babylon

Raising his subjects had sacrificed all of us

To the blood of her family, to the blood of her spouse?

She armed the whole populace; Antipater escaped

The furors of the queen with difficulty that day.

You were spared a father.

CASSANDER: It is true, but still,

The wife of Alexander perished by my hand.

ANTIGONUS: That's the fate of battles; the success of our arms

Ought not to cost us regrets and tears.

CASSANDER: I admit it, I poured that frightful cup,

And covered with this august and unfortunate blood,

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Astonished by myself and confused with rage
Through which my father dragged my blind courage,
I have for a long while lamented.

ANTIGONUS: But, what secret motives
Increase today such keen regrets?
I have some right to read the heart of a friend.
You dissimulate too much.

CASSANDER: Friend—what can I say?
Believe that there's a time in which the embattled heart fought
Though a secret instinct flies back towards virtue,
And from our criminal attempts, the past memory
Returns with horror to terrify thought.

ANTIGONUS: Trust me, forget these expiated murders,
But let our interests not be forgotten.
If some repentance still bothers your life,
Repent especially for abandoning Asia
To the insolent law of traitorous Antiochus.
Let my brave warriors and your unvanquished Greeks
Make the Euphrates tremble a second time
Of all the new kings whose grandeur dazzles.
None is worthy of being one, nor in his early years
Served like us, under the conqueror of the Persians.
All our chiefs have perished.

CASSANDER: I know it and perhaps
God sacrificed them to the Manes of their master.

ANTIGONUS: We remain, we are living and we must rebuild
This debris, all embloodied, that we must collect.
Dying, Alexander left it to the most worthy.
I dare to seize it; his order designates me.
Assure my fortune thus, like your fate.
The most worthy of all, no question, is the strongest.
Let's raise again with our Greeks, the power destroyed,
Never let discord be introduced amongst us.
Nor expose ourselves anew to these new tyrants
They, who were not born to march as our equals.
Do you promise me?

CASSANDER: Friend, I swear to you
I am ready to avenge our common insult.
The scepter of Asia is in unworthy hands
And the Euphrates and the Nile have too many sovereigns.
I will fight for myself, for you, and for Greece.

ANTIGONUS:
I believe your interest in it, I trust your promise about it.
And especially, I pride myself on the noble friendship
Whose respectable bonds have linked you to me.
But of this friendship I demand a pledge.
Don't refuse me.

CASSANDER: That doubt is an outrage.
Is what you are asking in my power?
It's an order for me, you have only to wish it.

ANTIGONUS: Perhaps you will see with some surprise

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The little that friendship authorizes me to demand.

I only wish a slave.

CASSANDER: Happy to serve you,

They are all at your feet, it's up to you to choose.

ANTIGONUS: Allow me to demand a young foreigner. (looking at Cassander attentively)

One who your father carried off from the walls of Babylon.

She is your share: award me this prize

For so many happy labors undertaken on your behalf.

They say your father persecuted her.

I shall take care that at my court she will be respected.

Her name is Olympias.

CASSANDER: Olympias!

ANTIGONUS: Yes, lord.

CASSANDER: (aside)

With what unexpected darts he comes to pierce my heart!

How can I give up Olympias!

ANTIGONUS: Listen, I flatter myself

That Cassander doesn't have an ungrateful soul towards me.

A refusal of the least objects can be wounding

And doubtless you do not wish to offend me?

CASSANDER: No; you will soon see this young captive.

You yourself shall judge if it is necessary that she follow you,

If it can be permitted to me to put her in your hands.

This temple is forbidden to profane humans;

Under the vigilant eyes of gods and goddesses,

Olympias is guarded in the midst of priestesses.

The doors will open when it is time.

In this sanctuary open to the rest of mortals,

New mysteries could surprise you there

And you will decide if the earth has kings

Who can enslave Olympias to their laws.

(Cassander goes back into the temple and Sosternes leaves.)

HERMAS: (coming forward) Lord, you astonish me; when Asia in alarms

Sees a hundred bloody thrones battled over by armies,

When from the vast realms of entombed Alexander

Fortune is preparing a new division

When you pretend to a sovereign empire

A slave is the object to which your great heart aspires!

ANTIGONUS: You ought to be astonished by it. I have reasons, Hermas,

That I dare not tell, and that no one knows.

Perhaps the fate of this slave is important

To all the kings of Asia; to whoever wants to be,

To whoever in his breast bears a heart grand enough

To dare to be the successor of Alexander.

On the name of slave and her adventures

I've long formed strange conjectures.

I wanted to enlighten myself; from these ramparts my eyes

Have sometimes rested their glance on her.

Her features, these parts, the time wherein heaven made her born,

The astonishing respect she receives from a master,

Cassander's remorse, and his dark speech

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Have loaned aid to these secret suspicions.
I believe I've penetrated this shadowy mystery.

HERMAS: They say that he cherishes her
And that he raises her like a father.

HERMAS: We shall see—But it's opening up and this sacred temple
Is revealing to us an altar decorated with garlands.
I see priestesses appearing from both sides;
In the depth of the sanctuary the high priest is seated.
Olympias and Cassander have reached the altar.

(The three doors of the Temple have opened. The whole interior is revealed. Priests are on one side, Priestesses on the other. They are all dressed in white robes with blue belts whose ends descend to the ground. Cassander and Olympias place their hands on the altar. Antigonus and Hermas remain in the peristyle with a group of the People who appear at the sides.)

CASSANDER: God of kings and of gods, eternal, unique being,
God revealed to me in these august ceremonies
Who punishes the perverse, who sustains the just,
Near whom remorse effaces crime,
Confirm, Clement God, the oath I have taken!
Receive these oaths, adorable Olympias:
I submit to your sway, my throne and my life.
I swear to you a love as pure, as holy
As that of the fire of Vesta which is never extinguished.
And you, daughters of heaven, you august priestesses,
Bear with the incense, my vows and my promises
To the thrones of the gods who deign to hear me
And ward off the darts that I may deserve.

OLYMPIAS: O gods in whom I hope, forever protect
The generous master who treated me as a father,
My adored lover, my respectable spouse,
Let him be forever cherished, always worthy of you!
My heart is known to you. His rank and his crown
Are the least of the treasures that his love is giving to me.
Witness the tender flames inspired in my heart,
Be the guarantee of them, you who consecrate them.
Let him teach me to please you and that your justice
Prepare me for the hell of an eternal death,
If, unfaithful to your laws I for a moment forget
Both the condition in which I am and what I owe to him.

CASSANDER:
Let's go back into the sanctuary
Where my happiness is calling me.
Priestesses, dispose the solemn pomps
By which my happy life is going to commence its course.
Sanctify my life, and our chaste love.
I've seen the gods in temple, and I've seen them in her.
If I am faithless, let me be hated by all!
Antigonus, in these parts you heard me;
To the wishes you were expressing have I responded enough?
You yourself pronounce if you ought to pretend
To see the slave of Cassander in your hands.
Know that my crown and all my grandeur

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Are weak presents, unworthy of her heart.

Let strict friendship unite the two of us;

Judge, if I ought to make such a sacrifice.

(He reenters the temple; the doors shut; the populace leaves the sanctuary.)

ANTIGONUS: Go, I no longer doubt it and everything is revealed to me.

He intends to brave me; but be certain he will ruin himself.

I recognize in him impetuous rashness

Which sometimes serves the gods, and sometimes offends them.

This ardent character which joins passion

To politics and religion;

Swift, clever, proud, impetuous and tender,

Ready to repent, ready to do anything.

He marries a slave! Ah! you can really believe

That love knew how to abase him to this degree.

This slave is of a rank that he himself respects.

The plot of his hidden plans is very suspect.

He secretly flatters himself that Olympias has rights

Which can raise him to the rank of king of kings.

If he were only a lover he would have made me a confidant

Of a passion that was carrying him away with such violence.

Go, you will soon see implacable hate

Succeed without pity his weak friendship.

HERMAS: To his distracted heart, perhaps you impute

Deeper plans than love has given birth to.

In our great interests, often our actions

Are, you know quite well, the result of passions.

Idly, one disguises their tyrannic power.

The weak sometimes pass for politic

And Cassander is not the first sovereign

Who cherished a slave and gave her his hand.

I have seen more than one hero subdued by his flame.

Overbearingly proud with kings, weak with a woman.

ANTIGONUS: You say only too true; I am weighing your reasons,

But all that I've seen confirms my suspicions.

Shall I tell you them in the end? The charms of Olympias

Perhaps bring jealousy into my heart.

You pierce only too well my secret feelings.

Love is joining itself to these great interests

Their marriage wounds me more than I thought.

Is Cassander alone the prey of weakness?

HERMAS: But he's counting on you. The most holy titles

Could they ever unite sovereigns?

The alliance, the gifts, the brotherhood of arms,

Your shared perils, your common alarms,

Your redoubled oaths, so many efforts, so many vows,

Don't they serve for anything

Except misfortune for the two of you?

