

**PHAEDRA: A
CLASSIC PLAY IN
THREE ACTS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649247790

Phaedra: A Classic Play in Three Acts by Matilda Heron

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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CLASSIC PLAY IN THREE ACTS.

ADAPTED TO THE ENGLISH STAGE

BY

MATILDA HERON.

CINCINNATI:
WEIGHTSON & CO., PUBLISHERS.
1858.

CHARACTERS.

PHÆDRA, Wife of Theseus.

GENONE, Nurse and confidant of Phædra.

ARICIA, an Athenian Princess.

ISMENA, Confidant of Aricia.

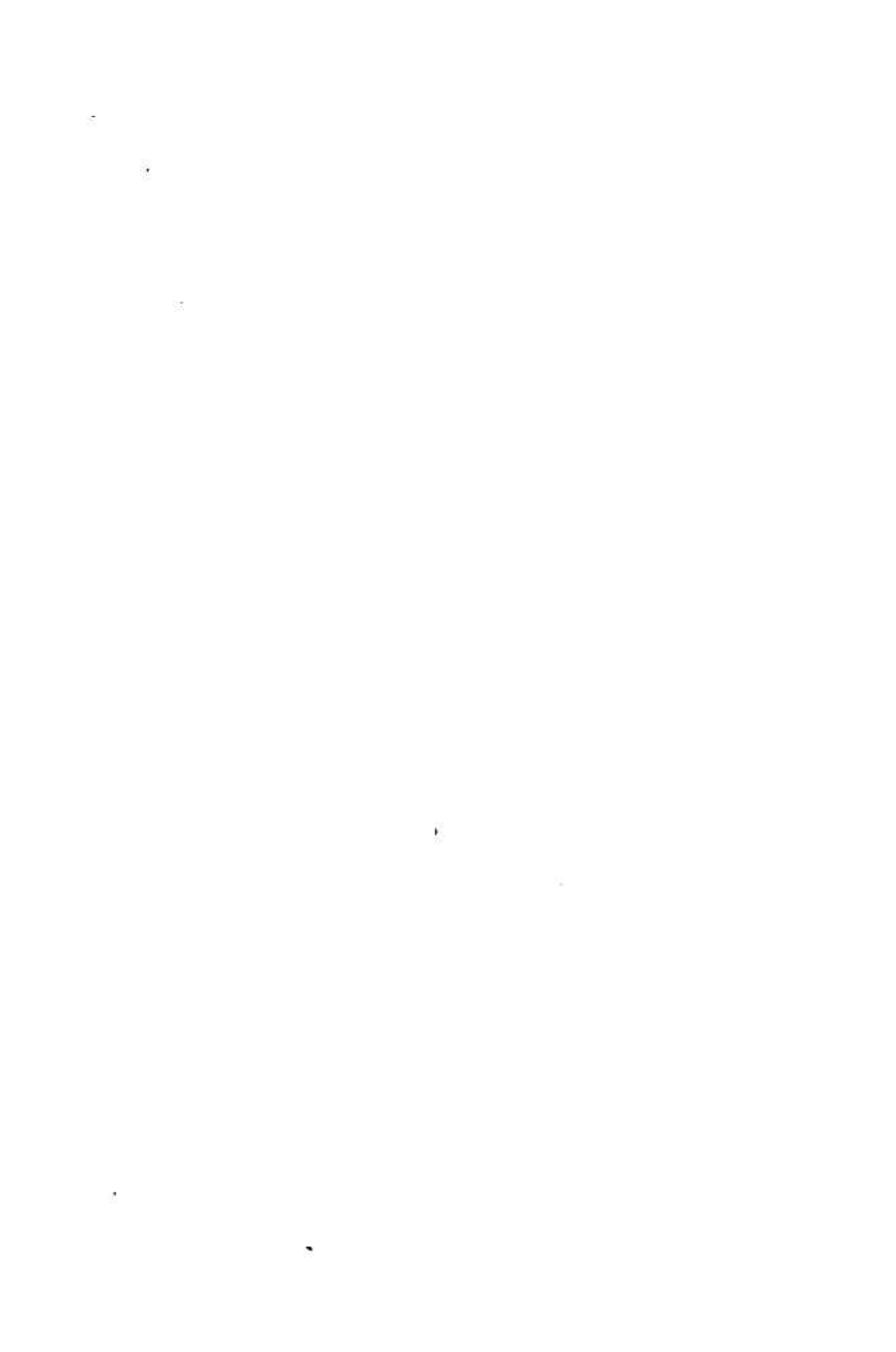
THESEUS, King of Athens.

HIPPOLYTUS, Son of Theseus.

THERAMENES, Governor of Hippolytus.

PANOPA, a guard.

SCENE—Athens,—interior of Theseus' Palace.



PHÆDRA.

ACT FIRST.

SCENE 1ST:—*A hall in Theseus' Palace. Hippolytus and Theramenes enter.*

Hippolytus. My will is fixed, Theramenes. To-day I bid adieu to Athens; already doth my heart rebuke my idleness. 'Tis six months since the king, my father, left these shores to struggle with the foe. No tidings of his safety greet our ears; no friendly shore hath seen his welcome sail; no herald yet announces his return. Business of the state, matters of grave import demand his presence here. Rebellious treason, panting for his crown, urges his absence as proof of his demise. These are not reasons to deter my steps, nor can my fears resolve themselves to peace, until, with certainty, I know my father lives.

Theramenes. And whither would'st thou turn thy uncertain sail in search of him whose lone retreat Neptune forbids that mortals desecrate? Did not the choicest fleet of Athens scour the broad seas, the shores of the Ægean, Corinth, Crete? Did not the Athenians demand their king among the mountains, among the savage tribes, the enemy?—and would'st thou doubt the zeal of their endeavors, pursuing their forsaken track, and thou so young, unused to care, while men grown old in active labors and their sovereign's love, return, hope-baffled in their enterprise.

