

**JOHANN
WOLFGANG
GOETHE**

IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS

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Iphigenia in Tauris

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Гёте И.

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Содержание

ACT THE FIRST	5
SCENE I	5
SCENE II	7
SCENE III	15
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	27

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Iphigenia in Tauris

ACT THE FIRST

SCENE I

A Grove before the Temple of Diana

IPHIGENIA

Beneath your leafy gloom, ye waving boughs
Of this old, shady, consecrated grove,
As in the goddess' silent sanctuary,
With the same shudd'ring feeling forth I step,
As when I trod it first, nor ever here
Doth my unquiet spirit feel at home.
Long as the mighty will, to which I bow,
Hath kept me here conceal'd, still, as at first,
I feel myself a stranger. For the sea
Doth sever me, alas! from those I love,
And day by day upon the shore I stand,
My soul still seeking for the land of Greece.
But to my sighs, the hollow-sounding waves
Bring, save their own hoarse murmurs, no reply.
Alas for him! who friendless and alone,
Remote from parents and from brethren dwells;
From him grief snatches every coming joy
Ere it doth reach his lip. His restless thoughts
Revert for ever to his father's halls,
Where first to him the radiant sun unclos'd
The gates of heav'n; where closer, day by day,
Brothers and sisters, leagu'd in pastime sweet,
Around each other twin'd the bonds of love.
I will not judge the counsel of the gods;
Yet, truly, woman's lot doth merit pity.
Man rules alike at home and in the field,
Nor is in foreign climes without resource;
Possession gladdens him, him conquest crowns,
And him an honourable death awaits.
How circumscrib'd is woman's destiny!
Obedience to a harsh, imperious lord,

Her duty, and her comfort; sad her fate,
Whom hostile fortune drives to lands remote:
Thus I, by noble Thoas, am detain'd,
Bound with a heavy, though a sacred chain.
Oh! with what shame, Diana, I confess
That with repugnance I perform these rites
For thee, divine protectress! unto whom
I would in freedom dedicate my life.
In thee, Diana, I have always hop'd,
And still I hope in thee, who didst infold
Within the holy shelter of thine arm
The outcast daughter of the mighty king.
Daughter of Jove! hast thou from ruin'd Troy
Led back in triumph to his native land
The mighty man, whom thou didst sore afflict,
His daughter's life in sacrifice demanding, —
Hast thou for him, the godlike Agamemnon,
Who to thine altar led his darling child,
Preserv'd his wife, Electra, and his son.
His dearest treasures? – then at length restore
Thy suppliant also to her friends and home,
And save her, as thou once from death didst save,
So now, from living here, a second death.

SCENE II

IPHIGENIA. ARKAS

ARKAS

The king hath sent me hither, and commands
To hail Diana's priestess. This the day,
On which for new and wonderful success,
Tauris her goddess thanks. The king and host
Draw near, – I come to herald their approach.

IPHIGENIA

We are prepar'd to give them worthy greeting;
Our goddess doth behold with gracious eye
The welcome sacrifice from Thoas' hand.

ARKAS

Oh, priestess, that thine eye more mildly beam'd, —
Thou much-rever'd one, – that I found thy glance,
O consecrated maid, more calm, more bright,
To all a happy omen! Still doth grief,
With gloom mysterious, shroud thy inner mind;
Still, still, through many a year we wait in vain
For one confiding utt'rance from thy breast.
Long as I've known thee in this holy place,
That look of thine hath ever made me shudder;
And, as with iron bands, thy soul remains
Lock'd in the deep recesses of thy breast.

IPHIGENIA

As doth become the exile and the orphan.

ARKAS

Dost thou then here seem exil'd and an orphan?

IPHIGENIA

Can foreign scenes our fatherland replace?

ARKAS

Thy fatherland is foreign now to thee.

