Phaedra’s Love

My grateful thanks to Vincent O’Connell, Mel Kenyon and New Dramatists (New York), without whose support I could not have written this play.

*For Simon, Jo and Elana.*
*With love.*
Phaedra’s Love was first performed at the Gate Theatre, London, on 15 May 1996. The cast was as follows:

Hippolytus     G.ai Harkins  
Phaedra        Philippa Williams  
Strophe        Catherine Cusack  
Doctor/Priest/Theseus  Andrew Maud  
Man 1         Giles Ward  
Man 2         Paolo De Paola  
Woman 1       Catherine Neal  
Woman 2       Diana Penny  
Policeman     Andrew Scott  

Directed by Sarah Kane  
Designed by Vian Curtis  

Characters

Hippolytus            Crowd including:  
Doctor                  Man 1  
Phaedra                 Woman 1  
Strophe                Child  
Priest                 Woman 2  
Theseus               Man 2  
Policeman 1            Policeman 2  

Author’s note

Punctuation is used to indicate delivery, not to conform to the rules of grammar.  
A stroke (/) marks the point of interruption in overlapping dialogue.  
Words in square brackets [ ] are not spoken, but have been included in the text to clarify meaning.  
Stage directions in brackets ( ) function as lines.  

Editor’s note

This edition of Phaedra’s Love, first reprinted in 2000, incorporates minor revisions made to the original text by Sarah Kane shortly before her death. It should therefore be regarded as the definitive version in all respects.  

Scene One

A royal palace.  

Hippolytus sits in a darkened room watching television.  
He is sprawled on a sofa surrounded by expensive electronic toys, empty crisp and sweet packets, and a scattering of used socks and underwear.  
He is eating a hamburger, his eyes fixed on the flickering light of a Hollywood film.  
He sniffs.  
He feels a sneeze coming on and rubs his nose to stop it.  
It still irritates him.  
He looks around the room and picks up a sock.  
He examines the sock carefully then blows his nose on it.  
He throws the sock back on the floor and continues to eat the hamburger.  
The film becomes particularly violent.  

Hippolytus watches impassively.  
He picks up another sock, examines it and discards it.  
He picks up another, examines it and decides it’s fine.  
He puts his penis into the sock and masturbates until he comes without a flicker of pleasure.  
He takes off the sock and throws it on the floor.  
He begins another hamburger.  

Scene Two

Doctor He’s depressed.  
Phaedra I know.  

Doctor He should change his diet. He can’t live on hamburgers and peanut butter.  
Phaedra I know.  

Doctor And wash his clothes occasionally. He smells.  
Phaedra I know. I told you this.
Doctor: What does he do all day?

Phaedra: Sleep.

Doctor: When he gets up.

Phaedra: Watch films. And have sex.

Doctor: He goes out?

Phaedra: No. He phones people. They come round. They have sex and leave.

Doctor: Women?

Phaedra: There's nothing gay about Hippolytus.

Doctor: He should tidy his room and get some exercise.

Phaedra: My mother could tell me this. I thought you might help.

Doctor: He has to help himself.

Phaedra: How much do we pay you?

Doctor: There's nothing clinically wrong. If he stays in bed till four he's bound to feel low. He needs a hobby.

Phaedra: He's got hobbies.

Doctor: Does he have sex with you?

Phaedra: I'm sorry?

Doctor: Does he have sex with you?

Phaedra: I'm his stepmother. We are royal.

Doctor: I don't mean to be rude, but who are these people he has sex with? Does he pay them?

Phaedra: I really don't know.

Doctor: He must pay them.

Phaedra: He's very popular.

Doctor: Why?

Phaedra: He's funny.

Doctor: Are you in love with him?

Phaedra: I'm married to his father.

Doctor: Does he have friends?

Phaedra: He's a prince.

Doctor: But does he have friends?

Phaedra: Why don't you ask him?

Doctor: I did. I'm asking you. Does he have friends?

Phaedra: Of course.

Doctor: Who?

Phaedra: Did you actually talk to him?

Doctor: He didn't say much.

Phaedra: I'm his friend. He talks to me.

Doctor: What about?

Phaedra: Everything.