Hippolytus. They did not seek my father with my eyes. And yet I do not doubt my father's friends, their zeal, their

loyalty; but other reasons press. I must go hence. In seeking Theseus I shall do my duty; in quitting Athens I shall save myself, and raze out memories 'tis death to know have lived!

Theramenes. Since when, my lord, have memories like these usurped thy peace? Can ills I may not know be harbored in thy breast?

Hippolytus. Can there be aught but ills for me in Athens!

Theramenes. Ah, true! I had forgotten, Phædra is thy enemy! Yet she is changed of late; and though scarce had she seen three moons beneath thy father's roof, his wife, ere she had exilèd thee, yet now her hate subdued, her vengeance spent, thou hast no cause to dread her power. Beside, the queen, unhappy lady, weary of life, and of the sun that lights her, sighs for the hour when death shall summon her to her father's urn.

Hippolytus. Hate slumbers in her breast—it is not dead. She pines for cause still further to afflict me. Yet were Phædra not, and had she never been—can there be peace for me where young Aricia dwells?

Theramenes. My lord thou do'st abuse her gentleness: her brothers' crimes belong to them—not her: should she be blamed because they were thy enemies? Because she is thy father's slave, should she incur thy hate?

Hippolytus. Did I hate her, I would not fly her.

Theramenes. Thou hast not dared to love her? Thou, Hippolytus, thy father's son? That blush betrays thee, boy.

Hippolytus. Thou'st heard too much and know'st me not enough. Theseus is my father, an Amazonian woman fed me with her milk; from her proud heart I drew my life, then can'st thou wonder if at the charge thy words imply—a blush should paint my cheek? Theramenes, respect that mother's memory.

Theramenes. And thou, Hippolytus, respect thyself. Suffer me to speak, who have known thee from thy birth; Aricia—

Hippolytus. Peace! the name disturbs me. Let it be buried

with her brothers—is she not their sister? my father's slave? condemned to celibacy, lest through her their hostile blood should rise to sweep him from his throne? Theseus is king; and dare I to espouse her cause against his anger? Besides, the laws, with stern omnipotence, forbid that Hymen lend his light to consecrate the nuptials of the blood of the Pallantides. Should I incur the wrath of gods, and call upon a nation's head the crime of my rebellion, and thus, by my audacious love, bring ruin to Aricia?

Theramenes. [*Aside.*] 'Tis as I thought. [*Aloud.*] Ah, my lord! if love be wedded to Aricia's cause, she need not fear the gods. For every thorn thy father's hate plants in her young, unerring heart, a flower of love buds forth for thee, exhaling sweets which poison, while they charm and set thy brain on fire.

Hippolytus. 'Tis even so, Theramenes; I love, I burn; Aricia's eyes have smote my peace, and she, my father made his slave!—hath captive made his son.

Theramenes. Now do I see the ills which thou would'st fly. Incautious prince, what would'st thou with thy house's enemy?

Hippolytus. Naught with mine enemy, but all with love! Yet hear me still; I know what thou would'st say—my house's honor, it shall not be forgotten. If through me that house have fallen, through me it shall rise. Aricia knows not of this sudden stroke—let her still be innocent. I will away beyond the seas, and there in exile tear from the volume of my father's fame this first foul blot and most unworthy page.

Theramenes. And thou wilt leave us?

Hippolytus. Would'st thou have me stay?

Theramenes. Alas! But Phædra, thou wilt see her, ere thy sail be spread? Unhappy queen, she wronged thee, true, yet in her soul some sorrow dwells which argues she is not all hate. Make peace with her. Do not the gods forgive? Phædra dies, A malady is gnawing at her heart no medicine can reach. Through the long night her tearless moans break the dead silence; she calls on light, and when its golden beams tinge the

glad cheek of morn, her weary spirit sighs for night, and chides the season that prolongs the day.

Hippolytus. 'Tis said that since my father left she hath not smiled. Would he were here. I will not seek the queen. Why should I pain her with my unwelcome presence. Yet ere I leave the court thou can'st advertise her that in observance of her state I will await her audience. Come, Theramenes, we lose our time. [EXEUNT.]

ENTER PHÆDRA AND CENONE.

Phædra. Let me rest here. My knees sink under me. I can walk no more. (*sits*)—Alas!

Cenone. Can I do ought to serve the queen?

Phædra. Remove these ornaments, and this and these. What hand importunate hath placed them here? All mortals have conspired to injure me.

Cenone. Teach me to please thee. Am I not thy slave? Do I not love thee? Can I not be kind? Was it not thy wish I should adorn thee thus, that thou might'st taste the air, see the glad sun, and now yet ere my last, fond office is complete, thou dost rebuke my zeal and blame my willingness.

Phædra. Thou still wert kind; bear with me, 'tis not long my care can burthen thee. Thou bright sun chide not if a mortal sigh, and smile to-day the last thou'lt smile on me.

Cenone. And must I hear thee ever thus renouncing life?

Phædra. Gods, why can I not! Is there no peace, no long, long night where for all time the mind may sleep? Day wears, night comes, but brings no peace, and on my soul, like molten fire, burns one eternal torment!

Cenone. Hear this, ye gods!

Phædra. Peace! The gods are angry, and from my aching senses have uprooted reason. Cenone, how is it with thy mistress, that thus across her cheek dark blushes steal, while from her heart the blood recedes. Ah me! It is not health, Cenone!

Cenone. It is not health, sweet queen, and must I see thee day by day thus passing from my arms a prey to silence—deaf to all entreaties. Thrice hath the bright sun blessed the day, and