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## Iphigenia 2.0

by CHARLES L. MEE

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In the darkness,  
we hear a male voice singing an ancient Macedonian folk song,  
wailing,  
almost keening.

Or Salpinx Call by Nederlanders Blazers Ensemble with Bie Deti Dallget by Arap  
Celolesakaj, Fatbardha Brahim, Nazif Celaj & Nikolin Likaj.

Or the male solo from Music of the Turkmen from Primitive Music of the World.

Or it could be Dionisis Savopoulos and Sotiria Bellou sing Zeibekiko.

Or Nikos Xylouris sings the mournful San Erthoun Mana I Fili Mou.

Or the very sad song Ipne Pou Pernis Ta Pedia sung by Savina Yannatou.

An Old Greek Man sits in the shadows, whitewashing the walls.  
Throughout the play he will continue to alter the space and prepare for the wedding.

Agamemnon enters by himself  
in thought,  
considering what he will say.  
He walks slowly downstage  
and stops directly in front of the audience.

When the music ends,  
he takes his time speaking.]

AGAMEMNON

I see that there are acts  
that will set an empire on a course  
that will one day  
bring it to an end.

Because, we see from the histories of empires  
none will last forever  
and all are brought down finally  
not by others  
but by themselves,  
from the actions that they take  
that they believe are right or good  
or necessary at the time to do.

Sometimes they are brought to ruin  
by no more than the belief  
that something must be done  
when in truth  
doing nothing would have been the better course.

[quietly, the First Soldier enters to one side,  
stands in silence,  
listening to Agamemnon]

To be sure,  
an empire  
cannot refuse to defend itself from absolute devastation  
and so it will arrange to have the capacity  
for self defense.  
It will preserve itself first from extinction  
and, as well, from lethal damage or great harm  
and then, too, from hurt and ill-treatment  
that could, if left unattended, lead to devastating injury,  
and, so by degrees,  
an empire will reason itself to a need to be immune even

from insult  
responding, finally,  
to the anxieties and nightmares  
that arise from within,  
and so: striking out  
at the phantasms of its own dreams.

Of course, it will know that a nation must protect its borders  
and, in order to do that,  
must secure its periphery  
and so it will come to attend to conditions just beyond its  
outermost bounds  
and thus, by increments,  
its interests will grow,  
until they will have been extended beyond an ability to defend them.  
They will have created new enemies along the way.  
They will have created the causes of wars  
where there were none before.  
Even if an empire begins with no ambition  
with no desire for conquest  
no wish to grow  
even so, it will feel it must grow or die  
and so it grows  
and thus it dies.  
Ruin, it would seem,  
is inherent in the nature of empire.

[and, as Agamemnon continues to speak,  
another soldier  
and then another  
and then another  
appear at the edges of the stage  
listening]

Might this fate be avoided  
or at least  
postponed?  
Might something else be done?  
Are there no precepts to follow in this murky,

unpredictable world?  
Often, it seems,  
men of affairs think that moral laws  
offer no useful guide to behavior  
that they are not meant for the practical business of the world  
forgetting  
that moral laws are nothing more nor less  
than the accumulated folk wisdom  
of millenia of human experience.  
And so it will happen  
that some moral law of an unforgiving nature is violated—  
a law against boundless desire,  
or cruelty  
a law against coercion  
or indifference to the humanity of others  
a law against initiating violence  
or being required,  
in the pursuit of some goal,  
to commit an act that anyone might see  
is heinous  
something finally is done that is so deeply wrong  
that the world must rise and crush it  
in order for the world itself to go on.

We may have felt some qualm about our behavior along the way  
but we will have dismissed it  
thinking it is a secondary thing  
lesser,  
insignificant in the context of the great demands  
we have placed upon ourselves  
and yet this qualm we feel  
will have been sent to us by our deepest wisdom.  
It is a warning to us.  
We ignore it at our peril.

And so, I tell you  
to call back the messenger.

This misgiving that I have  
can only, finally,  
save us all from devastation.

FIRST SOLDIER

And yet  
it's too late.  
The messenger has gone.

AGAMEMNON

He can be recalled.

FIRST SOLDIER

And if he were recalled  
what then?  
The soldiers have already said  
they will not sail to Troy  
they will not put their lives at risk  
unless you make a sacrifice that means as much to you  
as their lives mean to them.  
This should be the requirement placed on any leader  
who would engage in any enterprise  
that puts at risk the lives of others.  
If you speak of moral law:  
your own ministers say  
you can't ask them to send their sons to war  
knowing, without fail, some of them will die,  
unless you prove your equal commitment to your goal  
and sacrifice one of your own children first.

AGAMEMNON

First?  
Before these soldiers even consent to step into battle?

FIRST SOLDIER

This is their demand.

AGAMEMNON

How can this be right  
to substitute the certainty of a death  
for the possibility of one?

SECOND SOLDIER

The prospect of death in war is certain for some  
and so they ask for you to be the first to accept this certainty.

AGAMEMNON

A child of my own.

FIRST SOLDIER

This is their demand.

AGAMEMNON

How could I do this?

THIRD SOLDIER

You've already done it.

FIRST SOLDIER

You've sent for your daughter.

AGAMEMNON

I was wrong.

I made a mistake.

I have changed my mind.

FIRST SOLDIER

She's on her way.

I'm told she will arrive any moment now.

AGAMEMNON

I can send her back.

SECOND SOLDIER

And the soldiers, too, will go back home.

And so there will be no army  
to defend the lives of all those others  
you have said you will protect.

AGAMEMNON

And are all those lives in such danger?

FIRST SOLDIER

Your own brother's wife  
Helen, we know, has been taken captive to Troy.

AGAMEMNON

Taken captive or been seduced?

FIRST SOLDIER

Will not be returned.

AGAMEMNON

I am to trade the life of my own daughter  
for that of Helen?

FIRST SOLDIER

To let the world understand  
no one of our citizens  
may be held unlawfully.

ALL SOLDIERS

That we will defend each other.

SECOND SOLDIER

No one of us stands alone  
to face the threats of the world by ourselves.

ALL SOLDIERS

We have made a compact with one another.

SECOND SOLDIER

And within our own home  
we are safe to live our lives.

FOURTH SOLDIER

The soldiers say,  
if you won't accept the duties of leadership  
it could be  
we should find another leader.

AGAMEMNON

It could be you should have one.  
Because  
I will not  
sacrifice  
my daughter.

[Menelaus enters.]

MENELAUS

What's this I hear, Agamemnon,  
that there has been some change of plan?

AGAMEMNON

Menelaus.  
This is just what we were discussing.

MENELAUS

Discussing?  
Hasn't a decision already been made?

AGAMEMNON

Yes. But then, you see....