Doctor: (Looks at her.)

Phaedra: We're very close.

Doctor: I see. And what do you think?

Phaedra: I think my son is ill. I think you should help. I think after six years training and thirty years experience the royal doctor should come up with something better than he has to lose weight.

Doctor: Who looks after things while your husband is away?

Phaedra: Me. My daughter.
Doctor: When is he coming back?
Phaedra: I've no idea.
Doctor: Are you still in love with him?
Phaedra: Of course. I haven't seen him since we married.
Doctor: You must be very lonely.
Phaedra: I have my children.
Doctor: Perhaps your son is missing his father.
Phaedra: I doubt it.

(Strophe)

Phaedra enters.

Mother:

Go away. F**k off. Don't touch me. Don't talk to me. Stay with me.

What's wrong?

Nothing. Nothing at all.

I can tell.

Have you ever thought, thought your heart would break?

No.

Wished you could cut open your chest, tear it out to stop the pain?

That would kill you.

This is killing me.

No. Just feels like it.

A spear in my side, burning.

(Strophe, Screams.)

You're in love with him.

(Laughs hysterically.) What are you talking about?

Obsessed.

No.

(Strophe, Looks at her.)

Is it that obvious?

I'm your daughter.
Phaedra  Do you think he’s attractive?
Strophe  I used to.
Phaedra  What changed?
Strophe  I got to know him.
Phaedra  You don’t like him?
Strophe  Not particularly.
Phaedra  You don’t like Hippolytus?
Strophe  No, not really.
Phaedra  Everyone likes Hippolytus.
Strophe  I live with him.
Phaedra  It’s a big house.
Strophe  He’s a big man.
Phaedra  You used to spend time together.
Strophe  He wore me out.
Phaedra  You tired of Hippolytus?
Strophe  He bores me.
Phaedra  Bores you?
Strophe  Shitless.
Strophe  I know.
Phaedra  I know what room he’s in.
Strophe  He never moves.
Phaedra  Can feel him through the walls. Sense him. 
    Feel his heartbeat from a mile.
Strophe  Why don’t you have an affair, get your mind off
    him.
Phaedra  There’s a thing between us, an awesome fucking
thing, can you feel it? It burns. Meant to be. We were. Meant to be.
Strophe  No.
Phaedra  Brought together.
Strophe  He’s twenty years younger than you.
Phaedra  Want to climb inside him work him out.
Strophe  This isn’t healthy.
Phaedra  He’s not my son.
Strophe  You’re married to his father.
Phaedra  He won’t come back, too busy being useless.
Strophe  Mother. If someone were to find out.
Phaedra  Can’t deny something this big.
Strophe  He’s not nice to people when he’s slept with them.
    I’ve seen him.
Phaedra  Might help me get over him.
Strophe  Treats them like shit.
Phaedra  Can’t switch this off. Can’t crush it. Can’t.
    Wake up with it, burning me. Think I’ll crack
    open I want him so much. I talk to him. He
    talks to me, you know, we, we know each other
    very well, he tells me things, we’re very close.
    About sex and how much it depresses him, and
    I know –
Strophe  Don’t imagine you can cure him.
Phaedra  Know if it was someone who loved you, really
    loved you –
Strophe  He’s poison. –
Phaedra  Loved you till it burnt them –
Strophe  They do love him. Everyone loves him. He despises them for it. You’d be no different.

Phaedra  You could feel such pleasure.

Strophe  Mother. It’s me. Strophe, your daughter. Look at me. Please. Forget this. For my sake.

Phaedra  Yours?

Strophe  You don’t talk about anything else any more. You don’t work. He’s all you care about, but you don’t see what he is.

Phaedra  I don’t talk about him that often.

Strophe  No. Most of the time you’re with him. Even when you’re not with him you’re with him. And just occasionally, when you remember that you gave birth to me and not him, you tell me how ill he is.

Phaedra  I’m worried about him.

Strophe  You’ve said. See a doctor.

Phaedra  He –

Strophe  For yourself, not him.

Phaedra  There’s nothing wrong with me. I don’t know what to do.

Strophe  Stay away from him, go and join Theseus, fuck someone else, whatever it takes.

Phaedra  I can’t.