IPHIGENIA

Hence is it that my bleeding heart ne'er heals.
In early youth, when first my soul, in love,
Held father, mother, brethren fondly twin'd,
A group of tender germs, in union sweet,
We sprang in beauty from the parent stem,
And heavenward grew. An unrelenting curse
Then seiz'd and sever'd me from those I lov'd,
And wrench'd with iron grasp the beauteous bands.
It vanish'd then, the fairest charm of youth,
The simple gladness of life's early dawn;
Though sav'd, I was a shadow of myself,
And life's fresh joyance bloom'd in me no more.

ARKAS

If thus thou ever dost lament thy fate,
I must accuse thee of ingratitude.

IPHIGENIA

Thanks have you ever.

ARKAS

Not the honest thanks
Which prompt the heart to offices of love;
The joyous glance, revealing to the host
A grateful spirit, with its lot content.
When thee a deep mysterious destiny
Brought to this sacred fane, long years ago.
To greet thee, as a treasure sent from heaven,
With reverence and affection, Thoas came.
Benign and friendly was this shore to thee,
Which had before each stranger's heart appall'd,
For, till thy coming, none e'er trod our realm
But fell, according to an ancient rite,
A bloody victim at Diana's shrine.

IPHIGENIA

Freely to breathe alone is not to live.
Say, is it life, within this holy fane,
Like a poor ghost around its sepulchre
To linger out my days? Or call you that
A life of conscious happiness and joy,
When every hour, dream'd listlessly away,
Leads to those dark and melancholy days,
Which the sad troop of the departed spend
In self-forgetfulness on Lethe's shore?
A useless life is but an early death;
This, woman's lot, is eminently mine.

ARKAS

I can forgive, though I must needs deplore,
The noble pride which underrates itself
It robs thee of the happiness of life.
And hast thou, since thy coming here, done nought?
Who cheer'd the gloomy temper of the king?
Who hath with gentle eloquence annull'd,
From year to year, the usage of our sires,
By which, a victim at Diana's shrine,
Each stranger perish'd, thus from certain death

Sending so oft the rescued captive home?
Hath not Diana, harbouring no revenge
For this suspension of her bloody rites,
In richest measure heard thy gentle prayer?
On joyous pinions o'er the advancing host,
Doth not triumphant conquest proudly soar?
And feels not every one a happier lot,
Since Thoas, who so long hath guided us
With wisdom and with valour, sway'd by thee,
The joy of mild benignity approves,
Which leads him to relax the rigid claims
Of mute submission? Call thyself useless! Thou,
Thou, from whose being o'er a thousand hearts,
A healing balsam flows? when to a race.
To whom a god consign'd thee, thou dost prove
A fountain of perpetual happiness,
And from this dire inhospitable shore
Dost to the stranger grant a safe return?

IPHIGENIA

The little done doth vanish to the mind,
Which forward sees how much remains to do.

ARKAS

Him dost thou praise, who underrates his deeds?

IPHIGENIA

Who estimates his deeds is justly blam'd.

ARKAS

We blame alike, who proudly disregard
Their genuine merit, and who vainly prize
Their spurious worth too highly. Trust me, priestess,
And hearken to the counsel of a man
With honest zeal devoted to thy service:
When Thoas comes to-day to speak with thee,

Lend to his purpos'd words a gracious ear.

IPHIGENIA

The well-intention'd counsel troubles me:
His offer studiously I've sought to shun.

ARKAS

Thy duty and thy interest calmly weigh.
Since the king lost his son, he trusts but few,
Nor those as formerly. Each noble's son
He views with jealous eye as his successor;
He dreads a solitary, helpless age,
Or rash rebellion, or untimely death.
A Scythian studies not the rules of speech,
And least of all the king. He who is used
To act and to command, knows not the art,
From far, with subtle tact, to guide discourse
Through many windings to its destin'd goal.
Do not embarrass him with shy reserve
And studied misconception: graciously,
And with submission, meet the royal wish.

IPHIGENIA

Shall I then speed the doom that threatens me?

ARKAS

His gracious offer canst thou call a threat?

IPHIGENIA

'Tis the most terrible of all to me.

ARKAS

For his affection grant him confidence.

IPHIGENIA

If he will first redeem my soul from fear.