MENELAUS

I see nothing but indecision.  
What are you saying?

The army won't be sent to Troy?  
After you gave your word  
you would bring Helen back to me?

AGAMEMNON

What the soldiers have demanded of me,  
is that I sacrifice my own daughter  
no, let's speak plainly,  
that I murder my own daughter  
before they would go into battle....  
What father could do this?

MENELAUS

And yet you thought you could.  
When it was first proposed to you  
you thought you must,  
to put your duties ahead of your private feelings.

AGAMEMNON

I was wrong.  
I made a mistake.  
I can't do this.

MENELAUS

I understand the difficulty this puts you in.

AGAMEMNON

Do you?

MENELAUS

But what sort of leader do you pretend to be?  
One who can make a decision  
as it were, from the mountaintop,  
but not when you imagine seeing  
face to face  
what your decision means in fact?

Is this the first you've heard what dangers men face in battle?

The time a car came towards us,  
when, just five minutes before, another car had come  
and there were four Palestinians in it with RPGs  
and they killed three of my friends.  
So this new Peugeot comes towards us,  
and we shoot.  
And there was a family there—  
three children.  
And I cried,  
but I couldn't take the chance.  
Children, father, mother.  
All the family was killed,  
but we couldn't take the chance.

When we cleaned out a terrorist prison camp  
we took a woman prisoner.  
I'd already told my men we took no prisoners,  
but I'd never killed a woman.  
"She has to die fast," my sergeant said.  
I was sweating.  
The woman said to me,  
what's the matter? you're sweating.  
"Not for you," I said, "It's a malaria recurrence."  
I gave my pistol to my  
sergeant,  
but he couldn't do it.  
None of them would do it,  
and I knew if I didn't do it,  
I'd never be able to control that unit again  
"You're sweating," she said again.  
"Not for you," I said.  
And I blew her fucking head off.

We came one time, my squad,  
into the house of a prominent community leader,  
and shot him  
and shot his wife

shot his married son  
his daughter-in-law,  
a male and female servant and their baby.  
The family dog was clubbed to death,  
the family cat was strangled,  
the goldfish was scooped out of his fishbowl and tossed on the floor.  
When our squad left,  
no life remained in the house—  
a "family unit" had been eliminated.  
Is it all a matter of distance, then?  
If you were an old man sitting at home by the fire  
you would tsk tsk the war  
even as you went out to dinner and the theatre  
you might even be appalled by it  
but not for more than a moment or two  
before you got on with deciding which wine to have with your fish.

You have no problem  
contemplating what the soldiers have to do at a distance  
but as soon as you imagine such an atrocity close to home  
at your own hands  
then you shrink from it.  
Would you have the soldiers do the same?

FIRST SOLDIER

Would you have us all go home?

SECOND SOLDIER

Shall we call a halt to it all?

FIRST SOLDIER

What do soldiers want?

THIRD SOLDIER

They ask for almost nothing.

FIRST SOLDIER

oreo cookies

THIRD SOLDIER

canned tuna

saltines

FIRST SOLDIER

salami

THIRD SOLDIER

the new york times

FOURTH SOLDIER

porn magazines

THIRD SOLDIER

canned soups

FOURTH SOLDIER

mail order bride catalogues

condoms

FIRST SOLDIER

letter writing gear

batteries

THIRD SOLDIER

powdered chocolate

actual coffee

not crystals

FOURTH SOLDIER

penis enlargers

candy bars

pop

THIRD SOLDIER

beef jerky

SECOND SOLDIER

whiskey

FIRST SOLDIER  
mouthwash

FOURTH SOLDIER  
a blowup doll

FIRST SOLDIER  
rubber bands  
duct tape

THIRD SOLDIER  
corned beef hash

FIRST SOLDIER  
sterno

THIRD SOLDIER  
cigars

FIRST SOLDIER  
marijuana  
methamphetamines  
cocaine  
LSD

FOURTH SOLDIER  
pocket pussy  
butt beads

FIRST SOLDIER  
baby name books

FOURTH SOLDIER  
vaseline  
baby powder

THIRD SOLDIER

shaving cream

boot laces

toothpaste

FOURTH SOLDIER

shower soap

FIRST SOLDIER

needles and thread

THIRD SOLDIER

jolly ranchers

FOURTH SOLDIER

the names and addresses of women incarcerated  
at federal correctional facilities

FIRST, SECOND, and THIRD SOLDIERS

Some sense of commitment from their leaders.

AGAMEMNON

Menelaus—

MENELAUS

Another time

We came into a church

there were two naked men torturing a young woman

a nun as it turned out

stripped naked and stretched out in the aisle of the church

holding her down

burning her with cigarettes

another woman to one side

already raped I guessed

and dead, bleeding

I yelled at the guys holding down the woman

I told them to stand up

hands above their heads

the one who had been holding down the woman

was shaking from fear  
his eyes flying uncontrollably around the room  
the woman had rolled onto her stomach, rocking from side to side,  
moaning  
I saw him see the rifle lying in the church aisle  
I told him not to be a fool  
but suddenly he screamed and dove for the rifle  
grabbing it, turning to look at me.  
My first burst caught him in the face,  
the second full in the chest.  
He was dead before he fell over,  
a body missing most of its head.  
The second guy began to wave his arms up and down,  
and he was looking at me  
and looking as his own rifle leaned up against the pew  
I said don't do it, don't do it,  
but he went for his rifle  
and he started to swing the muzzle in my direction  
KILL HIM, GODDAMMIT  
one of my guys yelled at me  
KILL HIM NOW!  
This guy was facing me now  
trying to swing the long barrel rifle across his body  
to align it with my chest  
his eyes locked on mine.  
His eyes never left mine,  
not even when the rounds from my Sterling  
tore into his stomach  
walked up his chest,  
and cut the carotid artery on the left side of his neck.  
When his body hit the floor,  
his eyes were still fixed on mine,  
and then his body relaxed,  
and his eyes dilated and went blind.

[He suddenly breaks away, like an animal, paces all over the space. Music begins.]

As for war,  
make no mistake,  
this call of nature  
longs to be tested—

[He cues the soldiers to begin a drill, which they do during the following - ]

seeks to be challenged beyond itself.  
The warrior within us beseeches Mars,  
the god of War,  
to deliver us to that crucial battlefield  
that will redeem us into the terrifying immediacy of the moment.  
We pray to the war gods to guide us to the walls of Jericho  
so we may dare the steadfastness and strength of our trumpet call.  
We aspire to be defeated in battles  
by powers so much greater than our self  
that the defeat itself will have made us larger  
than when we arrived.  
We long for the encounter that will ultimately empower us  
with dignity and honor.