Of sacred friendship isn't he most exemplary?

ANTIGONUS: Friendship, I know, has temples in Greece.

Interest does not, but it is adored.

No question, from ambition and intoxicated love,

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Cassander has deceived me about Olympias' fate.

Cassander hides from my enlightened eyes.

He's only too right to do so. Go, perhaps today

The object of so many wishes is not yet his.

HERMAS: He received her hand—This sacred precinct

Sees the pomp of marriage already prepared.

(The initiates, the priests and the priestesses cross the back of the stage, with palms decorated with flowers in their hands.)

HERMAS: All the initiates, followed by their priests

Palms in hand are flooding this sanctuary.

And the most tender love is ordering this feast.

ANTIGONUS:

No, I tell you, his conquest can still be ravished from him.

Come, I will confide everything to your zeal, to your fidelity.

I will have laws, gods, the populace, for me.

For now, let's flee these pomps that outrage me.

Let's enter into the course where my plans are leading me.

If possible, let's water these holy asylums

Less with the blood of bulls, than the blood of humans.

CURTAIN

ACT II

This scene is intended to take place in the interior of the temple, but as most theaters are rarely constructed in a manner favorable to acoustics the actors are obliged to come forward into the peristyle; but the three open doors show that you are in a temple.)

HIGH PRIEST:

What! during these sacred days! what! in this august temple,
Where God pardons crime and consoles the just,
A single priestess would dare to deprive us
Of expiations that she must complete?
What! Arzana dispenses with such a holy duty?

A PRIESTESS: Arzana is in retreat, obstinate and silent,
Irrigating the images of the gods with her tears.
Lord, you know it, hiding herself from all eyes,
In prey to her troubles, weakened by languor,
She implores an end to a dying life.

HIGH PRIEST: We pity her condition; but she must obey.
She can serve for a short while at the altars.

Since she was confined to this temple

Today is the only day that fate has designated to her.

Let her be made to come. (The Priestess goes to seek Arzana)

The will of heaven

Demands her presence and calls her to the altar.

Olympias, crowned by her with garlands of flowers

Will be led in triumph to the gods.

Cassander, initiated in our divine secrets,

Will be purified by her august hands.

All must be accomplished. Our rites, our mysteries,

These directions that the gods have given to our fathers,

Cannot be changed, are not to any degree uncertain,

Like feeble laws invented by humans. (Statira escorted by the Priestess returns) (to Statira)

Come, you cannot contradict yourself

By refusing to fulfill your holy ministry.

From the moment you pronounced irrevocable vows

In this sacred asylum,

This great day is the only one that God has chosen for you

To announce his decrees to the conquerors of Asia.

Be worthy of God whom you represent.

STATIRA: (covered with a veil which hangs over her face without hiding it, and dressed like other priestess)

O heaven! For the last fifteen years within these secluded walls,

In the shadow of silence, inaccessible to the world,

I have enshrouded my horrible destiny.

Why are you drawing me from my obscurity?

You want to surrender me today, to calamity. (to High Priest)

Ah! lord, when I came to these abodes

It was to weep to die unknown.

You know it.

HIGH PRIEST: Heaven has prescribed other laws for you

And when you preside for the first time

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At the pomps of marriage, at our grand mystery,
Your name, your rank, can no longer be hidden;
It must be spoken.

STATIRA: Lord, what does it matter who I am?
The most abject blood, the blood of the greatest kings,
Aren't they equal before the supreme Being?
It is indeed known to him more than his own.
In the past these great names were able to flatter me.
In the night of the tomb they must be carried off.
Leave me forever lost to memory.

HIGH PRIEST: No question we renounce pride and glory.
We think as you do; but the Divinity
Exacts a simple admission, and wants the truth.
Speak—You are shaking.

STATIRA: You yourself will shake. (to priests and priestesses)
You who serve with God the supreme majesty,
Who share my fate, attached to his cult,
May my secrets be hidden between you and this God.

HIGH PRIEST: We all swear it to you.

STATIRA: Before having heard me
Tell me if it is true that the cruel Cassander
Will be here in the rank of our initiates.

HIGH PRIEST: Yes, madam.

STATIRA: He's seen his crimes expiated!

HIGH PRIEST: Alas! all humans have need of clemency.
If God didn't open his arms except to the sole innocent,
Who would come into this temple to burn incense on the altars?
God makes repentance the virtue of mortals.

This paternal judge sees from the height of his throne
The very culpable earth and his kindness pardons.

STATIRA: Well, if you knew for what excess of horror
He demands mercy and fears a vengeful god,
If you were instructed that he made his master perish,
And what a master, great gods! if you could know
What blood he shed in our enflamed walls,
When before the barely closed eyes of Alexander,
Having dared to pierce his lamenting widow,
He threw her dying on the body of her spouse.

You will be more surprised when you learn
Of secrets that until now the earth was unaware of.

This wife raised to the fulfillment of glory
Whose Persian blood honored the memory,
Widow of a demi-god, daughter of Darius.

She is speaking to you here, don't question her any further.
(The priests and the priestesses raise their hands and bow.)

HIGH PRIEST: O gods! what have I heard? gods how the crime outrages.
With what blows you strike those who are your image!
Statira in this temple! Ah! permit that at your knees
My deep respect—

STATIRA: High Priest, raise yourself
I am no longer for you the mistress of the world.

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Only respect here my profound sorrow.
See the fate of grandeurs down here.
What my father endured at the moment of his death,
In Babylon, in blood, I endured the same.
Darius, King of Kings, deprived of his diadem,
Fleeing in the deserts, wandering, abandoned,
Saw himself assassinated by his own friends.
A stranger, a pauper, a reject of the earth,
Comforted the misery of his last moments. (pointing to the Priestess who brought her)
Do you see this foreign woman in my court?
Her hand, her hand alone saved my life.
She alone drew me from the bloody crowd
Where my cowardly friends left me expiring.
She is an Ephesian, she guided my steps
Into this august asylum, at the end of my realm.
I saw myself despoiled by a thousand hands,
The country strewn with dead and dying.
Alexander's soldiers all raised up as kings
And public larcenies called great exploits.
I held in horror the world, and the ills it begets
Forever distant from it I will inter myself alive.
I confess, I weep for an infant daughter
Torn from my arms, from my embloodied body.
This foreign girl clings to me like family.
I lost Darius, Alexander and my daughter.
God alone remains to me.

HIGH PRIEST: Alas! may he be your support!
From the throne on which you were placed you rose almost to him.
His temple is your court; may it be happier here
Than in that august and dangerous grandeur,
On that terrible throne and by you forgotten
Become for the earth an object of pity.

STATIRA: Lord, this temple has sometimes consoled me,
But you must feel the horror which troubles me
In seeing Cassander speak there to the same gods
That my prayers have implored against his impious head.
HIGH PRIEST: The sacrifice is great: I feel deeply what it costs.
But our law speaks to you and your heart is listening;
You have embraced it.

STATIRA: Would I had been able to foresee
That it would impose on me this horrible duty?
I feel that my life, worn out in bitterness,
Its torch paling to extinction and self consumption,
In these last moments that God wishes to give me,
To what are they going to serve?

HIGH PRIEST: Perhaps to forgive.
You yourself have depicted your career.
March in it without ever turning back.
The Manes, freed from a body, vile and mortal
Experience an eternal repose without passions.
A new day lights them: this day is without clouds.

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They live for the gods: such is our portion.
A happy retreat leads to the depth of hearts,
Forgetfulness of enemies and forgetfulness of misfortunes.

STATIRA: It's true, I was queen and am only a priestess.
In my horrid duty support my weakness.
What is it I must do?

HIGH PRIEST: Olympias on her knees
Must first of all throw herself before you in these parts.
It's up to you to bless this illustrious marriage.

STATIRA: I am going to prepare her for a life of misfortune.
It's the fate of mankind.

HIGH PRIEST: The sacred fire, the incense,
The lustral water, the gifts offered to powerful gods,
All will be presented by your respectable hands.

STATIRA: And for whom, wretch! Ah! my deplorable life,
Unto its last moment will it be charged with horror?
In this retreat I thought to avoid my misfortune
Misfortune is everywhere, I was abusing myself.

Come, let's follow the law imposed by myself
HIGH PRIEST: Goodbye. I admire you more than I pity you.
She's coming to you. (he leaves)

(The stage shakes.)

STATIRA: You are shaking,
Funereal and holy place! I hear a horrible murmur,
The temple is tottering! What! all nature
Is moved by its aspect! and my forlorn senses
Are in the same difficulty, and remain confounded!

OLYMPIAS: (terrified) Ah! madame!

STATIRA: Approach, young and tender victim.
This frightening augury seems to announce crime;
Your attractions seem born only for virtue.

OLYMPIAS: Just gods, support my downtrodden courage!
And you, confidant of their august decrees,
Deign to direct my innocent youth.
I am in your hands; dissipate my terror.

