

Only I greet this door as the portal of Death, and my prayer is to receive a mortal stroke, that the blood-stream may flow easy, and I may not struggle but close mine eyes.

*Eld.* O woman patient as miserable! When all this is spoken, yet now, if verily thou dost know thine own death, why goest thou to it, stubbornly as the ox, which the god moves toward the altar?

*Cass.* There is no escape, friends, none, when the time is full.

*Eld.* Yea, but the last of the time is best.

*Cass.* The day is come. Little shall I gain by flight.

*Eld.* Then be assured, that thou hast a stubborn patience!

*Cass.* So praised is never any save the unhappy.

*Eld.* Yet a mortal may be glad to die with honour.

*Cass.* Ah father, to think of thee and those, thy genuine children!...

*Eld.* What is it? What horror turns thee back?

*Cass.* O foul, O foul!

*Eld.* What callest thou foul, if the loathing be not in thy fancy?

*Cass.* 'Tis the horror of dripping blood, that the house exhales.

*Eld.* Nay, nay: it is the scent of the hearth-sacrifice.

*Cass.* It is such a reek as might come out of a grave.

*Eld.* Thou canst not mean the sweet incense of the palace<sup>1</sup>.

*Cass.* Yet I will go, and within, as here, will wail the fate of me and of Agamemnon. Enough of life!

Oh friends, my friends!

I do not clamour for naught as a bird that dreads a bush. Bear this witness to me dead, when some day for my death another woman shall die, and for the hapless husband another fall<sup>2</sup>. This office I ask of you at the point to die.

*Eld.* Ah miserable, I pity thee for thy death foretold!

*Cass.* I would speak one speech more—or is it mine own dirge? To the sun I call, unto the last I see, that those my avengers may take of these my enemies a bloody vengeance also for the easy conquest of a poor slain slave.

Alas for the state of man! If happiness may be changed as it were by a shade, misery is a picture which at the dash of the wet sponge is gone. And this I say is the more pitiable by far. [*Exit.*]

<sup>1</sup> Literally, 'It is not the Syrian sweetness of the house which you describe'. But perhaps this verse should be read as a question, 'Dost thou not mean the spicy incense?'

<sup>2</sup> The Greek implies, what cannot with equal simplicity be conveyed in English, that both (Agamemnon and Aegisthus) are *ἄνδρες* to the same *γυνή*.