ARKAS

Why dost thou hide from him thy origin?

IPHIGENIA

A priestess secrecy doth well become.

ARKAS

Nought to our monarch should a secret be;
And, though he doth not seek to fathom thine,
His noble nature feels, ay, deeply feels,
That studiously thou hid'st thyself from him.

IPHIGENIA

Displeasure doth he harbour 'gainst me, then?

ARKAS

Almost it seems so. True, he speaks not of thee.
But casual words have taught me that the wish
To call thee his hath firmly seiz'd his soul;
Oh, do not leave the monarch to himself!

Lest his displeasure, rip'ning in his breast,
Should work thee woe, so with repentance thou
Too late my faithful counsel shalt recall.

IPHIGENIA

How! doth the monarch purpose what no man
Of noble mind, who loves his honest name,
Whose bosom reverence for the gods restrains,
Would ever think of? Will he force employ
To tear me from this consecrated fane?
Then will I call the gods, and chiefly thee,
Diana, goddess resolute, to aid me;
Thyself a virgin, thou'lt a virgin shield,
And succour to thy priestess gladly yield.

ARKAS

Be tranquil! Passion, and youth's fiery blood
Impel not Thoas rashly to commit
A deed so lawless. In his present mood,
I fear from him another harsh resolve,
Which (for his soul is steadfast and unmov'd,)
He then will execute without delay.
Therefore I pray thee, canst thou grant no more,
At least be grateful – give thy confidence.

IPHIGENIA

Oh tell me what is further known to thee.

ARKAS

Learn it from him. I see the king approach;
Thou honour'st him, and thy own heart will prompt thee
To meet him kindly and with confidence.
A noble man by woman's gentle word
May oft be led.

IPHIGENIA, *alone*

I see not how I can
Follow the counsel of my faithful friend.
But willingly the duty I perform
Of giving thanks for benefits receiv'd,
And much I wish that to the king my lips
With truth could utter what would please his ear.

SCENE III

IPHIGENIA. THOAS

IPHIGENIA

Her royal gifts the goddess shower on thee!
Imparting conquest, wealth, and high renown,
Dominion, and the welfare of thy house,
With the fulfilment of each pious wish,
That thou, who over numbers rul'st supreme,
Thyself may'st be supreme in happiness!

THOAS

Contented were I with my people's praise;
My conquests others more than I enjoy.
Oh! be he king or subject, he's most blest,
Who in his home finds happiness and peace.
Thou shar'dst my sorrow, when a hostile sword
Tore from my side my last, my dearest son;
Long as fierce vengeance occupied my heart,
I did not feel my dwelling's dreary void;
But now, returning home, my rage appeas'd,
My foes defeated, and my son aveng'd,
I find there nothing left to comfort me.
The glad obedience, which I used to see
Kindling in every eye, is smother'd now
In discontent and gloom; each, pond'ring, weighs
The changes which a future day may bring,
And serves the childless king, because compell'd.
To-day I come within this sacred fane,
Which I have often enter'd to implore
And thank the gods for conquest. In my breast
I bear an old and fondly-cherish'd wish.
To which methinks thou canst not be a stranger;
Thee, maid, a blessing to myself and realm,
I hope, as bride, to carry to my home.

IPHIGENIA

Too great thine offer, king, to one unknown;
Abash'd the fugitive before thee stands,
Who on this shore sought only what thou gav'st,
Safety and peace.

THOAS

Thus still to shroud thyself
From me, as from the lowest, in the veil
Of mystery which wrapp'd thy coming here,
Would in no country be deem'd just or right.
Strangers this shore appall'd; 'twas so ordain'd
Alike by law and stern necessity.
From thee alone – a kindly welcom'd guest,
Who hast enjoy'd each hallow'd privilege,
And spent thy days in freedom unrestrain'd —
From thee I hop'd that confidence to gain
Which every faithful host may justly claim.