STATIRA: Ah! I've got more of it than you! My child, hug me.
Are you informed of the fate of your spouse?
What is your country? What blood has conceived you?

OLYMPIAS: Humble in my condition, I haven't expected
This rank to which they are raising me, and which is not owed me.
Cassander is king, madam; in Greece in his father's court,
He deigned to raise my youth.
Since I fell into his august hands
I've always seen in him the greatest of humans.

I cherish a spouse and I revere a master.
Behold all my feelings, and behold all my being.

STATIRA: Just heaven, how easily a young heart is deceived!
I love the candor of innocence in you!

So, Cassander has taken care of your destiny?
What! you were not born of a prince or a king?

OLYMPIAS: To love virtue and follow its laws,

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

Must one be born in the purple of kings?

STATIRA: No, I see only too much crime on the throne.

OLYMPIAS: I was only a slave.

STATIRA: Such a destiny astonishes me.

The gods have placed nobility

On your face, in your eyes, in your features,

As well as attractions.

You, slave!

OLYMPIAS: Antipater, in my first infancy

By the fate of combat held me under his power.

I owe everything to his son.

STATIRA: Since your earliest days

Experienced misfortune and saw the end of its course!

And mine has lasted the whole time of my life!

In what times and in what parts were you pursued

By this frightful destiny which put you in irons?

OLYMPIAS: They say that they ended the life

Of a great king, master of the universe,

They were splitting up his empire and that in Babylon

Cassander saved my unfortunate life

Abandoned to the sword during the horror and carnage.

STATIRA: What! in the times marked by the death of Alexander

Captive of Antipater, and obedient to Cassander?

OLYMPIAS: That's all that I've learned. So many misfortunes passed

Are to be effaced by my new happiness.

STATIRA: Captured in Babylon! O eternal power!

Are you making a sport of the tears of a mortal woman?

The place, the time, her age, have excited in me

Joy and sorrow, tenderness and terror.

Am I not deceiving myself? Heaven seems to imprint on her face

The image of my heroic spouse.

OLYMPIAS: What are you saying?

STATIRA: Alas! such were his looks,

When, less proud and more soft, far from bloody dangers,

Raising my family robbed by the sword,

He restored it to the rank from which it had fallen.

When his hand joined to my trembling hand.

Illusion too dear, faltering and idle hope!

Is it possible? Listen to me, princess;

Have some pity on the trouble that presses me.

Do you have any recollection of a mother?

OLYMPIAS: Those who from my infancy were able to talk to me

Told me all about that time of trouble and carnage.

From leaving the cradle I was enslaved.

I've never known a mother's love.

I am unaware who I am, and who gave me life.

Alas! you are sighing, you are weeping, and my tears

Are mixed with your tears, and I find charms in that—

Eh, what! you clasp me in your languishing arms!

You are making impotent efforts to speak!

Speak to me.

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

STATIRA: I cannot—I am succumbing—Olympias!
The trouble I am feeling is going to cost me my life.

(Enter the High Priest.)

HIGH PRIEST: O priestess of gods! o queen of humans!
What new change in your sad destiny!

What must we do, and what are you going to hear?

STATIRA: Misfortunes; I am prepared and I must expect all.

HIGH PRIEST: It's the greatest of blessings mixed with bitterness
But there's no alternative. Antigonus troubled,
Antigonus, his partisans, the populace, the armies
Animated by zeal, all at last voice,
All say that this creature present to your eyes,
Who for a long while was in obscurity like you,
That your royal hands are going to unite with Cassander,
That Olympias—

STATIRA: Get it over with.

HIGH PRIEST: Is Alexander's daughter.

STATIRA: (running to embrace Olympias)

Ah! my lacerated heart told me that before you did.
O my daughter! o my blood! o sweet and fatal name.
In your embrace, I must rejoice,

Though by your marriage you are causing my death!

OLYMPIAS: What! you are my mother and you lament over it!

STATIRA: No, I bless the long incensed gods.

I feel nature too much and the excess of my joy;
But heaven is ravishing me of the blessing it is sending me!
It is giving you to Cassander!

OLYMPIAS: Ah! if in your flank

Olympias had drawn the source of her blood,
If I believe my love of him, if you are my mother,
Can the generous Cassander displease you?

HIGH PRIEST: Yes, you are her blood, you cannot doubt it.

Cassander in the end admits it, he's just attested to it.
May the two of you be reunited through her
To at last conciliate the two enemy races!

OLYMPIAS: Who? him? your enemy! Such will be my misfortune!

STATIRA: He is your father Alexander's poisoner.

From the breast of Statira from whom you claim birth
In this unfortunate breast which nourished your infancy
That you just embraced for the first time,
He plunged the knife with which he struck kings.
He is pursuing me at last even to the Temple of Ephesus.
There he braves the gods while feigning to appease them!
He dares to ravish you from my maternal arms.
And you can ask if I must hate him!

OLYMPIAS: What! Heaven sees the family of Alexander here!

What! you are his widow! Olympias is his daughter!

And your murderer, mother, is my spouse!

I am in your arms only an object of wrath!

What! this marriage so dear was a horrible crime!

HIGH PRIEST: Hope in heaven.

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

OLYMPIAS: Ah! its inflexible hate
From which no shadow of hope can flatter my prayers,
As it opened my eyes it opened an abyss.
I see what I am and what I must be.
The greatest of my ills is actually to know myself!
On the altar that you are to unite us, I must
Expire as a victim and fall at your feet.

(A Priest enters.)

PRIEST: They are threatening the temple and the divine mysteries
Are soon profaned by bold hands.
The two disunited kings are battling before our eyes
The right to command where the gods command.
Behold what they are announcing to these wailing vaults
And under our fearful feet our trembling dwellings.
It seems that heaven intends to inform us
That the earth is offended and must be calmed!
A people completely distracted, excited by discord,
Is rushing towards the sacred precinct and precipitating itself.
Ephesus is divided into two factions.
Soon we will resemble other nations.
Holiness, peace, morality are going to disappear;
The kings are carrying them off and we will have a master.

HIGH PRIEST:

Ah! then at least they will take their crimes far from us!
Let them leave on earth an asylum of peace!
Their interest demands it—O tender and august mother.
And you—shall I say, alas! the wife of Cassander?
You can cast yourself at the foot of these altars.
I am going to present myself to audacious kings
I know the respect that one owes to their crown.
But they owe more to this God who gives it to them.
If they intend to reign they cannot irritate him.
I know we are without arms, without soldiers.
We have only our laws, that's our power.
God alone is my support, his temple is my defense.
And if tyranny dares to approach in it,
It's over my bloody body that it must march.
(The High Priest and the Priest leave.)

STATIRA: O destiny! o God of altars and thrones!
Against Cassander at least favor Antigonus.
My daughter, in the decline of my life, I need and
Expect help only from our enemies
And to seek an avenger in the breast of my misery
Amongst the usurpers of the throne of your father!
Amongst our own subjects, whose jealous efforts
Are disputing a hundred realms that I once possessed entirely!
They crawled at my feet, here they are my masters.
O throne of Cyrus! o blood of my ancestors!
Into what deep abyss are you descended!
Vanity of grandeur I no longer know you.

OLYMPIAS: My mother I am with you—Ah! in this funereal day

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

At least make me worthy of the great name which remains to you.

The duty that it prescribes is my only hope.

STATIRA: Daughter of the king of kings, fulfill that duty.

CURTAIN

ACT III

The temple is closed.

CASSANDER:

Truth is getting out of hand, it's no longer time for silence.
This funereal secret which my father kept hidden
Must give way to the public clamor.
Yes, I've done justice to the daughter of kings.
Must I much longer, through a cruel silence,
Still do to her blood a mortal offense?
I am guilty enough.

SOSTERNES: But a jealous rival

Is using the great name of Olympias against you.
He's rousing the populace; Ephesus is alarmed
The aroused fury of religion
That Antigonus scorns, he knows how to excite.
Having killed the mother, you are committing a frightful crime,
A detestable crime, to possess the daughter.

CASSANDER: You know the bloody reproaches that Ephesus
Can make me, great God! cannot approach mine.

Thanks to heaven, I've calmed the hearts of the citizens.
Mine will always be the victim of the furies,
The victim of love and of my barbarism.
Alas! I wanted for her to hold everything from me.
That she would be unaware of a fate that froze me with terror.
I was placing the inheritance of her father in her hands,
Conquered by Antipater, my share today.
Happy with my love, happy with my blessings,
One time in my life with myself at peace.
Everything will be redressed, I will render her justice.
After all, my heart was not the accomplice of any crime.
I killed Statira, but in battle,
It was in saving my father, that I readied my arm against her.
It's in the distraction of murder and carnage
In which a son's duty distracted my courage
It was blindness that night and horror
Spread over my troubled eyes by means of madness!
My soul shook, having been punished,
By this fatal love which holds it enslaved.
I think myself innocent in the judgement of the gods,
Before the whole world but not in my own eyes.
Not at all for Olympias, and that's my torture
That's my despair. She must choose
Whether to pardon me or pierce my heart.
This despairing heart which is burning with fury.