Strophe  You can have any man you want.

Phaedra  I want him.

Strophe  Except him.

Phaedra  Any man I want except the man I want.

Strophe  Have you ever f**ked a man more than once?

Phaedra  This is different.

Strophe  Mother, this family –

Phaedra  Oh I know.

Strophe  If anyone were to find out.

Phaedra  I know, I know.

Strophe  It’s the excuse they’re all looking for. We’d be torn apart on the streets.

Phaedra  Yes, yes, no, you’re right, yes.

Strophe  Think of Theseus. Why you married him.

Phaedra  I can’t remember.

Strophe  Then think of my father.

Phaedra  I know.

Strophe  What would he think?

Phaedra  He’d –

Strophe  Exactly. You can’t do it. Can’t even think of it.

Phaedra  No.

Strophe  He’s a sexual disaster area.

Phaedra  Yes, I –

Strophe  No one must know. No one must know.

Phaedra  You’re right, I –

Strophe  No one must know.

Phaedra  No.

Strophe  Not even Hippolytus.

Phaedra  No.

Strophe  What are you going to do?

Phaedra  Get over him.
Scene Four

Hippolytus is watching television with the sound very low.
He is playing with a remote control car.
It whizzes around the room.
His gaze flits between the car and the television apparently getting
pleasure from neither.
He eats from a large bag of assorted sweets on his lap.
Phaedra enters carrying a number of wrapped presents.
She stands for a few moments watching him.
He doesn’t look at her.
Phaedra comes further into the room.
She puts the presents down and begins to tidy the room – she picks up
socks and underwear and looks for somewhere to put them. There is
nowhere, so she puts them back on the floor in a neat pile.
She picks up the empty crisp and sweet packets and puts them in the
bin.
Hippolytus watches the television throughout.
Phaedra moves to switch on a brighter light.

Hippolytus When was the last time you had a fuck?
Phaedra That’s not the sort of question you should ask your
stepmother.

Hippolytus Not Theseus, then. Don’t suppose he’s keeping
it dry either.
Phaedra I wish you’d call him father.

Hippolytus Everyone wants a royal cock, I should know.
Phaedra What are you watching?

Hippolytus Or a royal cunt if that’s your preference.
Phaedra (Doesn’t respond.)

Hippolytus News. Another rape. Child murdered. War
somewhere. Few thousand jobs gone. But none
of this matters ’cause it’s a royal birthday.

Phaedra Why don’t you riot like everyone else?

Hippolytus I don’t care.

Silence.

Hippolytus plays with his car.

Hippolytus Are those for me? Course they’re fucking for
me.

Phaedra People brought them to the gate. I think they’d
like to have given them to you in person. Taken
photos.

Hippolytus They’re poor.

Phaedra Yes, isn’t it charming?

Hippolytus It’s revolting. (He opens a present.) What the
fuck am I going to do with a bagatelle?
What’s this? (He shakes a present.) Letter
bomb. Get rid of this tat, give it to Oxfam,
I don’t need it.

Phaedra It’s a token of their esteem.

Hippolytus Less than last year.

Phaedra Have you had a good birthday?

Hippolytus Apart from some cunt scratching my motor.

Phaedra You don’t drive.

Hippolytus Can’t now, it’s scratched. Token of their
contempt.

Silence.

Hippolytus plays with his car.

Phaedra Who gave you that?

Hippolytus Me. Only way of making sure I get what I
want. Wrapped it up and everything.

Silence apart from the TV and car.

Phaedra What about you?
Phaedra’s Love

Phaedra  What about me? Want a sweet?

Phaedra  I—
          No. Thank you.
          The last time you—
          What you asked me.

Phaedra  Had a fuck.

Phaedra  Yes.

Phaedra  Don’t know. Last time I went out. When was that?

Phaedra  Months ago.


Phaedra  A man?

Phaedra  Think so. Looked like one but you can never be sure.

Silence.

Phaedra  Hate me now?

Phaedra  Course not.

Silence.

Phaedra  Where’s my present, then?

Phaedra  I’m saving it.

Phaedra  What, for next year?

Phaedra  No. I’ll give it to you later.

Phaedra  When?

