

POLYXENA:

Odysseus, I see that you are hiding  
 your right hand underneath your cloak, and turning  
 your face away, so I can't touch your beard.<sup>16</sup>  
 355 You're off the hook; don't worry. I refuse  
 to call on Zeus, Protector of Suppliants.  
 Since I'm compelled, I'll follow you, and also  
 since death is what I want. If I resist  
 I'll be no good, in love with mere survival.  
 360 Why should I live? My father was the lord  
 of all the Phrygians.<sup>17</sup> That was my starting point.  
 Then, I was raised on promises and hopes  
 of royal marriage, and keen rivalry  
 to see whose hearth and home I would belong to.  
 365 Unlucky me—I was the princess once,  
 first among the women of Ida, admired  
 among the maidens, equal to the gods  
 in all but one respect: mortality.

And now I am a slave. The name, to start with—  
 370 so unfamiliar!—makes me long for death.  
 And then, I might get cruel-minded masters;  
 whoever pays for me with silver—me,  
 sister of Hector, and of many others!—  
 will give me orders, tell me that I must  
 375 make bread, and sweep the house, and do my weaving,  
 spending painful days under compulsion.  
 Some paid-for slave from somewhere will defile  
 my bed, which was prestigious once, considered  
 a prize for rulers.

380 No! I'm free to close  
 my eyes forever, turn from this day's light,  
 give my body to Hades. Go ahead,

16. In the ritual of supplication, the supplicator touched the chin and kissed the hand of the person supplicated, thereby asking for protection in the name of Zeus. Odysseus' gesture prevents Polyxena from performing the ritual.

17. Phrygia was a kingdom in west-central Anatolia; in tragedy it is often identified with Troy. Phrygia had gold mines and was the legendary home of King Midas.