SOSTERNES: They assert that Olympias, brought to this temple,
Can withdraw the hand she gave you.

CASSANDER: Yes, Sosternes, I know it; and if by this law
The creature that I idolize is abused against me,

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

Bad luck to my rival, and bad luck to this temple!
Of the most holy cult I will here make an example.
I will soon turn it over to vengeance and horror.
Let's take this idle terror far from me.
I am loved; her heart was mine from infancy,
And love is the god who will take up my defense.
Let's rush to Olympias.

(The High Priest leaves the temple.)

CASSANDER: Interpreter of heaven,
Minister of clemency, on this solemn day
I've spared your holy temple from alarms.
I still haven't taken arms against Antigonus.
I've respected these days dedicated to peace
But give that peace to my torn senses.
I have more than one right here, I shall know how to defend them.
I am dying without Olympias, and you must give her up.
Let's complete this marriage.

HIGH PRIEST: Lord, she's performing
Very sacred duties and very dear to her heart.

CASSANDER: All my partisans share them. Where then is the priestess
Who must offer my wife to me and bless my tenderness.

HIGH PRIEST: She is going to bring her. Let such beautiful bonds
Not work misfortune for the two of you today!

CASSANDER: Our misfortune! Alas! this single day
Saw the course of so many ills terminated.
For the first time a moment of sweetness
Is dissipating the darkness of my frightful pains.

HIGH PRIEST: Perhaps Olympias is to be pitied more than you.

CASSANDER: What do you mean? what are you saying?
Eh! what can she fear?

HIGH PRIEST: (as he is leaving) You will learn so enough.

CASSANDER: No, stay. Eh, what!
Are you taking part with Antigonus against me?

HIGH PRIEST: May the heavens preserve me from passing the limits
That my peaceful cult prescribes to my zeal.
Court intrigues, the shouts of factions,
The sad passions of mortals that I am fleeing
Have not yet troubled our obscure retreats.

To the god we are serving we raise our pure hands.
The quarrels of great kings, prompt to divide them,
Are to us known only to appease them
And we would be unaware of their transient grandeurs
But for the fatal need they have for our prayers.
For you, for Olympias, and for others, Lord,
I am going to implore the favor of the immortals.

CASSANDER: Olympias!

HIGH PRIEST: This moment recall her to these parts.
See if you still have rights over her.

I am leaving you.

(The High Priest leaves and the temple opens.)

CASSANDER: (As Olympias and Statira enter from the interior of the temple)

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

She's trembling, O heaven, and I am quaking!
What! you are lowering your tear filled eyes!
You are turning away from me that face in which nature
Depicted the most noble soul and the purest passion!

OLYMPIAS: (throwing herself in the arms of her mother)

Ah! barbarian!—Ah! Madame!

CASSANDER: Explain yourself, speak.

Into whose arms are you fleeing my desolated glances?
What have they said about me? Why am I causing such alarms?
Who's this that accompanies you, and bathing you with tears?

STATIRA: (unveiling and turning toward Cassander) See who I am.

CASSANDER: Her features—her voice!

My blood is freezing! Where am I? And what am I seeing?

STATIRA: Your crimes.

CASSANDER: Statira can reappear here!

STATIRA: Wretch! recognize the widow of your master,
The mother of Olympias.

CASSANDER: O heavenly thunders.

Roar over me, break over this criminal face!

STATIRA: Why didn't you make this horrible prayer sooner?

Eternal enemy of my whole family,
If heaven wanted it, if through your first blows,
You alone made my husband and my throne collapse.
If on that day of crime, in the midst of carnage,
Barbarian, you sensed in yourself little enough courage
To strike a woman, and piercing her side
To plunge your hands in the waves of her blood,
Leave me what remains of this wretched blood.
Must your hand at all times be funeral to me?
Don't tear my daughter from my heart, from my arms;
When heaven returns her to me, don't carry her away from me.
Earthly tyrants have always separated
Respect, at least, for the asylum in which I am interred.
Wretch, don't come with unworthy efforts
To persecute the dead in these sacred tombs.

CASSANDER: You have struck me more than thunder could have
And my face dares not touch the ground at your feet.
I confess myself unworthy after my attempted murders.
And if I excuse myself because of the horror of battles,
If I inform you that my hand was deceived
When the thread of the life of a hero was cut
That I was serving my father in arming myself against you,
I would be unable to soften your just wrath.
Nothing can excuse me. Yet I might say
That I saved this blood that my tenderness adores,
That I am placing at your feet my scepter and my realm.
All is horrifying for you! You are not listening to me!
My hand would snatch my wretched life from me
Less full of crimes than punished remorse,
If your own blood, the object of so much love,
Despite herself, despite me, didn't attach me to life.

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

With holy respect I raised your daughter.
I defended her for fifteen years from my father and my family.
She has my vows, my heart, and perhaps the gods
Who are assembled in this august abode
Will let the shocking horror of our fate
Be repaired through a holy marriage.
STATIRA: What marriage! O my blood! you will receive the faith
Of whom? Of the assassin of Alexander and myself?
OLYMPIAS: No—mother, extinguish these terrifying torches,
These torches of hymen in our guilty hands.
Extinguish in my heart the frightful memory
Of bonds, of sad bonds which must have joined us.
I prefer, and there's nothing in
This choice that should astonish you,
Ashes with which you are covered to the scepter he is giving me.
I don't hesitate; leave me in your arms
To forget love with so many crimes.
Your daughter became his accomplice by loving him.
Pardon: accept my just sacrifice.
If possible separate my heart and his misdeeds,
Especially prevent me from ever seeing him again.
STATIRA: I recognize my daughter and am less unfortunate.
You restore a little life to my frightful languor.
I am reborn. Ah! great gods! did you want my hand
To present Olympias to this inhuman monster?
What were you exacting of me? what frightful ministry
Both for your priestess, alas, and for her mother!
You had pity: you didn't want it
To catch me in the snare into which you were guiding my steps.
Cruel man, don't insult the altar and the throne;
You soiled the walls of Babylon with my blood.
I would yet prefer a second time
To see that blood shed by the assassin of kings
Than to see my subject, my enemy—Cassander—
Insolently love Alexander's daughter.
CASSANDER: I still condemn myself with greater harshness,
But I love, but give in to love in fury.
Olympia belongs to me; I know what my father did.
I am a king like him, I have the same character,
I have the same rights, the same power;
She is, in the end, my wife.
Nothing can separate my fate and her destiny.
Neither terrors, nor you, nor the gods, nor my crimes.
Nothing can ever break such legitimate fetters.
Heaven didn't turn away from my remorse.
And since it united us, it has pardoned everything.
But if they intend to separate me from this adored spouse,
Her hand which belongs to me, her faith that she swore;
They must shed this blood, they must take my heart out
Which knows nothing but her and which horrifies you.
In my eyes your altars no longer are privileged.

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

If I'm a murderer I will be a sacrilegious man.
I will carry off my wife from this temple, from your arms.
From the gods themselves, from our gods,
If they won't hearken to me.
I demand death, I want it, I envy it
But I shall not expire except as the spouse of Olympias.
Despite you, I must bear to the tomb
Both the most tender love and the finest name
And the terrible remorse of an involuntary crime
Which will at least soften the Manes of her father.
(Cassander leaves with Sosternes.)

STATIRA: What a moment! what blasphemy! o heaven! what did I hear?
Ah! my daughter, at what price is my blood returned to me?
I can see that you resent the horrors I am experiencing.
My sorrow is found in your terrified eyes.
Your heart responds to mine. Your dear hugs,
Your enflamed sighs, console my torments.
They are less mournful when you share them.
My daughter is my asylum in this new shipwreck.
I can endure everything, because I see in you
A heart worthy indeed of Alexander and me.

OLYMPIAS: Ah! heaven is my witness if my soul is formed
To imitate yours, and to be animated
With the same sentiments and the same virtues.
O widow of Alexander! o blood of Darius!
My mother! Ah! was it needful that the hands of Cassander
That robbed me from your arms raised me?
Why did your murderer, foreseeing my wishes,
Mark his life for me with benefactions?
Why has his cruel hand never oppressed me!
Benefactions too dangerous! why has he loved me?

STATIRA: Heavens! who do I see appear in these retired abodes?
Antigonus himself!

ANTIGONUS: (entering) O queen! stay.
You see one of the kings created by Alexander
Who respects his widow and is coming to defend her.
You can climb from the foot of this altar
To the first rank of the world where heaven placed you.
Put your daughter there, and at least take vengeance.
On your haughty ravisher who is offending all three of us.
Your fate is known, all hearts are yours.
They are weary of tyrants that your august spouse
Left masters of his empire by his death.
For this great change your name can suffice.
Will you admit me here as your defender?