IPHIGENIA

If I conceal'd, O king, my name, my race,
'Twas fear that prompted me, and not mistrust.
For didst thou know who stands before thee now,
And what accursed head thy arm protects,
A shudd'ring horror would possess thy heart;
And, far from wishing me to share thy throne,
Thou, ere the time appointed, from thy realm
Wouldst banish me perchance, and thrust me forth,
Before a glad reunion with my friends
And period to my wand'rings is ordain'd,
To meet that sorrow, which in every clime,
With cold, inhospitable, fearful hand,
Awaits the outcast, exil'd from his home.

THOAS

Whate'er respecting thee the gods decree,

Whate'er their doom for thee and for thy house,
Since thou hast dwelt amongst us, and enjoy'd
The privilege the pious stranger claims,
To me hath fail'd no blessing sent from Heaven;
And to persuade me, that protecting thee
I shield a guilty head, were hard indeed.

IPHIGENIA

Thy bounty, not the guest, draws blessings down.

THOAS

The kindness shown the wicked is not blest.
End then thy silence, priestess; not unjust
Is he who doth demand it. In my hands
The goddess plac'd thee; thou hast been to me
As sacred as to her, and her behest
Shall for the future also be my law.
If thou canst hope in safety to return
Back to thy kindred, I renounce my claims:
But is thy homeward path for ever clos'd —
Or doth thy race in hopeless exile rove,
Or lie extinguish'd by some mighty woe —
Then may I claim thee by more laws than one.
Speak openly, thou know'st I keep my word.

IPHIGENIA

Its ancient bands reluctantly my tongue
Doth loose, a long-hid secret to divulge;
For once imparted, it resumes no more
The safe asylum of the inmost heart,
But thenceforth, as the powers above decree,
Doth work its ministry of weal or woe.
Attend! I issue from the Titan's race.

THOAS

A word momentous calmly hast thou spoken.

Him nam'st thou ancestor whom all the world
Knows as a sometime favourite of the gods?
Is it that Tantalus, whom Jove himself
Drew to his council and his social board?
On whose experienc'd words, with wisdom fraught,
As on the language of an oracle,
E'en gods delighted hung?

IPHIGENIA

'Tis even he;
But gods should not hold intercourse with men
As with themselves. Too weak the human race,
Not to grow dizzy on unwonted heights.
Ignoble was he not, and no betrayer;
To be the Thunderer's slave, he was too great:
To be his friend and comrade, – but a man.
His crime was human, and their doom severe;
For poets sing, that treachery and pride
Did from Jove's table hurl him headlong down,
To grovel in the depths of Tartarus.
Alas, and his whole race their hate pursues.

THOAS

Bear they their own guilt, or their ancestors'?

IPHIGENIA

The Titan's mighty breast and nervous frame
Was his descendant's certain heritage;
But round their brow Jove forg'd a band of brass.
Wisdom and patience, prudence and restraint,
He from their gloomy, fearful eye conceal'd;
In them each passion grew to savage rage,
And headlong rush'd uncheck'd. The Titan's son,
The strong-will'd Pelops, won his beauteous bride,
Hippodamia, child of Enomaus,
Through treachery and murder; she ere long
Bore him two children, Atreus and Thyestes;
With envy they beheld the growing love
Their father cherish'd for a first-born son

Sprung from another union. Bound by hate,
In secret they contrive their brother's death.
The sire, the crime imputing to his wife,
With savage fury claim'd from her his child,
And she in terror did destroy herself —

THOAS

Thou'rt silent? Pause not in thy narrative!
Do not repent thy confidence – say on!