Phaedra  Soon.

Phaedra  Why not now?


They look at each other in silence.

Hippolytus looks away.

He sniffs.

He picks up a sock and examines it.

He smells it.

Phaedra  That’s disgusting.

Hippolytus  What is?

Phaedra  Blowing your nose on your sock.

Hippolytus  Only after I’ve checked I haven’t cleaned my cum up with it first. And I do have them washed.

Hippolytus  Before I wear them.

Silence.

Hippolytus crashes the car into the wall.

Hippolytus  What is wrong with you?

Phaedra  What do you mean?

Hippolytus  I was born into this shit, you married it. Was he a great shag? Fucking must have been.

Hippolytus  Every man in the country is sniffing round your cunt and you pick Theseus, man of the people, what a wanker.

Phaedra  You only ever talk to me about sex.

Hippolytus  It’s my main interest.

Phaedra  I thought you hated it.

Hippolytus  I hate people.

Phaedra  They don’t hate you.

Hippolytus  No. They buy me bagatelles.

Phaedra  I meant—

Hippolytus  I know what you meant. You’re right.

Women find me much more attractive since
I've become fat. They think I must have a secret.

(He blows his nose on the sock and discards it.)

I'm fat. I'm disgusting. I'm miserable.
But I get lots of sex. Therefore . . . ?

Phaedra  (Doesn't respond.)

Hippolytus  Come on, Mother, work it out.

Phaedra  Don't call me that.

Hippolytus  Therefore. I must be very good at it. Yes?

Phaedra  (Doesn't respond.)

Hippolytus  Why shouldn't I call you mother, Mother?
I thought that's what was required. One big happy family. The only popular royals ever.
Or does it make you feel old?

Phaedra  (Doesn't respond.)

Hippolytus  Hate me now?

Phaedra  Why do you want me to hate you?

Hippolytus  I don't. But you will. In the end.

Phaedra  Never.

Hippolytus  They all do.

Phaedra  Not me.

They stare at each other.

Hippolytus looks away.

Hippolytus  Why don't you go and talk to Stroph, she's your child, I'm not. Why all this concern for me?

Phaedra  I love you.

Silence.

Hippolytus  Why?

Phaedra  You're difficult. Moody, cynical, bitter, fat, decadent, spoilt. You stay in bed all day then watch TV all night, you crash around this house with sleep in your eyes and not a thought for anyone. You're in pain. I adore you.

Hippolytus  Not very logical.

Phaedra  Love isn't.

Hippolytus and Phaedra look at each other in silence. He turns back to the television and car.

Phaedra  Have you ever thought about having sex with me?

Hippolytus  I think about having sex with everyone.

Phaedra  Would it make you happy?

Hippolytus  That's not the word exactly.

Phaedra  No, but – Would you enjoy it?

Hippolytus  No. I never do.

Phaedra  Then why do it?

Hippolytus  Life's too long.

Phaedra  I think you'd enjoy it. With me.

Hippolytus  Some people do, I suppose. Enjoy that stuff. Have a life.

Phaedra  You've got a life.

Hippolytus  No. Filling up time. Waiting.

Phaedra  For what?

Hippolytus  Don't know. Something to happen.

Phaedra  This is happening.
Hippolytus Never does.

Phaedra Now.

Hippolytus Till then. Fill it up with tat. Bric-a-brac, bits and bobs, getting by, Christ Almighty wept.

Phaedra Fill it up with me.

Hippolytus Some people have it. They’re not marking time, they’re living. Happy. With a lover. Hate them.

Phaedra Why?

Hippolytus Getting dark thank Christ day’s nearly over.

A long silence.

Hippolytus If we fuck we’ll never talk again.

Phaedra I’m not like that.

Hippolytus I am.

Phaedra I’m not.

Hippolytus Course you are.

They stare at each other.

Phaedra I’m in love with you.

Hippolytus Why?

Phaedra You thrill me.

Silence.

Phaedra Would you like your present now?

Hippolytus (Looks at her. Then turns back to the TV.)

Silence.

Phaedra I don’t know what to do.

Hippolytus Go away. It’s obviously the only thing to do.

They both stare at the television.