STATIRA: Yes, it's pity which directs your heart,
If you serve my blood, if your offer is sincere.

ANTIGONUS: I shall not suffer that a bold youth
From the hands of your daughter and with so many virtues
Obtain a double right to the throne of Cyrus.
He's too unworthy of it, and for such a share

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

I presume he doesn't have your vote.
I haven't opened my heart to the High Priest.
I am presenting myself as a worshipper
Who implores clemency of the divinities.
I am presenting myself to you armed with vengeance.
The widow of Alexander, forgetting her grandeur,
Will not, at least, forget honor of her family to such a degree.

STATIRA: My heart is detached from the throne and from life.

The first was stolen from me, the second soon finished.
But if you snatch from the hands of a ravisher
The only treasure the gods have given to my sorrow,
If you protect her, if you avenge her father,
I will no longer see in you anything but my tutelary god.
Lord, save my daughter, by the edge of my tomb,
From the crime and the danger of marrying my executioner.

ANTIGONUS: Worthy blood of Alexander, do you approve my zeal?

Do you accept my offer and think like she does?

OLYMPIAS: I ought to hate Cassander.

ANTIGONUS: I must be granted
The prize, the noble prize that I am coming to demand.
Against my ally I am taking your defense.
I think to deserve you: be my reward.
Everything else is an outrage, and it's you I want.

Cassander wasn't made to obtain your vows.
Speak, and my arm will uphold
Of the queen, and especially of you yourself.
Pronounce: do you deign to honor me with such a prize?

STATIRA: Decide.

OLYMPIAS: Let me get my wits about me.
I am hardly opening my eyes. Trembling, shocked,
Hurled from the breast of slavery in this temple.
Daughter of Statira, daughter of a demi-god,
I find a mother in this august place.
Despoiled of his name, his rank and his treasure
And from a deadly sleep hardly awakened;
I marry a benefactor—he is an assassin.
My spouse cut up my mother's breast.
In this heap of horrible adventures
You offer me your hand to avenge my injuries.
What can I reply to you?—Ah! in such moments— (hugging her mother)
You see to whom I owe my first feelings.
See if the torch of nuptial celebrations
Is made to light these fatal horrors.
What crowd of ills surround me in a single day,
And if this frozen heart could listen to love.

STATIRA: Ah! I will respond to you for her,
And heaven is giving her to you.
The majesty or perhaps the pride of my throne
Hadn't destined, in my original plans,
The daughter of Alexander for one of my subjects.
But you deserve her by daring to defend her.

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

It was you that expiring Alexander designated.
He named the most worthy, and you've become it.
His throne is your treasure if you sustain it.
May the favor of the immortal gods second you!
May their hand lead you to the empire of the world!
Alexander and his widow, both enslaved,
He in the tomb and I in these shadowy walls,
Will see you without regret on the throne of my fathers,
And may fate, henceforth less severe,
Protect you from this fatality
Which always overturns this embloodied throne!

ANTIGONUS: It will be raised up by the hand of Olympias.
Show yourself with her to the people of Asia.
Leave this refuge, and I am going to urge all
To avenge Alexander and to replace him.
(Exit Antigonus.)

STATIRA: My daughter, it's through you that I am breaking the barrier
That separates me here from all of nature.
In a moment I am returning to this perverse world
To avenge my spouse, your marriage and your fetters.
God will give strength to my maternal hands
To smash with you your criminal chains.
Come fulfill my promise and make me forget
By new oaths, the crime of the first.

OLYMPIAS: Alas!

STATIRA: What! you lament?

OLYMPIAS: This same day
To light the marriage torches twice?

STATIRA: What are you saying?

OLYMPIAS: Allow me, for the first time
To make you hear a timid voice.

I cherish you, my mother, and I want to pour out
The blood that I received from you and Alexander
If I obtain from the gods by shedding it
The prolongation of your days or their consolation.

STATIRA: O my darling Olympias!

OLYMPIAS: Dare I still say
That your obscure asylum is the throne to which I aspire?
You will see me submissive there and crushing at your feet
These wretched thrones, by you alone forgotten.
My father Alexander, shut in his tomb,
Does he want that his enemy succumb by our hands?
Let's leave that to these kings in the horror of battles,
To punish one by means of the other and to avenge his death.
But as for us, of so many ills the innocent victims
To their frantic arms join our trembling hands,
Must we take on ourselves a fruitless murder?
Tears are for us, crimes are for them.

STATIRA: Tears! And for whom do I see them shed here?
Gods! have you rendered me the daughter of Alexander?
Is it she that I hear?

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

OLYMPIAS: Mother—

STATIRA: O vengeful heaven!

OLYMPIAS: Cassander!

STATIRA: Explain yourself; you are freezing me with horror.
Speak.

OLYMPIAS: I cannot.

STATIRA: Go, you are tearing out my soul.

End this terrible trouble; speak, I say.

OLYMPIAS: Ah! Madam,

I feel too much the blows I've just struck you with.
But I cherish you too deeply to wish to deceive you.
Prepared to separate myself from a spouse so guilty,
I am fleeing him—but I love him.

STATIRA: O execrable word!

Last of my life! cruel daughter, alas!
Because you love him, you won't flee him.
You love him! You are betraying Alexander and your mother!
Great God! I've seen my husband and my father perish.
You are tearing my daughter from me, and your inhuman decree
Makes me find her again only to die by her hand,

OLYMPIAS: I am throwing myself at your feet.

STATIRA: Unnatural daughter!
Daughter too dear!

OLYMPIAS: Alas, by sorrows devoured
Trembling at your knees, I am bathing them with tears.
Mother, forgive—

STATIRA: I forgive and I am dying.

OLYMPIAS: Live, listen to me.

STATIRA: What do you want?

OLYMPIAS: I swear to you

By the gods, by my name, by you, by nature,
That I will punish myself for it, that Olympias today
Will shed all her blood before belonging to him.
My heart is known to you. I told you that I love;
Judge by my weakness, and even by this confession,
If this heart belongs to you and you are bearing it away
From my distracted sense that love has tamed.
Don't consider my weakness and my age;
From my father and from you I feel my courage.
I've been able to offend, I cannot betray;
And you will know me in seeing me die.

STATIRA: You can die, you say, inhuman and beloved daughter,
And you cannot hate the assassin of your father.

OLYMPIAS: Tear my heart out, you will see that a spouse,
However dear he was to me, reigns in it less than you.
You will recognize in it this pure blood that animates me.
To justify yourself, take your victim.
Immolate your daughter.

STATIRA Ah! I trust in your virtues.

I pity you Olympias, and I do not accuse you.
I hope in your duty, I hope in your courage.

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

As for myself, I was pitied by a love that outrages me.

You are tearing my heart apart and you know how to soften it.

Console your mother at least by making her die.

Go, I am wretched and you are not guilty.

OLYMPIAS: O heaven! Which of us is the most miserable?

CURTAIN

ACT IV

In the peristyle.

HERMAS: You indeed told me, the holy places profaned
With the horrors of battles are going to be abandoned.
Your soldiers near the temple are occupying this passage.
Cassander, intoxicated by love, by sorrow, by rage,
Defying the wrath of the very gods he invokes,
Is advancing against you by this other path.
The signal is given; but in this enterprise
The populace is divided between you and Cassander.

ANTIGONUS: (leaving) I will reunite them.

CASSANDER: (blocking Antigonus) Stay, unworthy friend
Unfaithful ally, detestable enemy,
Are you daring to contest with me what heaven is giving me?

ANTIGONUS: Yes.

Where's the surprise in which your heart's abandoning itself?
The daughter of Alexander has rights great enough
To make Asia rise in arms and make our tyrants tremble.
Babylon is her dowry, and the empire is her right.
I pretend to both; and I really mean to tell you
That your tears, you regrets, your expiations,
Will not impose on the eyes of the people
Even if you were made innocent of the death of the father
Don't think that now friendship is so regarded
Opinion makes everything; it condemns you.
To the weaknesses of love your abandoned heart
Seduced Olympias by hiding her birth.
You thought to enshroud in eternal silence
This funereal secret of which I am informed.
It's not by deceiving her that you can be loved.
Her eyes are finally opened, and it is done; and Cassander
Dares not raise his, having no more right to pretend.
With what are you flattering yourself?
Do you think that her rights
Will raise you one day to the rank of king of kings?
I can take the defense of Statira here.
But do you want to preserve our long alliance?
Do you want to reign in peace in your new Realm?
To see me friend again, to support you with my arm?

CASSANDER: Well?

ANTIGONUS: Give up Olympias, and nothing separates us.
I will perish for you: if not I declare to you
That I am the greatest of all your enemies.
Know your interests, weigh them and choose.

CASSANDER: I won't have any trouble and I came to make you
A different offer, and which might please you.
You know neither law, nor remorse, nor pity.
And it's a game for you to betray friendship.