IPHIGENIA

How blest is he who his progenitors
With pride remembers, to the list'ner tells
The story of their greatness, of their deeds,
And, silently rejoicing, sees himself
Link'd to this goodly chain! For the same stock
Bears not the monster and the demigod:
A line, or good or evil, ushers in
The glory or the terror of the world. —
After the death of Pelops, his two sons
Rul'd o'er the city with divided sway.
But such an union could not long endure.
His brother's honour first Thyestes wounds.
In vengeance Atreus drove him from the realm.
Thyestes, planning horrors, long before
Had stealthily procur'd his brother's son,
Whom he in secret nurtur'd as his own.
Revenge and fury in his breast he pour'd,
Then to the royal city sent him forth,
That in his uncle he might slay his sire,
The meditated murder was disclos'd,
And by the king most cruelly aveng'd,
Who slaughter'd, as he thought, his brother's son.
Too late he learn'd whose dying tortures met
His drunken gaze; and seeking to assuage
The insatiate vengeance that possess'd his soul,
He plann'd a deed unheard of. He assum'd
A friendly tone, seem'd reconcil'd, pleas'd.
And lur'd his brother, with his children twain,
Back to his kingdom; these he seiz'd and slew;
Then plac'd the loathsome and abhorrent food
At his first meal before the unconscious sire.
And when Thyestes had his hunger still'd

With his own flesh, a sadness seiz'd his soul;
He for his children ask'd, – their steps, their voice,
Fancied he heard already at the door;
And Atreus, grinning with malicious joy,
Threw in the members of the slaughter'd boys. —
Shudd'ring, O king, thou dost avert thy face:
So did the sun his radiant visage hide,
And swerve his chariot from the eternal path.
These, monarch, are thy priestess' ancestors,
And many a dreadful fate of mortal doom,
And many a deed of the bewilder'd brain,
Dark night doth cover with her sable wing,
Or shroud in gloomy twilight.

THOAS

Hidden there
Let them abide. A truce to horror now,
And tell me by what miracle thou sprang'st
From race so savage.

IPHIGENIA

Atreus' eldest son
Was Agamemnon; he, O king, my sire:
But I may say with truth, that, from a child,
In him the model of a perfect man
I witness'd ever. Clytemnestra bore
To him, myself, the firstling of their love,
Electra then. Peaceful the monarch rul'd,
And to the house of Tantalus was given
A long-withheld repose. A son alone
Was wanting to complete my parent's bliss;
Scarce was this wish fulfill'd, and young Orestes,
The household's darling, with his sisters grew,
When new misfortunes vex'd our ancient house.
To you hath come the rumour of the war,
Which, to avenge the fairest woman's wrongs,
The force united of the Grecian kings
Round Ilion's walls encamp'd. Whether the town
Was humbl'd, and achiev'd their great revenge
I have not heard. My father led the host
In Aulis vainly for a favouring gale
They waited; for, enrag'd against their chief,
Diana stay'd their progress, and requir'd,

Through Calchas' voice, the monarch's eldest daughter.
They lur'd me with my mother to the camp,
And at Diana's altar doom'd this head. —
She was appeas'd, she did not wish my blood,
And wrapt me in a soft protecting cloud;
Within this temple from the dream of death
I waken'd first. Yes, I myself am she;
Iphigenia, – I who speak to thee
Am Atreus' grandchild, Agamemnon's child,
And great Diana's consecrated priestess.

THOAS

I yield no higher honour or regard
To the king's daughter than the maid unknown;
Once more my first proposal I repeat;
Come, follow me, and share what I possess.

IPHIGENIA

How dare I venture such a step, O king?
Hath not the goddess who protected me
Alone a right to my devoted head?
'Twas she who chose for me this sanctuary,
Where she perchance reserves me for my sire,
By my apparent death enough chastis'd,
To be the joy and solace of his age.
Perchance my glad return is near; and how
If I, unmindful of her purposes,
Had here attach'd myself against her will?
I ask'd a signal, did she wish my stay.

THOAS

The signal is that still thou tarriest here.
Seek not evasively such vain pretexts.
Not many words are needed to refuse,
By the refus'd the *no* alone is heard.

IPHIGENIA

Mine are not words meant only to deceive;
I have to thee my inmost heart reveal'd.
And doth no inward voice suggest to thee,
How I with yearning soul must pine to see
My father, mother, and my long-lost home?
Oh let thy vessels bear me thither, king!
That in the ancient halls, where sorrow still
In accents low doth fondly breathe my name,
Joy, as in welcome of a new-born child,
May round the columns twine the fairest wreath.
Thou wouldst to me and mine new life impart.