Charging into the trenches  
shouting and yelling  
horses neighing  
I saw Corporal Bolte run his lance  
right through a dismounted German  
who had his hands up, surrendering  
and we poured into the trenches  
they all had their hands up  
yelling "Camerad, Camerad,"  
which means "I give up" in their language  
but they had to have it that's all  
they had to have it  
no one can change his feelings during that last rush  
the veil of blood before his eyes.  
He doesn't want to take prisoners,  
he wants to kill.

[The drill is over.]

If you would decide to send these men to war  
then you must go to war yourself—  
and now—  
and set the example for your men  
how they are to behave.

[Achilles enters.  
He is 18 years old,  
or perhaps only 16 years old,  
a boy,  
idealistic.]

ACHILLES  
Agamemnon?

AGAMEMNON  
Yes.  
Achilles.

ACHILLES  
I understand a wedding party is on its way.

AGAMEMNON  
Yes.

ACHILLES  
And I am to be the groom.

[silence]

I'm told you have lured your daughter Iphigenia here  
with the story that she is to be married to me.  
But you have no intention of having a wedding.  
Instead you plan to bring her here to kill her as a sacrifice.

I've come here  
prepared to go to war  
in truth  
honored to serve.  
I volunteered.  
It seems to me a privilege  
to be able to be a soldier.

But I did not volunteer  
to be used as a lure  
for another's innocent death.  
To be made,  
without my knowledge  
against my will  
the party to a lie I would never tell.

How can it be  
you would found a policy  
on lies.  
Put the lives of men and women and children at stake  
on a ground of lies?

Where, then, is the possibility of good judgment?  
Where is the chance  
for others to join with you  
in discussion about what is best?  
And so arrive at some decision  
that is indeed best for you  
and for the country  
and for its citizens.

What chance can an empire have  
if its actions are to be based  
on lies and imaginings?

I will not be drafted into a plot against your daughter.  
I will not be conscripted into any cause  
without my consent  
without respect for my autonomy.

AGAMEMNON

Achilles....

ACHILLES

I will not.

Even though you may think it trivial  
nonetheless,  
your life, too, depends upon the autonomy of others  
on the best judgment,  
not coerced, not constrained,  
but freely given, of your friends.

This is the beginning of civil society.  
On this we build a world  
where all can flourish and prosper.  
But, if you show contempt for others,  
they will show scorn for you  
then hatred  
then violence  
and, finally, homicidal intent.

[Achilles leaves in a huff.

Screams from outside.  
Iphigenia,  
in the coolest, latest American teenage fashion,  
enters.

She is  
accompanied by her two bridesmaids  
also wearing the latest American teenage fashion.]

IPHIGENIA

Whoa.

[Music.

Loud, happy, contemporary/traditional Greek folk dancing music.

Or a song like The Great Bouzouki (Vocal Radio Edit) by Krid P.]

Daddy!

[Iphigenia goes straight to Agamemnon,  
and dances with him.

And,  
first one  
and then the other  
bridesmaid  
draws a soldier into the dance,  
the soldiers giving in uncertainly  
one by one to the bridesmaids,  
so that finally  
all the bridesmaids and all the soldiers are dancing, too.

When the music comes to an end:]

IPHIGENIA

Oh, daddy, I love you!

AGAMEMNON

I love you, sweetheart.

IPHIGENIA

I'm so excited.

To be married!

How come?

I mean

I love him.

And he loves me, too.

I know that.

We talked about how we would one day get married.

But we didn't think it could happen so soon.

And it seemed,

at least,

he had to go with you  
to this stupid war.  
I mean....

AGAMEMNON  
No.

IPHIGENIA  
I understand everyone needs to do it.

AGAMEMNON  
Yes.

IPHIGENIA  
But to be married before he goes,  
oh god,  
thank you, daddy.  
I'm so happy.

AGAMEMNON  
Yes. Yes.  
So am I, my love.

[Clytemnestra who has entered to the side,  
smiling and happy,  
now steps forward.]

CLYTEMNESTRA  
Thank you, Agamemnon.  
You knew this!  
You knew this was what she wanted.  
And what I wanted for her.  
And yet you never gave a hint.  
You kept it to yourself.

[she puts her arms around him and kisses him]

Thank you, Agamemnon.

AGAMEMNON

I'm happy if you're comfortable with the plan—  
the mother of the bride—  
not having been consulted.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I'm overjoyed.  
It was all I hoped for.

AGAMEMNON

Then I'm happy.

CLYTEMNESTRA

We came as soon as we got your message.

AGAMEMNON

Your trip was not too difficult?

IPHIGENIA

We celebrated all the way.

FIRST BRIDESMAID

We've been celebrating three days and three nights.

SECOND BRIDESMAID

And now we're really ready  
to begin to celebrate!

FIRST BRIDESMAID

My friend Dana  
had this bachelorette party at the Beverly Hills Hotel?  
They reserved a suite  
and there were nine girls there.  
And when they arrived  
a good looking guy  
dressed in a tuxedo with tails  
was playing a nocturne by Chopin on the baby grand piano  
at far end of the suite.  
There were candles on all the tables

and the couches and chairs were draped in rose pink velvet  
and all the girls wore satin and lace pj's and nightgowns  
and there were roses and appetizers  
served by this gorgeous guy in a white tux  
and get this:

they played this game called  
"Who is he?"

There were twenty pictures of actors and models and sports figures posted on  
the wall.

Each girl was given a list of clues  
to help them figure out the name that went with the face.  
And the girl who was the first to match the correct name  
with the correct face  
would win a prize associated with him—  
like, a copy of his album  
or a magazine subscription to the publication he was featured in.

#### SECOND BRIDESMAID

My friend Jennifer had a bachelorette party  
where  
at the end of the party—almost the end of the party—  
she pulled on the end of a tasseled cord  
and the curtain fell away  
and there was a large hot tub.  
The water was bubbling and steaming.  
All the girls took off their tops and began getting into the the tub.  
And then the waiter took off his jacket  
and began disrobing down to a skinny little bikini.  
And he had a great body  
and he slid into the jacuzzi with the the girls.  
And then the pianist got up and began to strip.  
He opened a bottle of Champagne,  
put a disc into the CD player,  
and he got into the jacuzzi, too!  
And everyone took turns telling jokes  
and playing all kinds of "touchy-feely" games.

#### FOURTH SOLDIER

I don't know if you've made any plans for your honeymoon?