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

I, at least, fear heaven: you laugh at its justice.
You enjoy crimes of which I made you the accomplice.
You won't rejoice in them, traitor—

ANTIGONUS: What do you intend?

CASSANDER: If in your atrocious soul there is some virtue

Let's not employ the hands of mercenary soldiers
To glut your rage and serve my wrath.
What have the populace in common with our factions?

Is it for them to die for our squabbles?

It's for us, it's for you, if you feel the audacity

To brave my courage, as well as my disgrace.

I was not admitted to communication with the gods

To go slaughter my friend under their eyes.

It's a new crime; it's you who are preparing it.

Go, we were made to be barbarians.

Let's march; come decide your fate and mine,

To drink my blood or pour out yours.

ANTIGONUS: I consent to it with joy; and be sure that Olympias

Will accept the hand which separates you from life.

(They draw their swords. The High Priest emerges from the temple precipitously with priests and initiates who hurl themselves with a crowd of people between Cassander and Antigonus and disarm them.)

HIGH PRIEST: Profane ones, this is too much. Stop, respect

The god who speaks to you and his solemnities.

Priests, initiates, people, let them be separated.

Banish from this holy place barbarous discord.

Expiate your crimes—Swords, vanish.

Powerful God, pardon! you, kings, obey.

CASSANDER: I give in to heaven, to you.

ANTIGONUS: I persist: and I call as witness

The Manes of Alexander, and the celestial wrath.

So long as I live I won't suffer

That Olympias pass into his arms before my eyes,

And that this illegitimate, impious marriage

Shall be the shame of Ephesus and the horror of Asia.

CASSANDER: No question it will be if you had created it.

HIGH PRIEST: With a mind more resigned, with a heart less inflamed,

Give up to the law, respect its justice.

It's common to both of you, it must be accomplished.

The hut of the poor and the throne of kings

Equally submit, hearing this voice.

It aids the weak, it is the curb of crime

And frees at the altar the innocent victim.

If the spouse, whoever he may be and whatever may be his rank,

Has shed the blood of his wife's relations,

He must be purified in our sacred mysteries

By the fires of Vesta and the healthy waters

And by repentance more necessary than those.

His spouse in one day can form other bonds.

She can do so without shame, at least if her clemency

Through the example of the gods, does not pardon the offense.

The law gives her a single day: she can shorten the time

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

Of the pain attached to these great changes
But especially await the orders of a mother.
She has resumed her rights, the sacred character
That nature gives, and that nothing weakens.
To her august voice Olympias is obedient.
What can you dare to attempt, when it's up to you to await
The decrees of the widow of Alexander?

(He leaves with his followers.)

ANTIGONUS: That's enough, I subscribe to it, pontiff: she is mine.

(Antigonus leaves with Hermas.)

CASSANDER: She won't be of a barbarous and faithless heart.

Sosternes, let's snatch her from this fatal asylum,
From the insolent pretension of this guilty cynic
Who laughs at my remorse, insults my sorrow
And, tranquil and serene, comes to tear my heart out.

SOSTERNES: He seduced Statira, Lord; he's acting on authority
Of both the laws he's violating and the gods that he scorns.

CASSANDER:

Let's carry her off, I tell you, to the gods that I have served
And by whom, henceforth, all my efforts are betrayed.
I will accept death, I will bless the lightning.
But in the end if my spouse dares to decide
To pass, in one day, here at this fatal altar
From the hand of Cassander to the hand of a rival!
Let this temple fall in ashes before I endure that!
Heaven! You will forgive me. More calm and more pure
My soul dares to abandon itself to this hope.
You are separating me from Olympias, is it to pardon her?

SOSTERNES:

It isn't separating you at all: this tender and docile heart
So submissive to your sway, so happy to surrender itself
Cannot pass to forgetfulness in a moment.
The heart cannot make such a prompt change.
She can love you without betraying nature.
Your blows in battle carried by chance
Have spilled, I confess, a very precious blood.
It's a misfortune that the gods allow you.
You didn't soak in the blood of her father.
Your tears have effaced all the blood of her mother.
Her misfortunes are passed, your blessings are present.

CASSANDER: Idly this idea appeases my torments.

This blood of Statira, these Manes of Alexander,
Are making themselves heard here with a very terrible voice.
Sosternes, she is their daughter, she has the frightful right
To hate unchangeably a wretched spouse.
I feel that she abhors me, and as for me, I prefer her
To the throne of Cyrus, to the throne of the world.
These expiations, these hidden mysteries
Indifferent to kings and sought out again by me,
She was the object of it; my criminal soul
Approached the gods only so as to approach her.

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

SOSTERNES: (noticing Olympias)

Alas! behold her in prey to her sorrows.

She's embracing an altar and bathing it with tears.

CASSANDER:

From the temple, from this altar, it's time I carried her off.

Go, hurry, let everything be prepared.

(Sosternes leaves.)

OLYMPIAS: (bent over the altar without seeing Cassander)

How my heart is soothed.

How desperate it is! How it condemns itself! alas! (noticing Cassander)

What do I see?

CASSANDER: Your husband.

OLYMPIAS: No, you are not.

No, Cassander—never pretend to be.

CASSANDER: Well! I am unworthy to be, and I ought to know myself.

I know all the crimes that my inhuman fate

Has committed by my hand to ruin the two of us.

I thought to expiate them, I am filling the measure with them.

My presence is a crime, and my passion an insult

But deign to reply to me—did I by my help

Tear your life from the furors of war?

OLYMPIAS: Why conserve it?

CASSANDER: From childhood

Have I respected your sweet innocence?

Have I idolized you?

OLYMPIAS: Ah! There's my misfortune.

CASSANDER: After the tender confession of the most pure passion,

Free in your goodness, mistress of yourself,

This favorable voice to the husband who loves you,

In the place where I am speaking to you, at these same altars,

Joined my oaths to your solemn oaths!

OLYMPIAS: Alas! it is too true—May the celestial wrath

Not punish me for such a funereal oath.

CASSANDER: You love me, Olympias!

OLYMPIAS: Ah! to complete the horror

Don't reproach me for my detestable error.

It was very easy to dazzle my youth.

You knew the weakness of a heart which was ignorant.

It's one crime the more. Flee me, these conversations

Are a more frightful crime for me than for you.

CASSANDER: Beware committing a more funereal one, perhaps

By accepting the vows of a barbarian and a traitor.

And if for Antigonus—

OLYMPIAS: Stop, wretch!

I reject the vows of Antigonus and you.

After this hand, cowardly abused,

Was able to join to your hand my sprinkled blood,

No mortal, henceforth, will have rights over my heart.

I hold marriage, and the world and life, in horror.

Mistress of my choice, without deliberating

I am choosing the tomb in which my mother is shut.

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

I choose this asylum where god must possess
This heart which deceived itself when it gave in to you.
I embrace the altars and I detest your throne
And all those of Asia—and especially that of Antigonus.
Go away, never see me again—Go, leave me to weep
Over the love I pledged and must abhor.

CASSANDER: Well! if the love of my rival offends you
You won't separate me from a ray of hope.
And when your virtue rejects another spouse
This refusal is mercy to me and I believe in you.
Soiled though I am with the blood of she who gave you birth
You are, you will be the better half of my being,
The dearest and holy half, and whose virtues
Have halted the lightning suspended over me
Have taken a supreme sway over my heart
And ought to disarm your mother herself.

OLYMPIAS: My mother! What! your mouth pronounced her name.
Ah! if repentance, if compassion,
If your love, at least, could soften your audacity,
Flee these parts where she dwells,
And the altar that I am embracing.
Leave me alone.

CASSANDER: No, I don't know how to leave without you.
You must consent to follow me instantly. (taking her by the hand)
Dear wife, come.

OLYMPIAS: (pulling away, distracted) Treat me then like her;
Strike an unfortunate faithful to her duty.
Into this desolated heart bring a more certain blow;
All my blood was made to spill under your hand.
Strike, I say.

CASSANDER: Ah! very far from bearing you vengeance,
I had less cruelty, I had less violence.
Heaven knows how to be merciful, and you to punish.
But it's too much to be an ingrate, and it's too much to hate me.

OLYMPIAS: Is my hate just and have you deserved it?
Cassander, if your ferocious embloodied hand,
Your hand which dared to pierce my mother's flank,
Had struck only me, and shed only my blood,
I would pardon you, I would love you—barbarian.
Go away, everything separates us.

CASSANDER: No, nothing is separating us.
Even if you were to hold Cassander in greater horror,
Even if you married me to pierce my heart,
You will follow me. My fate must be accomplished.
Leave me my love, at least for my punishment.
This punishment is without end, and I swear it by you.
Hate, punish, but follow your husband.

(Enter Sosternes.)