Eventually, Phaedra moves over to Hippolytus.

He doesn’t look at her.

She undoes his trousers and performs oral sex on him.

He watches the screen throughout and eats his sweets.

As he is about to come he makes a sound.

Phaedra begins to move her head away – he holds it down and comes in her mouth without taking his eyes off the television.

He releases her head.

Phaedra sits up and looks at the television.

A long silence, broken only by the rustling of Hippolytus’ sweet bag.

Phaedra cries.

Hippolytus There. Mystery over.

Silence.

Phaedra Will you get jealous?

Hippolytus Of what?

Phaedra When your father comes back.

Hippolytus What’s it got to do with me?

Phaedra I’ve never been unfaithful before.

Hippolytus That much was obvious.

Phaedra I’m sorry.

Hippolytus I’ve had worse.

Phaedra I did it because I’m in love with you.

Hippolytus Don’t be. I don’t like it.

Phaedra I want this to happen again.

Hippolytus No you don’t.

Phaedra I do.

Hippolytus What for?

Phaedra Pleasure?
Phaedra's Love

Phaedra's Love Scene

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Phaedra  You enjoyed that?
Hippolytus  You enjoyed that?
Phaedra  I want to be with you.
Hippolytus  But did you enjoy it?
Phaedra  (Doesn't respond.)
Hippolytus  No. You hate it as much as me if only you'd admit it.
Phaedra  I wanted to see your face when you came.
Hippolytus  Why?
Phaedra  I'd like to see you lose yourself.
Hippolytus  It's not a pleasant sight.
Phaedra  Why, what do you look like?
Hippolytus  Every other stupid fucker.
Phaedra  I love you.
Hippolytus  No.
Phaedra  So much.
Hippolytus  Don't even know me.
Phaedra  I want you to make me come.
Hippolytus  Can't stand post-coital chats. There's never anything to say.
Phaedra  I want you –
Hippolytus  This isn't about me.
Phaedra  I do.
Hippolytus  Fuck someone else imagine it's me. Shouldn't be difficult, everyone looks the same when they come.
Phaedra  Not when they burn you.
Hippolytus  No one burns me.

Phaedra  What about that woman?
Hippolytus  Looks at her.
Hippolytus  What?
Phaedra  Lena, weren't you –
Hippolytus  (Grabs Phaedra by the throat.)

Don't ever mention her again.
Don't say her name to me, don't refer to her, don't even think about her, understand?
Understand?
Phaedra  (Nods.)

Hippolytus  No one burns me, no one fucking touches me.
Phaedra  So don't try.

He releases her.

Silence.

Phaedra  Why do you have sex if you hate it so much?
Hippolytus  I'm bored.
Phaedra  I thought you were supposed to be good at it. Is everyone this disappointed?
Hippolytus  Not when I try.
Phaedra  When do you try?
Hippolytus  Don't any more.
Phaedra  Why not?
Hippolytus  It's boring.
Phaedra  You're just like your father.
Hippolytus  That's what your daughter said.

A beat, then Phaedra slaps him around the face as hard as she can.
Phaedra’s Love

Hippolytus  She’s less passionate but more practised.
            I go for technique every time.
Phaedra  Did you make her come?
Hippolytus  Yes.
Phaedra  (Opens her mouth. No sound comes out.)
Hippolytus  It’s dead now. Face it. Can’t happen again.
Phaedra  Why not?
Hippolytus  Wouldn’t be about me. Never was.
Phaedra  You can’t stop me loving you.
Hippolytus  Can.
Phaedra  No. You’re alive.
Hippolytus  Wake up.
Phaedra  You burn me.
Hippolytus  Now you’ve had me, fuck someone else.

Silence.
Phaedra  Will I see you again?
Hippolytus  You know where I am.

Silence.
Hippolytus  Do I get my present now?
Phaedra  (Opens her mouth but is momentarily lost for words.
            Then.)

You’re a heartless bastard.
Hippolytus  Exactly.

Phaedra begins to leave.
Hippolytus  Phaedra.
Phaedra  (Looks at him.)

