

**THEKLA: A  
DRAMA; PP. 7-60**

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Thekla: A Drama; pp. 7-60 by Aileen Cleveland Higgins

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**AILEEN CLEVELAND HIGGINS**

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# THEKLA

*A Drama*

BY

AILEEN CLEVELAND HIGGINS



Arti et Veritati

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**Publishers**

MCMVII

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## CHARACTERS

THEKLA, of a noble family in Iconium.

THEOKLEIA, her mother.

PAUL, the Apostle.

DEMAS, } false friends of Paul.

HERMOGENES, }

ONESIPHORUS, citizen of Iconium, and Paul's host.

LECTRA, his wife.

MAIA, his daughter.

ZENO, chief magistrate of Iconium.

CASTELIUS, governor.

CLAUDIUS, the emperor.

ALEXANDER, high priest and *agonothetes*, or president of the festival in Antioch

QUEEN TRYPHAENA, relative of Claudius.

POLYBIUS } attendants of Alexander.

POSIDES, }

Other attendants, nobles, spectators at the festival, slaves.

# THEKLA

## ACT I

*Scene I. Iconium. A. D. 50. The upper chamber of Thekla's luxurious home at Iconium. On the left side, the garden, fresh with spring budding. On the right side of the chamber, the house of Onesiphorous, where the Apostle Paul is the guest, meeting hour after hour, in his room opposite Thekla's window, those eager to hear his divine messages. It is night. In the garden, Thamyris, Thekla's lover, waits, as he has waited many nights, for her to place her love-lamp in the window, — the Oriental signal that the maiden is ready to be wooed and won by him who seeks her. In her darkened chamber Thekla is alone; with hands that flutter in and out like winged creatures, half in fright, she draws her lattice screen; then with a quick-caught breath, she sinks upon the grass-woven mat beside her window, and leans all trembling in the hush, to watch the shadows at the end of the garden where she knows Thamyris watches each night. The moon sends seeking gleams that shine upon the buds braided in her hair; as if revealed in human sight, with a sudden flush she hides her face in the silk-wrapped folds upon her breast. As a bat beats widespread wings in late circling, Thekla starts and listens — then draws farther back in the shadow of the chamber. There is a prescient hush. Thamyris slowly draws nearer and stands beneath her window. Then from the still damp garden close comes Thekla's name in wooer's pleading.)*



## THEKLA

*Thamyris*

Ah, Thekla, open now your lattice-screen,  
 And set the love-lamp in its place to send  
 Its signal to me here within the close  
 Of this, your garden, where the plants and vines  
 That your caress has brought to pink-tipped bud,  
 Around me cast the spell of your white soul.  
 Long have I waited for the hour when I  
 Shall see a shy rose-glow shine through the dark  
 Of brooding night — a signalling that I  
 May speak my love at last — sweet beckon that  
 Invites and bids me come — love's message that  
 You yield,— you lean to list to wooer's song —  
 New melody which speaks your name — a song  
 Long sung a-hush within my heart. Ah, love,  
 Keep me no longer here in silence bound.  
 I wait, loved maid, — I wait.

*(Thekla draws away from the window and makes no answer. There is a long interrogating silence. Enter Theokleia, from the corridor where she has been standing, in hearing of Thamyris's pleading.)*

*Theokleia*

My child, why sit  
 You silent here, in dark and solitude ?

*Thekla*

I am alone, yet not alone,

THEKLA

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*Theokleia*

Ah, then,  
Within the garden Thamyris awaits,  
As he has long awaited, eve on eve,  
The gleaming of your love-lamp. All too long  
Have you withstood him, Thekla,— and indeed  
’Twere travesty of shyness longer, child,  
To keep back now the message that will bring  
The noblest youth in all Iconium  
To plead in adoration at your feet.  
None honored as young Thamyris — not one  
So sought and banqueted as he, and none  
Accounted such great wealth; with all this, too,  
He has much learning — and beside his wit,  
So trenchant in its turn, all other jest  
Seems but the tinselled effort of a fool.  
Who is it first in all the games which try  
The strength of muscles’ skill? And who beside  
All other nobles looks a very god  
Incarnate in man’s mold? ’Tis he who fain  
Would wed you, child. What want you more?

*Thekla*

I find  
In Thamyris no fault — and yet, I know  
Not why — a nameless something stays my hand.  
I cannot light my love-lamp for him yet.

*Theokleia*

Ah, come — what time like now to yield when all

The spring breathes possibilities of love?  
 The scarlet buds, close sheathed in pale leaf-green  
 Beneath your window, hold the nectary  
 Of a fulfilment sweet. The whisper song  
 Of birds, the fragrance of the pulsing earth,  
 The rush of sap, the blue that freshens skies  
 So lately winter-gray, the clearer light,  
 The first warm winds, — what does all nature tell  
 To you this wondrous night of stars in spring?  
 Come, — never were you fairer, child, with buds  
 Of white pearly crown-like in your hair, —  
 That shining scarf of rainbow hue close-wrapped  
 About your breast, — your eyes like early dawn.  
 Ah, cloister not your beauty longer here!  
 A face like yours was made to give delight  
 To many eyes.

*Thekla*

What matters it, in truth,  
 My mother, how a face be fashioned, or  
 Who may behold?

*Theokleia*

Such words are strange upon  
 So fair a maiden's lips. In woman's heart  
 The love of beauty's power ever lives,  
 In you it sleeps, made dormant by the life  
 You lead alone and unaccompanied here  
 Apart from men and other maiden who,  
 With dance and jest, would soon enliven you.  
 When once it is revealed to you that for