SOSTERNES: Appear, or soon Antigonus is carrying her off.
He's speaking to your warriors, he's besieging the gate,
He's seducing your friends assembled near the temple

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

With his formidable voice; they seem disturbed.
He calls to witness Alexander, he calls to witness Olympias.
Tremble for your love, tremble for your life.
Come.

CASSANDER: Thus you are sacrificing me to my rival!
I am going to seek death since you wish it
OLYMPIAS: Me, wish your death!—get out, I'm incapable of it.
Live far from me.

CASSANDER: Without you, life is execrable to me.
And if it's preserved to me, I am returning to this place.
I will tear you from the temple, or die there before your eyes.
(He leaves with Sosternes.)

OLYMPIAS: Wretched woman! And it's he who is causing my alarms!
Ah! Cassander, is it up to you to cost me tears?
Must there be so many battles to fulfill duty?
You would have an absolute power over my soul,
O blood from which I was born, o voice of nature!
I am abandoning myself to you, it's for you that I am swearing
To sacrifice to you my dearest feelings.
On this altar, alas! I took other oaths.
Gods! you received them; o gods! your clemency
Ought to approve the innocence of the most tender love.
You've changed everything—well then change my heart.
Give it the virtue conforming to its misfortune.
Have some pity on a torn soul
Which is perishing unfaithful or dying unnatural.
Alas! I was happy in my obscurity,
In the forgetfulness of mankind, in captivity;
Without parents, without rank, unknown even to myself.
The great name that I bear is what has ruined me.
At least I will be worthy of it—Cassander I must flee you,
I must abandon you—but how can I hate you?
What power does a weak mortal have over itself?
I am tearing at my cruel wound, weeping,
And this unfortunate dart that my hand seeks
I push into my heart instead of tearing it out.
(The High Priest, priests and priestesses enter.)

OLYMPIAS: Pontiff, where are you hurrying? Protect my weakness.
You are trembling, you are weeping!

HIGH PRIEST: Unfortunate princess!
I am weeping for your situation.

OLYMPIAS: Ah! be its support.

HIGH PRIEST: Resign yourself to heaven—you have nothing but that.

OLYMPIAS: Alas! what are you saying?

HIGH PRIEST: O dear and august daughter,
The widow of Alexander—

OLYMPIAS: Ah! just gods!—my mother!
Well—

HIGH PRIEST: All is lost. The two furious kings,
Trampling on the laws, armed against the gods,
Into the sanctuary of the sacred enclosure

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

Encouraged their troops readied for murder.
Already spilling blood, swords in hand,
Cassander to you was beating a path.
I marched against him, having for my defense
Only the laws he was forgetting;
And our gods that he is offending.
Your distracted mother, offered herself to his blows.
Thinking herself master at once of the temple and you,
Weary of horrors, weary of so many crimes,
She seized the sword that strikes sacrifices
Plunging it into this flank where irritated heaven
Made you draw life and calamity.

OLYMPIAS: (falling into the arms of a priestess)

I am dying—support me—let's march—Is she still living?

HIGH PRIEST: Cassander is at her feet: he laments, he implores

He still dares to ready his funereal aid
To innocent hands which are reviving her life.
He shrieks out on himself, he accuses himself,
He throws his weapons far away.

OLYMPIAS: (rising) Cassander at her knees!

HIGH PRIEST: He's bathing them with tears.

To his cries, to our voices, she rolls her eyes.
She sees in him only an audacious monster
Who's tearing from her the remains of her life.
By this funereal hand pursued at all times
Weak, and sustaining herself by a final effort,
She falls, she's reaching the moment of death.
She abhors, at the same time, Cassander and life
And raising regretfully her debilitated eyelids,
“Go,” she said to me, “Unfortunate minister
Of an unlucky temple profaned by blood.
Console Olympias. She loves me, and I direct
That to avenge her mother, she marry Antigonus.”

OLYMPIAS: Let's go die beside her. Exact from me, great gods!
Come, guide my steps, come shut our eyes.

HIGH PRIEST: Arm yourself with courage; he must appear here.

OLYMPIAS: Lord, I have need of it, and perhaps, I will have some.

CURTAIN

ACT V

HERMAS: Pity must speak and vengeance is vain;
An unlucky rival is not worthy of hate.

Flee this funereal place: Today Lord,
Olympias will be lost for you and for him.

ANTIGONUS: What! Statira is no more!

HERMAS: It's Cassander's fate

To be forever fatal to the great name of Alexander.

Statira, succumbing to the weight of her sorrows,

Expired with horror in the arms of her daughter.

The sensitive Olympias, stretched at her feet,

Felt her painfully retained soul exhale.

The ministers of the gods, the priestesses in tears

Mixing in their regrets increased their sorrows.

Cassander, shocked, feels all their seizures.

The temple is echoing with outbursts and complaints.

They are preparing a funeral pyre, and these vain decorations

Which recall the dead to the sight of the living.

They pretend that Olympias, in this solitary place,

Will live in the asylum that entombed her mother.

That from the world, from marriage, tearing her beautiful life,

She will consecrate to the gods their deplorable court.

And that she must weep in eternal silence

For her family, her mother and even her birth.

ANTIGONUS: No, no, she must follow the laws of her duty.

In the end, I have over her irrevocable rights.

Statira gave her to me, and her supreme orders

At the moment of death are the laws of the gods themselves.

This frantic Cassander and his funeral passion

Caused a just horror to the blood of Statira.

HERMAS: Lord, you believe that?

ANTIGONUS: She herself declared

That her desolated heart renounced this barbarian.

If he still dares to love her, I've promised his death.

I'll keep my word and you mustn't doubt it.

HERMAS: Would you mix blood to the tears you see shed,

To the flames of the funeral pyre, to these august ashes?

Struck by a holy respect, know that your soldiers

Are recoiling with horror and will not follow you.

ANTIGONUS: No, I cannot be troubled by funerary pomps.

I've taken an oath; Cassander reveres her.

I know the laws that I must respect;

That to win the populace I must imitate them.

Avenger of Statira, Protector of Olympias,

I must here be the example of the rest of Asia.

Everything speaks in my favor, and my delayed blows

Will have the more force for it and be more certain.

(The temple opens.)

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

(Antigonus, Hermas, the High Priest, the priests slowly come forward; Olympias is in mourning supported by the priestesses.)

HERMAS: They are leading Olympias hardly breathing.

I see emerging from the temple the august high priest

Who dampens with his tears the tracks of his steps.

The priestesses of the gods are holding her in their arms.

ANTIGONUS: These objects would touch the heart of the most ferocious. (to Olympias)

I really mean to admit it.—All know that my mouth,

In mixing my regrets with your sad sighs,

Swears again to avenge so many frightful annoyances.

The enemy who twice deprived you of a mother

Nourishes in his furor a bold hope.

Know that all is ready for his punishment

Don't add fear to your affliction

Be secure against his attempts.

OLYMPIAS: Ah! lord, speak less of murder and vengeance

She lived—I am dying to the rest of mortals.

ANTIGONUS: I deplore her loss as much as I pity you.

I could recall her sacred will

So dear to my hope and revered by you.

But I know what one owes in this first moment

To her shade, to her daughter, to your despair.

Consult yourself, madame and keep her promise.

(He leaves with Hermas.)

OLYMPIAS: You who reckon the horror which urges me,

You, minister of a god of peace and gentleness,

The only consoler of unfortunate hearts,

Can't I, under your eyes, consecrate my misery

To water the altars with tears for my mother?

Would you really, lord, have the harshness

To shut this asylum to my calamity?

It's the unique inheritance of the blood of so many kings

Don't envy me it; leave me my share.

HIGH PRIEST: I am weeping over your fate; but what can I do for you?

Your mother named your spouse as she died.

You heard her last will,

While with our hands we shut her eyes,

And if you resist her dying voice,

Cassander is your master, he will resume all his rights.

OLYMPIAS: I admit it, I swore it to dying Statira

To avert my hand from that bloody hand;

I am keeping my oath.

HIGH PRIEST: Free still in these abodes,

Your hand depends only on you and the gods.

Soon everything's going to change; you can, Olympias,

Direct now the fate of your life.

No question, one must not the same day light

Funeral pyres of the dead and the torches of love.

This mixture is terrible: but a word can suffice

And I will await this word without daring to prescribe it.

In these extremities, it's up to you to feel

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

What your heart owes to the blood from which you spring.

OLYMPIAS: Lord, I've told you: this marriage and all others
Are horrible to my heart and ought to be displeasing to yours.

I don't wish to betray these incensed Manes.

I am abandoning a spouse—that's obedience enough.

Let me flee marriage, and love, and a throne.

HIGH PRIEST: You must follow Cassander or choose Antigonus,
These two armed heroes, so proud and so jealous
Are forced now to be reconciled to you.

With one word you will become trouble and carnage

Whose shocking image our eyes will see.

Without the deep respect that inspires mortals

This apparel of death, this funeral pyre, these altars,

And these last duties, and these supreme honors,

Piety is wearying, and especially amongst the great

I have with difficulty stopped torrents of blood.