SECOND SOLDIER

You remember we went through that place  
the Grace Bay Club  
there was that Balinese masseuse

FIRST SOLDIER

with the oils with lavender and geranium

SECOND SOLDIER

right

FOURTH SOLDIER

I remember lying face down on that massage table  
at the Shambhala Spa at the Parrot Cay resort  
I was just trying not to drool on the red hibiscus blossom

FIRST SOLDIER

You can do couples massage  
you on one table  
your husband on another table

FOURTH SOLDIER

Then you have their homemade ginger tea

FIRST SOLDIER

dinner on the porch of your own cottage  
with your own wicker lounge chairs  
and the plink-plink music

SECOND SOLDIER

If you want  
you can rent Keith Richards's house  
he has a place there  
and you can rent it in the winter  
\$4,050 a night

THIRD SOLDIER

Or Bruce Willis's house

FOURTH SOLDIER

Michael Keaton

SECOND SOLDIER

Swimming, snorkeling, canoeing, fishing, windsurfing

FIRST SOLDIER

White sand beaches

water so clear you think you can see the fish swimming in it

FOURTH SOLDIER

Green sea grape trees,  
frangipani blossoms,  
pound cake bushes with white floral bursts,  
jasmine, heather,  
wild allamanda with bright yellow blooms,  
mangroves,  
bay cedar and wild cotton.  
Snowy-white egrets.  
Brown lizards.

SECOND SOLDIER

Heated pool  
hammock,  
two bathrooms,  
four-poster bed with white mosquito netting

THIRD SOLDIER

Or you could go to Little Dix Bay  
remember that?

SECOND SOLDIER

The Virgin Islands

THIRD SOLDIER

dinner on the beach  
just the two of you, surrounded by tiki torches

SECOND SOLDIER

Or you can ask one of the members of the staff  
to take you in a boat  
and leave you marooned together  
on an empty white-sand beach with beach umbrellas  
a picnic lunch and plenty of cold beer

FIRST SOLDIER

Or Emerald Bay in the Bahamas

THIRD SOLDIER

a massage  
followed by champagne and fruit at sunset

FIRST SOLDIER

Day two  
a round of golf on the course designed  
by the legendary Greg Norman  
18 holes, par 72

SECOND SOLDIER

Indigenous herbs and seaweeds in the spa

FIRST SOLDIER

You think:

ALL SOLDIERS

"Have we died and gone to heaven?"

FOURTH SOLDIER

When will the wedding be?

IPHIGENIA

What will it be, daddy?

AGAMEMNON

As soon as you're ready.

IPHIGENIA

Daddy, I'm ready now.

AGAMEMNON

Then why not today?

The wedding will be today.

IPHIGENIA

Oh, god!

We have to get ready!

FIRST BRIDESMAID

Where can we all get

you know

ready?

AGAMEMNON

Just here.

Use my quarters.

I'll show you.

CLYTEMNESTRA

But, if the wedding is to be today,

then the mother of the bride has some things to do, too.

IPHIGENIA

Thank you, daddy!

[he starts to lead them off]

OK, everyone!

SECOND BRIDESMAID

Let's go.

[The young women all run out  
after Clytemnestra and Agamemnon.

The soldiers sing a verse of a pop song, like Home Again by New Edition, a'capella.]

FIRST SOLDIER

In a case like this,  
you have to think:  
what are the qualities of good leadership?

THIRD SOLDIER

The six most important words: "I admit I made a mistake."

SECOND SOLDIER

The five most important words: "Tell me what you think."

FOURTH SOLDIER

The four most important words: "I'm open to suggestion."

SECOND SOLDIER

The three most important words: "I hear you."

THIRD SOLDIER

The two most important words: "Thank you,"

SECOND SOLDIER

The one most important word:

ALL

"We"

The least most important word:

FIRST SOLDIER

"I"

THIRD SOLDIER

Good leaders are made not born.  
If you have the desire and willpower,  
you can become an effective leader.

#### SECOND SOLDIER

Good leaders develop through a never ending process of self-study, education, training, and experience.

#### THIRD SOLDIER

To inspire your men to higher levels of teamwork, there are certain things you must

#### SECOND and THIRD SOLDIER

be, know, and, do.

#### SECOND SOLDIER

These do not come naturally, but are acquired through continual work and study. Good leaders are continually working and studying to improve their leadership skills;

#### ALL

they are NOT resting on their laurels.

#### THIRD SOLDIER

You must have a honest understanding of who you are, what you know, and what you can do.

Also, note that it is the followers, not the leader

who determines if a leader is successful.

If they do not trust or lack confidence in their leader, then they will be uninspired.

To be successful you have to convince your followers, not yourself or your superiors, that you are worthy of being followed.

#### SECOND SOLDIER

Some personality traits may lead people naturally into leadership roles.

This is the Trait Theory.

THIRD SOLDIER

People can choose to become leaders.

People can learn leadership skills.

This is the Transformational Leadership Theory.

SECOND SOLDIER

A crisis or important event

may cause a person to rise to the occasion,

SECOND and THIRD SOLDIER

which brings out extraordinary leadership qualities

SECOND SOLDIER

in an ordinary person.

This is the Great Events Theory.

ALL

This is the case we are talking about today.

FOURTH SOLDIER

And what are the essential qualities of leadership

required in response to a Great Event?

FIRST SOLDIER

One

ALL

Know yourself and seek self-improvement.

FIRST SOLDIER

Two.

SECOND SOLDIER

Be technically proficient.

FIRST SOLDIER

Three.

ALL

Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions.

Four.

FIRST SOLDIER

Above all: Make sound and timely decisions.

SECOND, THIRD, and FOURTH SOLDIERS

Again!

FIRST SOLDIER

And

SECOND, THIRD, and FOURTH SOLDIERS

Again!

FIRST SOLDIER

And

SECOND, THIRD, and FOURTH SOLDIERS

Again!

[Music. A rap song like Brand Nubian's Soldier's Story.

Menelaus enters.

During the following the soldiers all strip to their underwear]

MENELAUS

Gentlemen, we are waiting for you.

Gentlemen, we are waiting for you.

HUT HUT HUT.

SOLDIERS

HUT HUT HUT.

[The soldiers do a big macho dance to a hip-hop song like Mama Said Knock You Out by LL Cool J, or Seven Banana Army by DJ Greg J.

When the soldiers finish,

they gather up their clothes without ceremony

and just walk off.

Clytemnestra enters,

partially dressed for the wedding.]

CLYTEMNESTRA

Agamemnon! Agamemnon!

[Agamemnon comes out.]

CLYTEMNESTRA

What is this, Agamemnon?

I'm told

there've been no wedding plans.

AGAMEMNON

Of course there have.

It's only that

things have happened so suddenly.

We weren't ready for you to arrive.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I'm told

you had no intention of having a wedding

that Achilles was used as a lure

to bring Iphigenia here.

AGAMEMNON

There was some confusion about all this, Clytemnestra.

And I am sorry for it.

But I think, finally,

in the long run,  
it doesn't matter,  
because now  
Iphigenia will be married today  
that's all  
and what's done is past.