Hippolytus  See a doctor. I’ve got gonorrhoea.
Phaedra  (Opens her mouth. No sound comes out.)
Hippolytus  Hate me now?
Phaedra  (Tries to speak. A long silence. Eventually.)
            No. Why do you hate me?
Hippolytus  Because you hate yourself.
            Phaedra leaves.

Scene Five

Hippolytus  is standing in front of a mirror with his tongue out.
Strophe enters.
Strophe  Hide.
Hippolytus  Green tongue.
Strophe  Hide, idiot.

Hippolytus  turns to her and shows her his tongue.
Hippolytus  Fucking moss. Inch of pleurococcus on my
            tongue. Looks like the top of a wall.
Strophe  Hippolytus.
Hippolytus  Showed it to a bloke in the bogs, still wanted to
            shag me.
Strophe  Have you looked out the window?
Hippolytus  Major halitosis.
Strophe  Look.
Hippolytus  Haven’t seen you for ages, how are you?
Strophe  Burning.
Hippolytus  You’d never know we live in the same
            house.
Strophe  For fuck’s sake, hide.
Hippolytus Why, what have I done?
Strophe My mother’s accusing you of rape.
Hippolytus She is? How exciting.
Strophe This isn’t a joke.
Hippolytus I’m sure.
Strophe Did you do it?
Hippolytus What?
Strophe Did you rape her?
Hippolytus I don’t know. What does that mean?
Strophe Did you have sex with her?
Hippolytus Ah. Got you.
   Does it matter?
Strophe Does it matter?
Hippolytus Does it matter.
Strophe Yes.
Hippolytus Why?
Strophe Why?
Hippolytus Yes, why, I do wish you wouldn’t repeat everything I say, why?
Strophe She’s my mother.
Hippolytus So?
Strophe My mother says she was raped.
   She says you raped her.
   I want to know if you had sex with my mother.
Hippolytus Because she’s your mother or because of what people will say?
Hippolytus Sexual contact?
Strophe You know exactly what I mean.
Hippolytus Don’t get stroppy, Strophe.
Strophe Did she want to do it?
Hippolytus You should have been a lawyer.
Strophe Did you make her?
Hippolytus You’re wasted as a pseudo-princess.
Strophe Did you force her?
Hippolytus Did I force you?
Strophe There aren’t words for what you did to me.
Hippolytus Then perhaps rape is the best she can do.
   Me. A rapist. Things are looking up.
Strophe Hippolytus.
Hippolytus At the very least it’s not boring.
Strophe You’ll be lynched for this.
Hippolytus Do you think?
Strophe If you did it I’ll help them.
Hippolytus  Of course. Not my sister after all. One of my victims.

Strophe  If you didn’t I’ll stand by you.

Hippolytus  A rapist?

Strophe  Burn with you.

Hippolytus  Why?

Strophe  Sake of the family.

Hippolytus  Ah.

Strophe  You’re my brother.

Hippolytus  No I’m not.

Strophe  To me.

Hippolytus  Strange. The one person in this family who has no claim to its history is the most sickeningly loyal. Poor relation who wants to be what she never will.

Strophe  I’ll die for this family.

Hippolytus  Yes. You probably will.

Strophe  I told her about us.

Hippolytus  You what?

Strophe  Yes. And I mentioned that you’d had her husband.

Hippolytus  No.

Strophe  I didn’t say you fucked him on their wedding night, but since he left the day after –

Hippolytus  Mother.

Strophe  A rapist. Better than a fat boy who fucks.

Hippolytus  You’re smiling.

Strophe  You are.

Hippolytus  I am.

Strophe  You’re a heartless bastard, you know that?

Hippolytus  It’s been said.

Strophe  This is your fault.

Hippolytus  Of course.

Strophe  She was my mother, Hippolytus, my mother. What did you do to her?

Hippolytus  (Looks at her.)

Strophe  She’s dead you fucking bastard.

Hippolytus  Don’t be stupid.

Strophe  Yes.

Hippolytus  What did you do to her, what did you fucking do?

Strophe  Batters him about the head.

Hippolytus  Catches her arms and holds her so she can’t hit him.

Strophe  Sobs, then breaks down and cries, then waits uncontrollably.

Strophe  What have I done? What have I done?

Hippolytus  ’Hold turns into an embrace.