But as soon as tomorrow, this blood is going to flow in Ephesus.

Decide, princess, and appease the people.

This populace, which is always on the side of the laws,

When you have spoken, will sustain your choice.

If not, sword in hand, in this temple, in front of my sight

Cassander, reclaiming the oath he received

From a treasure he possessed, has the right to take it away

Despite the just horror he seems to inspire you with.

OLYMPIAS: It suffices; I conceive your reasons and your fears.

I won't get carried away with any more useless complaints.

I submit to my destiny; you see it's rigor.

I must make a choice—it's made in my heart.

I am determined.

HIGH PRIEST: So then, it's Antigonus.

You are accepting the vows and the hand that he is giving you?

OLYMPIAS: Lord, whatever it may be, perhaps this moment

Isn't made to conclude such an engagement.

You yourself admit it; and this last hour

In which my mother lived must occupy me completely.

You are going to bring her to the awaiting pyre?

HIGH PRIEST: We must acquit ourselves of these sad duties.

An urn will contain her mortal remains.

You will gather them up.

OLYMPIAS: Her criminal daughter

Caused her death—this daughter, at least,

Still owes some cares to her vengeful Manes.

HIGH PRIEST: I am going to prepare everything.

OLYMPIAS: By your laws that I am ignorant of,

Can I still see her on this blazing bed?

Can I approach this funeral apparatus?

Can I water her funeral pyre with my tears?

HIGH PRIEST: Alas! you ought to do it; we share your tears.

You have nothing to fear; and these rivals in arms

Won't be able to trouble these sorrowful duties.

Present your perfumes, your veils, your hair

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

And the pure and sad offering of libations.

(The priestesses place all this around an altar.)

OLYMPIAS: It's the unique favor that her daughter demands. (to the inferior priestess)

You who led her into this region of death,

Who shared fifteen years the horrors of her fate,

Go, return to warn me when these beloved ashes

Will be ready to fall in the flaming ditch.

May my last duties, since they are permitted to me,

Satisfy her shade—It's necessary

PRIESTESS: I obey.

(She leaves.)

OLYMPIAS: (to the High Priest) Go then; raise this fatal pile,

Prepare the cypress and the sepulchral pyre,

Make the two cruel rivals come here.

I intend to explain myself at the foot of the altar,

At the aspect of my mother, before the eyes of these priestesses,

Witnesses of my misfortunes, witnesses of my promises.

My feelings, my choice will be declared.

You will pity them, perhaps, and approve them.

HIGH PRIEST: You are still the mistress of your fate

You have only today, it's fleeing, and time presses.

(He leaves with the priests.)

OLYMPIAS: (on the forestage, the Priestesses form a half circle around her)

O you, who in my heart at this decision resolved,

Usurped to my shame an absolute power

Which triumphs still with dying Statira,

Of Alexander in the tomb, of their trembling daughter,

Of the earth and the heavens conjured against you,

Reign, unfortunate lover, over my shredded senses.

If you love me, alas! if I dare still to believe it,

Go, you will pay very dearly for your funereal victory.

(Enter Cassander.)

CASSANDER: Well! I am coming to fulfill my duty and your vows.

My blood must water this wretched funeral pyre.

Accept my death, it's my only hope;

Let it be with pity rather than with vengeance.

OLYMPIAS: Cassander!

CASSANDER: Sacred creature! darling wife!—

OLYMPIAS: Ah! cruel!

CASSANDER: There's no more pardon for this great criminal.

Unfortunate slave of fate that guides me,

My destiny is at all times to be a parricide. (throwing himself on his knees)

But I am your husband; but despite his crimes,

This husband adores you even more than ever.

Respect, while abhorring me, this marriage that I call in witness.

In the whole universe, Cassander alone remains to you.

Death is the only god who can separate us.

Perishing, I wish to see you and adore you.

Avenge yourself, punish me, but don't be a perjurer.

Go, marriage is still more holy than nature.

OLYMPIAS: Rise, and stop profaning, at least,

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

These fatal ashes and my funereal duties.
When on this frightful pyre whose ignited flames
Consume the members of my mother in these parts,
Don't soil these gifts that I must present.
Don't approach, Cassander and know to listen to me.
(Enter Antigonus.)

ANTIGONUS: Still your virtue can no longer defend itself from him.
Statira dictated to you the decree you must render.
I've respected the dead on this day of terror.
You can judge of it, since my vengeful arm
Has not yet inundated this asylum with blood
Because, still docile to your orders,
I take you in these parts for his judge and mine.
Pronounce our verdict, and fear nothing.
You will be seen, madame, at least I hope it,
To distinguish the assassin from the avenger of a mother.
Nature has some rights. Statira in the heavens,
Beside Alexander, rests her eyes here.
You are still shrouded in this temple.
But earth and heaven are observing Olympias.
You must decide between the two of us.

OLYMPIAS: I consent to it; but I intend that you respect me.
You see these preparations, these gifts that I must make
To our infernal gods, to the Manes of a mother.
You chose this time, impetuous rivals,
To speak to me of marriage amidst tombs!
Swear to me only, soldiers of my kingly father,
Kings after his death, that if I am dear to you
In this moment at least, recognize my laws.
You will not further trouble my duties and my choice.

CASSANDER: I must, I swear it, and you must know
How much I respect you and disdain this traitor.

ANTIGONUS: Yes, I swear it, too, very confident your heart
Is pierced with horror of this barbarous rival.
Pronounce: I subscribe to it.

OLYMPIAS: Think, whatever it may cost,
You yourself said it, that Alexander is listening to me.

ANTIGONUS: Decide before him.

CASSANDER: I await your will.

OLYMPIAS: Know then this heart that you are persecuting
And yourselves judge of the share that remains to me.
Whatever choice I make it must be funereal to me.
You feel all the excess of my calamity.
Learn more; know that I deserved it.
I've betrayed my parents, when I was able to know them,
I brought death to her who made me born.
I found a mother in this place of terror,
She died in my arms, she died for me.
She told her daughter, desolated at her feet:
"Marry Antigonus, and I will die consoled."
She was expiring, and I, to finish her off,

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

I refused.

ANTIGONUS: In this way you can brave me,
Outrage your mother, and betray nature!

OLYMPIAS: To her Manes, to you, I am doing no further injury.

I render justice to all and I'm rendering it to myself.

Cassander, before him, I pledged you my faith.

See if our bonds have been legitimate.

I allow you to judge; you know your crimes

It would be superfluous to reproach you for them.

Repair them one day.

CASSANDER: I cannot touch you!

I cannot soften this horror that presses you!

OLYMPIAS: You must be enlightened; keep your promise.

(The temple opens, the funeral pyre can be seen aflame.)

THE INFERIOR PRIESTESS: Princess, it is time.

OLYMPIAS: (to Cassander) See this frightful spectacle.

Cassander, at this moment, pity yourself if you can.

Contemplate this pyre, contemplate these ashes,

Recall my fetters, recall Alexander,

There's his widow, speak and say what I must do.

CASSANDER: Sacrifice me.

OLYMPIAS: You fate is dictated by your voice.

Await mine here. (she climbs on the platform of the altar which is near the pyre; the priestesses present her their offerings)

You, Manes of my mother,

Manes to whom I render these funerary duties,

You, that a just wrath must still animate,

You will receive gifts which may calm you.

They are perhaps worthy of my father and of you.

You, husband of Olympias, and who ought never to be,

You, who protect me with a cruel assistance,

You, through whom I lost the author of my life,

You, who cherished me so much, and for whom my weakness

Felt the tenderness of a more fatal love,

You think my cowardly passion banished from my soul—

Know (silence) that I adore you (silence)

And that I'm punishing myself for it.

Ahes of Statira, receive Olympias.

(Olympias strikes herself and throws herself into the flames.)

ALL: Heaven!

(The High Priest and the priests and priestesses express their astonishment and consternation.)

CASSANDER: (running to the pyre) Olympias!

THE PRIESTS: O heaven!

ANTIGONUS: O unheard of mania!

CASSANDER: She is no more and all our efforts are vain. (returning to the peristyle)

Is this enough, great gods? My execrable hands

Made my king perish, his widow and my spouse!

Antigonus, is your soul still jealous?

Unfeeling witness of this horrible death,

Do you still envy the sweetness of my fate?

If your great heart is irritated by my happiness,

OLYMPIAS A tragedy About the daughter of Alexander the Great

Share it, trust me, take this sword and imitate me.

(Kills himself.)

HIGH PRIEST: Stop! O holy temple! O just and vengeful god!

In what profane palace have you seen more horror?

ANTIGONUS: Thus Alexander, and his whole family,

Successors, murderers, all are ashes and dust!

Gods, whose wrath the whole world endures,

Masters of vile mortals, why did you create them?

What did Statira do? What did Olympias do?

For what are you reserving my deplorable life?

CURTAIN