CLYTEMNESTRA

What's past?  
I don't understand.  
There was to be no wedding?

AGAMEMNON

When we first arrived  
the soldiers and I  
here at Aulis  
preparing to embark to Troy  
they were ready to go,  
the soldiers,  
or so I thought.  
And then, for whatever reason,  
because they were suddenly filled with fear or  
they came to feel, on thinking more about it,  
that the war was not a necessary war  
or because  
as, finally, in fact, they said to me  
that the leader of an army  
needed to show he was prepared to make sacrifices  
commensurate with their own—  
that this was only right and just  
in a real and absolute sense,  
and as a prudent precaution  
as a check on a leader's possibly rash judgment  
to make certain he had really thought about what he was doing—  
they demanded that  
before they would sail for Troy  
I should make such a sacrifice  
to prove my worth  
and the worth of the enterprise.

CLYTEMNESTRA

A sacrifice?

AGAMEMNON

That I should bring myself face to face  
with what I was asking of them—  
of the dreadful things I was asking them to do  
and to have done to them.

And so I ought to sacrifice my own child  
before they would set sail.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Your own child?

Do you mean to kill your own child?

AGAMEMNON

Yes.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Who would do such a thing?

AGAMEMNON

Exactly.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Do you mean, for instance,  
that you should kill Iphigenia?

AGAMEMNON

Exactly.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Insane.

And that is why you asked me to bring her here?

[silence]

Was it, Agamemnon?

AGAMEMNON

Originally....

CLYTEMNESTRA

It was.

AGAMEMNON

I don't know what possessed me....

I was wrong.

I made a horrifying mistake.

CLYTEMNESTRA

It was.

[she goes suddenly to the ground,  
her hand over her mouth  
as though she might vomit  
or cry  
or faint]

AGAMEMNON

Clytemnestra....

[after a moment]

CLYTEMNESTRA

You would kill your own daughter.

AGAMEMNON

I don't know what I could have been thinking....

I thought,

as the leader of the expedition

to put my own personal thoughts

ahead of the common will

and the common good....

I thought

I need to think of what is best for greatest number

and so I was thinking abstractly

not personally

in fact  
I was not thinking clearly at all  
then I thought  
but how can it be the common good  
if what I do is so vile in itself?  
How can such a single act  
in a general context  
still hold good?  
And so I thought  
I can't do this  
I can't possibly do this  
even though  
I can't think clearly  
why not  
or why.  
I'm trying to follow my instinct  
and to trust that that knows more than my reason by itself  
that my feelings and my thoughts together  
are a more reliable guide than my thoughts alone  
and yet  
I don't know what's become of me.  
It's taken me apart  
and I'm not to be trusted any more  
by anyone.

CLYTEMNESTRA  
We'll leave now.  
I'll get Iphigenia.

AGAMEMNON  
I'm not certain that you can leave.

CLYTEMNESTRA  
Oh, yes, I can.  
I can leave  
and never ever see you again.

AGAMEMNON

What I mean to say is,  
I'm told that some of the soldiers  
have said that they won't let you leave.

CLYTEMNESTRA

They can't stop us.

AGAMEMNON

I'm told they say  
neither Iphigenia, nor you,  
nor the other young women you've brought with you  
will leave alive  
if we don't finish what we've begun.

CLYTEMNESTRA

No. That can't be.  
All that will happen now  
is that your soldiers won't go with you to war.  
They'll go home, too.

AGAMEMNON

There is a group  
determined to continue.  
What's been set in motion  
can't be stopped.

CLYTEMNESTRA

If that's the case  
then you should know:  
if you kill your daughter,  
I will murder you.  
I will tear your hands from your arms  
and your arms from your shoulders.  
I will burn the flesh from your body  
I will beat your bones to dust.  
What you have begun will not be finished  
until you are pounded back into the dirt.

[she leaves;

he starts to follow her, stops, turns,

and leaves in the other direction.

The Greek Man hurries to the edge of the stage  
and speaks to the audience in Greek,  
hoping someone will understand him.

Joyful music. A song like "The Best Pupil by Adriatica"

Or It's *What's Inside that Counts* by Brook Alison.

The bridesmaids enter in their bridesmaids' dresses.

They lie down on their backs, the feet upstage.

They raise their feet into the air,

showing their long white wedding stockings,

and they perform the foot and leg dance in the air.

Iphigenia enters up center,

naked, or in a slip,

holding powder and powder puff.

The bridesmaids rush to her,

powder her,

and then, running off and back onstage

bring in her underclothes and her wedding dress

and dress her for her wedding.

Music ends.

The soldiers, who have been watching the bridesmaids dance, hoot and holler.

Iphigenia and the bridesmaids

all run out together.]

FIRST SOLDIER

Girls, this is an emergency.

We need you to come outside right away.

Over.

It's what's inside that counts.

Over.

I respect you.

Over.

[Clytemnestra enters.

The soldiers exit.

Speaking in Greek, she confers quietly with the Greek Man, who points to Achilles.

The Greek Man leaves them alone.]

CLYTEMNESTRA

Excuse me?

ACHILLES

Yes?

CLYTEMNESTRA

I'm not interrupting?

ACHILLES

Interrupting?

Oh. No. Not at all.

CLYTEMNESTRA

We've met.

I'm Clytemnestra, Iphigenia's mother.

ACHILLES

Yes. Of course. I remember.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I thought it would be only right  
for the mother of the bride to say hello to the groom  
before the wedding.

ACHILLES

Oh. Yes.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Everyone tells me what an extraordinary young man you are.

ACHILLES

Oh, well....

CLYTEMNESTRA

A person of very fine character, they say.

And strong, of course,  
in mind and body.

And sweet.

Well,

some say:

adorable.

[silence]

And I see they tell the truth.

ACHILLES

Thank you.

CLYTEMNESTRA  
Probably you think  
that I don't know  
there never was to be a wedding.

ACHILLES  
I didn't know myself a wedding had been planned.

CLYTEMNESTRA  
You weren't a part of the deceit.

ACHILLES  
No.

CLYTEMNESTRA  
I understand.  
Both of us were tricked.

ACHILLES  
Yes.

CLYTEMNESTRA  
And now  
because of us  
Iphigenia is to be killed.

ACHILLES  
I hope not.

CLYTEMNESTRA  
But what can we do about it?

[silence]

There is something we can do.  
Something you can do.  
Something that requires courage  
and great honor

and, it may be, self-sacrifice,  
and these are just your qualities  
so I'm told.

You can marry Iphigenia  
and then, as her husband,  
defend her against her father  
and against all the others.

They will recognize your right.  
That's what you could do.

ACHILLES  
Marry her.

CLYTEMNESTRA  
Yes.