Hippolytus  Wasn’t you, Strophe, you’re not to blame.

Strophe  Never even told her I loved her.

Hippolytus  She knew.

Strophe  No.

Hippolytus  She was your mother.

Strophe  She –

Hippolytus  She knew, she knew, she loved you. Nothing to blame yourself for.

Strophe  You told her about us.

Hippolytus  Then blame me.
Strophe  You told her about Theseus.
Hippolytus  Yes. Blame me.
Strophe  You –
Hippolytus  Me. Blame me.

A long silence.
Hippolytus and Strophe hold each other.

Hippolytus  What happened?
Strophe  Hung.

Silence.

Strophe  Note saying you’d raped her.

A long silence.

Hippolytus  She shouldn’t have taken it so seriously.
Strophe  She loved you.
Hippolytus  (Looks at her.) Did she?
Strophe  Tell me you didn’t rape her.
Hippolytus  Love me?
Strophe  Tell me you didn’t do it
Hippolytus  She says I did and she’s dead. Believe her. Easier all round.
Strophe  What is wrong with you?
Hippolytus  This is her present to me.
Strophe  What?
Hippolytus  Not many people get a chance like this.
This isn’t tat. This isn’t bric-a-brac.
Strophe  Deny it. There’s a riot.
Hippolytus  Life at last.
Strophe  Burning down the palace. You have to deny it.

Hippolytus  Are you insane? She died doing this for me.
I’m doomed.
Strophe  Deny it.
Hippolytus  Absolutely fucking doomed.
Strophe  For me. Deny it.
Hippolytus  No.
Strophe  You’re not a rapist. I can’t believe that.
Hippolytus  Me neither.
Strophe  Please.
Hippolytus  Fucked. Finished.
Strophe  I’ll help you hide.
Hippolytus  She really did love me.
Strophe  You didn’t do it.
Hippolytus  Bless her.
Strophe  Did you?
Hippolytus  No. I didn’t.

He begins to leave.

Strophe  Where are you going?
Hippolytus  I’m turning myself in.

He leaves.

Strophe  sits alone for a few moments, thinking.
She gets up and follows him.

Scene Six

A prison cell.
Hippolytus  sits alone.
A Priest enters.
Scene Six

Phaedra’s Love

Priest My son.

Hippolytus Bit of a come down. Always suspected the world didn’t smell of fresh paint and flowers.

Priest I may be able to help you.

Hippolytus Smells of piss and human sweat. Most unpleasant.

Priest Son.

Hippolytus You’re not my father. He won’t be visiting.

Priest Is there anything you need?

Hippolytus Got a single cell.

Priest I can help you.

Hippolytus Don’t need tat.

Priest Spiritually.

Hippolytus Beyond that.

Priest No one is beyond redemption.

Hippolytus Nothing to confess.

Priest Your sister told us.

Hippolytus Us?

Priest She explained the situation to me.

Hippolytus She’s not my sister.

Admit, yes. Confess, no.

I admit it. The rape. I did it.

Priest Do you feel remorse?

Hippolytus Will you be giving evidence?

Priest That depends.


Priest At your mother’s death?

Hippolytus Suicide, not death. She wasn’t my mother.

Priest You feel joy at your stepmother’s suicide?

Hippolytus No. She was human.

Priest So where do you find your joy?

Hippolytus Within.

Priest I find that hard to believe.

Hippolytus Course you do. You think life has no meaning unless we have another person in it to torture us.

Priest I have no one to torture me.

Hippolytus You have the worst lover of all. Not only does he think he’s perfect, he is. I’m satisfied to be alone.

Priest Self-satisfaction is a contradiction in terms.

Hippolytus I can rely on me. I never let me down.

Priest True satisfaction comes from love.

Hippolytus What when love dies? Alarm clock rings it’s time to wake up, what then?

Priest Love never dies. It evolves.

Hippolytus You’re dangerous.

Priest Into respect. Consideration.

Have you considered your family?

Hippolytus What about it?

Priest It’s not an ordinary family.

Hippolytus No. None of us are related to each other.