THOAS

Then go! the promptings of thy heart obey;
Despise the voice of reason and good counsel.
Be quite the woman, sway'd by each desire,
That bridleless impels her to and fro.
When passion rages fiercely in her breast,
No sacred tie withholds her from the wretch
Who would allure her to forsake for him
A husband's or a father's guardian arms;
Extinct within her heart its fiery glow,
The golden tongue of eloquence in vain
With words of truth and power assails her ear.

IPHIGENIA

Remember now, O king, thy noble words!
My trust and candour wilt thou thus repay?
Thou seem'dst, methought, prepar'd to hear the truth.

THOAS

For this unlook'd-for answer not prepar'd.
Yet 'twas to be expected; knew I not
That 'twas with woman I had now to deal?

IPHIGENIA

Upbraid not thus, O king, our feeble sex!
Though not in dignity to match with yours,
The weapons woman wields are not ignoble.
And trust me, Thoas, in thy happiness
I have a deeper insight than thyself.
Thou thinkest, ignorant alike of both,
A closer union would augment our bliss;
Inspir'd with confidence and honest zeal
Thou strongly urgest me to yield consent;
And here I thank the gods, who give me strength
To shun a doom unratified by them.

THOAS

'Tis not a god, 'tis thine own heart that speaks.

IPHIGENIA

'Tis through the heart alone they speak to us.

THOAS

To hear them have I not an equal right?

IPHIGENIA

The raging tempest drowns the still, small voice.

THOAS

This voice no doubt the priestess hears alone.

IPHIGENIA

Before all others should the prince attend it.

THOAS

Thy sacred office, and ancestral right
To Jove's own table, place thee with the gods
In closer union than an earth-born savage.

IPHIGENIA

Thus must I now the confidence atone
Thyself extorted from me!

THOAS

I'm a man,
And better 'tis we end this conference.
Hear then my last resolve. Be priestess still
Of the great goddess who selected thee;
And may she pardon me, that I from her,
Unjustly and with secret self-reproach,
Her ancient sacrifice so long withheld.
From olden times no stranger near'd our shore
But fell a victim at her sacred shrine.
But thou, with kind affection (which at times
Seem'd like a gentle daughter's tender love,
At times assum'd to my enraptur'd heart
The modest inclination of a bride),
Didst so inthral me, as with magic bonds,
That I forgot my duty. Thou didst rock
My senses in a dream: I did not hear
My people's murmurs: now they cry aloud,
Ascribing my poor son's untimely death
To this my guilt. No longer for thy sake
Will I oppose the wishes of the crowd,
Who urgently demand the sacrifice.

IPHIGENIA

For mine own sake I ne'er desired it from thee.
Who to the gods ascribe a thirst for blood
Do misconceive their nature, and impute
To them their own inhuman dark desires.
Did not Diana snatch me from the priest,
Preferring my poor service to my death?

THOAS

'Tis not for us, on reason's shifting grounds,
Lightly to guide and construe rites divine.
Perform thy duty; I'll accomplish mine.
Two strangers, whom in caverns of the shore
We found conceal'd, and whose arrival here
Bodes to my realm no good, are in my power.
With them thy goddess may once more resume
Her ancient, pious, long-suspended rites!
I send them here, – thy duty not unknown. [Exit.

IPHIGENIA, *alone*

Gracious protectress! thou hast clouds
To shelter innocence distress'd,
And genial gales from Fate's rude grasp,
Safely to waft her o'er the sea,
O'er the wide earth's remotest realms,
Where'er it seemeth good to thee.
Wise art thou, – thine all-seeing eye
The future and the past surveys,
And doth on all thy children rest,
E'en as thy pure and guardian light
Keeps o'er the earth its silent watch,
The beauty and the life of night.
O Goddess! keep my hands from blood!
Blessing it never brings, nor peace;
And still in evil hours the form
Of the chance-murder'd man appears
To fill the unwilling murderer's soul
With horrible and gloomy fears.
For fondly the Immortals view

Man's widely-scatter'd, simple race;

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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