ACHILLES  
I don't know.

CLYTEMNESTRA  
Why not?

ACHILLES  
I don't know that it was ever meant for me to marry.

CLYTEMNESTRA  
You were meant to be a man  
known for defending the lives of others.  
A hero.  
Now, here, is a life that needs you.  
All the other lives you may defend:  
all those are imagined,  
but this one now is real.

ACHILLES  
I might defend Iphigenia without marrying her.

CLYTEMNESTRA

You have no standing to defend her  
against her father  
unless you are her husband.

ACHILLES

I can stand against her father  
and all the others  
for what is right.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Do you think so?

Or, would you agree only to consider marriage?

For me.

As a special favor  
to me.

And then

if you will marry her  
what would I owe to you?

Anything you might ask.

For the rest of my life.

Forever.

Will you consider it?

ACHILLES

Yes.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I thought you would.

I like young men  
young people.

They seem to me  
more brave than anyone.

Adventurous.

Filled with hope  
and anticipation.

ACHILLES

Indeed.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Oh, yes.

Young people are exciting to me.

The things they know

new things.

I'm always interested in what's next.

ACHILLES

Right.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Dancing.

Do you dance?

ACHILLES

Sure.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Probably you know all the new dances.

Oh.

I wonder how you'll do

at your own wedding.

You may not know the traditional wedding dances.

ACHILLES

It hadn't occurred to me.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Oh, yes.

Well.

You'll be expected, you know,

to dance with the mother of the bride.

Perhaps I ought to show you

—This is so silly—  
so you won't feel ill-at-ease?  
Would you like that?

ACHILLES

Oh, yes.  
I would.

[Music.

she takes him in her arms  
and they dance.

to a song like Never on a Sunday by Pink Martini  
or a piece of music that is not just instrumental  
but has some ecstatic singing—  
again something from northern Greece, Macedonia,  
or even gypsy music from just over the border to the north

As they come to the end of their dance,  
Achilles is weak and breathless  
from the intimacy with Clytemnestra.]

CLYTEMNESTRA

Ask me for anything.

[She releases him,  
and he stands back, speechless,

as the bridesmaids run in,

fully dressed for the wedding.]

SECOND BRIDESMAID

Where should we be?

FIRST BRIDESMAID

Where should we get together for the wedding?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Just here is good.

SECOND BRIDESMAID

Achilles!

You're not dressed!

My god!

You know you don't have much time.

FIRST BRIDESMAID

Men are so helpless!

SECOND BRIDESMAID

Do you even know what you are supposed to wear?

ACHILLES

Yes. Of course.

I'm just going.

No one will need to wait on me!

[he's gone]

CLYTEMNESTRA

OK, girls.

Your friend is getting married.

She's thrilled.

You're thrilled for her.

And she's asked you to be a bridesmaid.

It's a happy occasion.

Keep reminding yourself of that.

When she's freaking out about the cake, say it:

It's a happy occasion.

So, don't let her down.

There are a few things you can do.

Don't say, "when I get married, I'm going to..."

No bride cares about your imaginary wedding.  
This is her real wedding.  
Get with the program.  
You can tell your other friends what you're going to do.  
Or, better yet, keep a journal  
(since no one really cares about your imaginary wedding).  
Plus, you might not ever get married.  
Especially if you keep talking about boring subjects  
such as your imaginary wedding.

Never say, "this is just like what so-and-so did."

Each bride is unique  
and her wedding is proof of her individuality.  
All weddings are not the same.  
She may not be the only one  
who ever thought to dance with her father to Daddy's Little Girl,  
but it's a fine choice.  
Their decision not to shove cake up each other's noses  
is an innovation to be proud of.  
Always praise that idea.

Help your friend go to the bathroom.

You're on duty at the wedding.  
And your friend is wearing five tons of dress.  
So, keep this in mind when you tip your champagne flute.  
If you get drunk then who will hold the cream puff skirt up  
while she backs into the stall?

Do the chicken dance.

Remember, they picked the music.  
So, don't say, "I hate this song."  
Also, stay until the reception hall manager kicks you out.  
Then go to the after-wedding party  
until the bride and groom go to their suite... finally.

OK?

BRIDESMAIDS

OK. Yes. Good. Sure.

[The soldiers enter.]

CLYTEMNESTRA

You guys, is this what you're wearing?

[they look at one another]

FIRST SOLDIER

Yeah.

SECOND SOLDIER

Sure.

THIRD SOLDIER

I guess so.

FIRST BRIDESMAID

Because you could use a little help.

FOURTH SOLDIER

We've read the book.

SECOND SOLDIER

Being Set at meat

Scratch not

neither Spit Cough or blow your Nose

except there's a Necessity for it.

CLYTEMNESTRA

What book is this?

FOURTH SOLDIER

Make no Shew of taking great Delight in your Victuals,

Feed not with Greediness;

cut your Bread with a Knife,  
lean not on the Table  
neither find fault with what you Eat.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Where did you get this book?

FIRST SOLDIER

This is George Washington wrote this.

SECOND SOLDIER

Take no Salt or cut Bread with your Knife Greasy.

THIRD SOLDIER

If you Soak bread in the Sauce  
let it be no more than what you put in your Mouth at a time  
and blow not your broth at Table  
but Stay till Cools of it Self.

CLYTEMNESTRA

You guys,  
you have some catching up to do.

FIRST SOLDIER

Drink not too leisurely nor yet too hastily.  
Before and after Drinking wipe your Lips  
breath not then or Ever with too Great a Noise, for its uncivil.

SECOND SOLDIER

Cleanse not your teeth with the Table Cloth Napkin Fork or Knife  
but if Others do it let it be done with a Pick Tooth.

THIRD SOLDIER

It is out of use to call upon the Company often to Eat  
nor need you Drink to others every Time you Drink.

FOURTH SOLDIER

If others talk at Table be attentive  
but talk not with Meat in your Mouth.

SECOND SOLDIER

When in Company,  
put not your Hands to any Part of the Body not usually Discovered.

THIRD SOLDIER

Shew Nothing to your Friend that may affright him.

FOURTH SOLDIER

In the Presence of Others Sing not to yourself with a humming Noise, nor  
Drum with your Fingers or Feet.

SECOND SOLDIER

Speak not in your Yawning,  
but put Your handkerchief or Hand before your face and turn aside.

THIRD SOLDIER

Sleep not when others Speak,  
Sit not when others stand,  
Speak not when you Should hold your Peace,  
walk not on when others Stop.

FIRST SOLDIER

It's not that we don't have some advice for you, too.  
You know what Clausewitz said.

SECOND BRIDESMAID

No. No. I don't know what Clausewitz said.

FIRST SOLDIER

The best strategies  
once they are brought to the battlefield  
descend into chaos and confusion  
until no one can be certain of the outcome.

SECOND SOLDIER

I've seen how it is.  
Every time a convoy left the gate it broke my heart.  
I saw them return with wounded.  
I saw their vehicles dragged back in tow` in pieces.

That was where I belonged, out there.  
I became a soldier to be out there.  
I became Infantry to be out there.  
Out there is home.  
I came here to sacrifice,  
to pay for freedom...  
to bring justice to those who wish to take that away  
from my nation and my nation's friends.  
And to those on the streets who wish to harm me and my friends, my country  
and my countrymen,  
I say this:  
you better be prepared,  
because I have been preparing for this for twenty-one years.  
I will match your ruthlessness,  
I will surpass your destruction,  
I have exceeded your skill in tactics and weapons,  
your courage crumbles at the thought of mine,  
and long ago my faith and commitment  
crushed your petty god and your weak faith.  
I am coming for you.  
With a peaceful heart I will destroy you.  
The whites of my eyes are the last thing you will see  
before you kiss the feet of my God.

[Iphigenia enters in her bridal gown.]

CLYTEMNESTRA

Iphigenia, dear,  
you look beautiful.  
Absolutely perfect.  
Doesn't she?

BOTH BRIDESMAIDS AND SOLDIERS

Yes...Absolutely...oh, yes...beautiful....

CLYTEMNESTRA

You know, dear,  
so often this is the moment  
a bride will suddenly fear

oh, will the groom show up?  
Has he changed his mind?  
Will he go through with it?

IPHIGENIA

No, mother, I'm not afraid.

CLYTEMNESTRA

And yet, I do know this:  
he cares for you.

IPHIGENIA

I know that, mother.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I'm only saying,  
I've talked to him  
and, if ever you should have any doubts....

IPHIGENIA

What are you saying?  
That I should have doubts?  
You've talked to him?  
What did he say?

CLYTEMNESTRA

It's not what's important, what he said.  
I'm just saying,  
whether he goes through with the wedding or not  
I think we can count on him as a friend.

IPHIGENIA

As a friend?  
What did he say?  
Are you saying  
no one should count on him?  
That's it.  
You're saying,  
he's not like my father

someone I can rely on absolutely  
all the time and always  
that's what you're saying....

CLYTEMNESTRA

Well, no....

I'm not even saying anything in particular  
about either Achilles or your father  
just men in general....

SECOND BRIDESMAID

You can't count on them.

IPHIGENIA

What?

SECOND BRIDESMAID

You can't count on men.

FIRST BRIDESMAID

Not all the time.

SECOND BRIDESMAID

In everything.

FIRST BRIDESMAID

Because a man will lie.

SECOND SOLDIER

Not all the time.

FIRST BRIDESMAID

But often.

FIRST SOLDIER

That's how men are.

THIRD SOLDIER

We live with that knowledge.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Iphigenia,  
your father has made a terrible mistake.  
These men, the soldiers,  
have told him they won't go to war  
unless your father makes a sacrifice first  
of the kind he asks them to make  
to sacrifice a life he treasures above all others  
and so  
when he wasn't thinking clearly  
he agreed to entice us to come to Aulis  
so that he can make his sacrifice.

IPHIGENIA

To sacrifice your life, you mean?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Your life.

IPHIGENIA

My life?  
My father to murder me?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Yes.

IPHIGENIA

You're telling me  
my father would murder me?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Yes.

IPHIGENIA

No.

No.

I don't know what you mean  
telling me such a lie.

[she turns and runs out

Clytemnestra runs after her,

followed by the bridesmaids]

CLYTEMNESTRA AND THE BRIDESMAIDS

Iphigenia!...Iphigenia!...

[everyone is gone except the soldiers,  
who sit for a few moments in silence]

FIRST SOLDIER

We're fighting the forgotten war.

FOURTH SOLDIER

It's like we're in a holding pattern now.

THIRD SOLDIER

There's only so much you can do to pass the time,  
resight your weapons,  
review your safety procedures  
get any last-minute items you'll be needing from the PX.

FIRST SOLDIER

Sometimes you think they've brought the war to you.  
You'll hear some big ka-boom  
and you won't know what it is.

SECOND SOLDIER

Last night there was a big bazaar just outside the perimeter gate.

THIRD SOLDIER

You could buy jewelry,  
rugs,  
silk scarves,  
carved stones and bootlegged movies.  
You could haggle over the price.

FOURTH SOLDIER

It was fun, like gambling.

SECOND SOLDIER

Still.  
Band camp ain't going like I thought it would.

ALL

Band camp ain't going like I thought it would.

FIRST SOLDIER

If something happens to me, I was doing what I wanted to do.

ALL

If something happens to me.

SECOND SOLDIER

It's not so much about the mission.  
It's about the guys serving next to us.

THIRD SOLDIER

Soldiers say they are here  
so that their loved ones can be safe back home.

SECOND SOLDIER

I feel like I'm wrapped up in a World War II love story.  
Because I met Sara Cooper  
at Topsail Beach, near Camp LeJeune,  
four days before shipping out.

I was like, 'Great, man. Don't get teary-eyed.'  
I fell in love with her.  
It's nice to have something to come back to,  
someone who will write to you, other than your Mom."

#### THIRD SOLDIER

I spent some time with my wife  
at Wilmington Beach before shipping out.  
She put me to work,  
made me draw a heart in the sand with our names in it.

#### FIRST SOLDIER

I have a new bride back home.  
Michelle.  
She works in civilian life for Lynchburg Fire and EMS.  
And I met her while I was running emergency calls.  
She was training at Lynchburg General Hospital.  
She is the best friend I ever had.  
Friday, I mailed her a nine-page letter.

Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,  
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame, all blind;  
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

An ecstasy of fumbling  
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,  
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling  
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.—

Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,  
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.  
In all my dreams before my helpless sight  
He plunges at me, guttering,

#### ALL

Guttering

FIRST SOLDIER  
choking,

ALL  
choking

FIRST SOLDIER  
drowning.

ALL  
drowning

FIRST SOLDIER  
If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace  
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin,

If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood

ALL  
Blood

FIRST SOLDIER  
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs

ALL  
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—

FIRST SOLDIER  
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
The old Lie:

ALL

Dulce et decorum est  
Pro patria mori.

[Big wedding music.

It might be the incredibly sprightly brass band from Yugoslavia  
Boban Markovic Orkestar  
performing Disko—Dzummbus.

Or the Macedonian brass band Maleshevski Melos  
performing Nesatova Sa-Sa.

After a few moments, a bridesmaid enters,  
then turns around and leaves.

After another moment, both bridesmaids enter,  
stand looking back where they came from,  
talking among themselves,  
not knowing what to do.

Iphigenia enters,  
leaves.

Agamemnon enters  
and walks to the other side of the stage,  
turns and waits.

Menelaus enters and stands to the side.

Iphigenia and Clytemnestra and the soldiers all enter,  
not knowing where to stand.

One of the bridesmaids fixes Iphigenia's veil.

Everyone is looking around.

Achilles enters at last.

Everyone looks around.]

CLYTEMNESTRA

Will you stop the music?

Will you just stop the music?

[the music stops]

AGAMEMNON

So.

We're all here then.

IPHIGENIA

Daddy.

AGAMEMNON

Yes.

IPHIGENIA

Mother tells me

that you have it in mind

not that I should be married

but that you should

sacrifice

me.

AGAMEMNON

No. No, it's not true.

IPHIGENIA

That's what I've been told.

And that's what others say now, too,

that that's why you brought me here.

AGAMEMNON

No, sweetheart, no.

That's not true.

IPHIGENIA  
It should be.

AGAMEMNON  
I'm sorry?

IPHIGENIA  
It should be.  
Do you think  
after I've been your daughter all these years  
that I don't know the duty of any person  
let alone your daughter  
to give her life  
as you've given yours  
for the common good.

AGAMEMNON  
No. No, Iphigenia....

CLYTEMNESTRA  
Iphigenia....

IPHIGENIA  
Yes.

AGAMEMNON  
There's been a misunderstanding....

IPHIGENIA  
To save one life  
you would put a thousand others in jeopardy?  
You and I both know  
this would be wrong.

AGAMEMNON  
No.

IPHIGENIA

Yes. You know.

You've taught me this.

AGAMEMNON

I'm sure this isn't what I meant at all.

IPHIGENIA

You don't mean to say

it is only men who should risk their lives for others?

Only men should give themselves?

Only men should be patriots?

Only men can be heroes?

Not women, too?

AGAMEMNON

No, this is not....

CLYTEMNESTRA

Iphigenia, I know what's happened here:

because your father has broken your heart

betraying you as he has

this man who should have loved you

more than any other man

who should have been your sustenance forever

now you think

what then?

you might as well just throw your life away.

IPHIGENIA

No, mother, that's not true.

It's because I love my father

and all that he has taught me

the example he has set for me

that I know he knows best

and to give my life, as he has,

this is what I want to do.

CLYTEMNESTRA

No.

No, no, no.

And you, Achilles,  
where are you now?

Standing there  
saying nothing.

Do you turn out to be nothing but a coward, then?

All talk, no action.

Let it happen, whatever it might be.

IPHIGENIA

No, mother,  
leave him alone.

He is silent because he knows  
this is the right thing to do.

I know it's hard for you, mother.  
I'm sorry to make it so difficult for you.  
But I want you to celebrate my decision,  
not to mourn for me,  
I want everyone to celebrate  
because we all know  
this is the right thing for anyone to do.  
And if I could set an example,  
this is the example I would set.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Is this how girls are, then, these days?  
This is how they have been socialized?  
What teen age magazines have you been reading?  
What crap?  
What fall makeover tips?  
What one minute workouts?  
What stories about Amanda Bynes's secret Hollywood crushes?

FIRST SOLDIER

Well, girls aren't the only ones who've been socialized.  
I think I've been socialized, too.

SECOND SOLDIER

So have I.

IPHIGENIA

And this is a good thing.

Everyone used to know

this was a good thing

and these days it's gotten a really bad rap.

But this is what I'm going to do

because I want my life to be meaningful, too.

What would you have me do, mother?

Stay at home and make a decision

about the draperies in the bedroom?

Or get a job in some law firm?

Or do social work?

Or try to preserve the environment?

This is what I was meant to do.

This is the moment that has been handed to me

to have a life that means something.

And what do you want

for me to just pass it by

and look for something else?

Spend fifty sixty years

looking for something else that will mean as much

and never will

because

this was my destiny

and I embrace it

I grab hold of it with both hands

and I will never let it go

because I don't want to be a useless

pointless human being

when I have a chance to have had a life

that will be remembered forever

as an example

to everyone who lives after me

immortal

more than famous  
immortal  
never to be forgotten.

I beg you, daddy,  
I beg you  
to let me do  
what you would have me do.

AGAMEMNON  
No.

IPHIGENIA  
Yes.

AGAMEMNON  
No, Iphigenia....

IPHIGENIA  
Yes.

[silence]

AGAMEMNON  
Yes.

OK then.

CLYTEMNESTRA  
No!

[Iphigenia lets her bridal dress fall to the floor,  
so that she is in her slip.  
She turns and leaves.

Agamemnon hesitates a moment,  
then he, too, turns,

and follows her out.  
And, once again, we hear  
music.

Djeli Mara by Saban Bajramovic's A Gypsy Legend

And no one knows quite what to make of it.

Do they dance?

What do they do?

Is there meant to be a wedding dance?

Clytemnestra collapses to the ground weeping.

A bridesmaid throws herself into the arms of a soldier.  
He holds her,  
looking around awkwardly at his companions.

Another soldier takes the hand of the other bridesmaid.

Menelaus leaves.

Achilles starts to follow out after Agamemnon,  
stops,  
looks after him,  
then turns, walks to the other side of the stage,  
stops,  
turns,  
looks in the direction Agamemnon has gone.

The music takes a turn from mournful to sprightly,  
positively happy.

A bridesmaid puts her arms around the shoulders  
of the third soldier,

and he begins to dance with her  
slowly,  
consolingly.

Achilles throws a bottle of pink champagne against the wall.

He looks at what he's done  
and then he throws another.

One of the bridesmaids breaks away from her soldier partner  
and she throws a bottle of champagne against the wall.

And then she and Achilles throw bottles  
of pink champagne and red and white wine against the walls.

This is followed by hurled wedding cake  
and champagne glasses  
and bouquets.

The bridesmaids rip off their dresses  
and fling them to the ground.  
They throw their shoes.

Achilles throws his jacket to the ground.

One of the other soldiers  
curls up on the ground.

And, bit by bit,  
the world descends into a big party riot murder war  
the home and war fronts combined  
dancing and embracing and weeping  
and throwing and breaking things.

At the height of the chaos, Agamemnon slowly enters,  
  
carrying the dead Iphigenia in his arms.

They are covered in blood.

Agamemnon wails in agony.

Menelaus follows behind.

As the others see them, they gradually fall silent and still.

THE END.

A NOTE ON THE TEXT:

*Iphigenia 2.0* was inspired by Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, and incorporates some texts from Alan Stuart-Smyth, Jim Graves, Jim Morris, Gaby Bashan, Richard Holmes, Richard Heckler, Dave Grossman, Wilfred Owen, and Anthony Swofford.

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