Priest Royalty is chosen. Because you are more privileged than most you are also more culpable. God —
Hippolytus  There is no God. There is. No God.
Priest    Perhaps you'll find there is. And what will you do then? There's no repentance in the next life, only in this one.
Hippolytus  What do you suggest, a last minute conversion just in case? Die as if there is a God, knowing that there isn't? No. If there is a God, I'd like to look him in the face knowing I'd died as I'd lived. In conscious sin.
Priest    Hippolytus.
Hippolytus  I'm sure God would be intelligent enough to see through any eleventh hour confession of mine.
Priest    Do you know what the unforgivable sin is?
Hippolytus  Of course.
Priest    You are in danger of committing it. It's not just your soul at stake, it's the future of your family –
Hippolytus  Ah.
Priest    Your country.
Hippolytus  Why do I always forget this?
Priest    Your sexual indiscretions are of no interest to anyone. But the stability of the nation's morals is. You are a guardian of those morals. You will answer to God for the collapse of the country you and your family lead.
Hippolytus  I'm not responsible.
Priest    Then deny the rape. And confess that sin. Now.
Hippolytus  Before I've committed it?
Priest    Too late after.
Hippolytus  Let me die.
Priest    No. Forgive yourself.
Hippolytus (Thinks hard.)
          I can't.
Priest    Why not?
Hippolytus Do you believe in God?
Priest    (Looks at him.)
Hippolytus I know what I am. And always will be. But you.
You sin knowing you'll confess. Then you're
forgiven. And then you start all over again.
How do you dare mock a God so powerful?
Unless you don't really believe.
Priest    This is your confession, not mine.
Hippolytus Then why are you on your knees? God
certainly is merciful. If I were him I'd
despise you. I'd wipe you off the face of the
earth for your dishonesty.
Priest    You're not God.
Fortunate for all concerned. I'd not allow
you to sin knowing you'd confess and get
away with it.
Priest    Heaven would be empty.
Hippolytus A kingdom of honest men, honestly sinning.
And death for those who try to cover
their arse.
Priest    What do you think forgiveness is?
Hippolytus It may be enough for you, but I have no
intention of covering my arse. I killed a
woman and I will be punished for it by
hypocrites who I shall take down with me.
May we burn in hell. God may be all powerful,
but there's one thing he can't do.

Priest    There is a kind of purity in you.
Hippolytus He can't make me good.
Priest    No.
Hippolytus Last line of defence for the honest man.
Free will is what distinguishes us from the
animals.
(He undoes his trousers.)
And I have no intention of behaving like a
fucking animal.

Priest    (Performs oral sex on Hippolytus.)
Hippolytus Leave that to you.
          (He comes.
          He rests his hand on top of the Priest's head.)
          Go.
          Confess.
          Before you burn.

Scene Seven

Phaedra's body lies on a funeral pyre, covered.
Theseus enters.
He approaches the pyre.
He lifts the cover and looks at Phaedra's face.
He lets the cover drop.
He kneels by Phaedra's body.
He tears at his clothes, then skin, then hair, more and more
frantically until he is exhausted.
But he does not cry.
He stands and lights the funeral pyre - Phaedra goes up in
flames.
Theseus  I'll kill him.

Scene Eight

Outside the court.

A crowd of men, women and children has gathered, including Theseus and Strophe, both disguised.

Theseus  Come far?

Man 1  Newcastle.

Woman 1  Brought the kids.

Child  And a barby. [barbecue]

Man 1  String him up, they should.

Woman 2  The bastard.

Man 1  Whole fucking pack of them.

Woman 1  Set an example.

Man 1  What do they take us for?

Woman 1  Parasites.

Man 2  We pay the raping bastard.

Man 1  No more.

Man 2  They're nothing special.

Woman 1  Raped his own mother.

Woman 2  The bastard.

Man 2  She was the only one had anything going for her.

Theseus  He'll walk.

Man 2  I'll be waiting at the fucking gate.

Man 1  Won't be the only one.

Woman 1  He's admitted it.

Strophe  That means nothing.

Woman 2  The bastard.

Theseus  Might go in his favour. Sorry your honour, reading my Bible every day, never do it again, case dismissed. Not going to lock a prince up, are they? Whatever he's done.

Man 2  That's right.

Man 1  No justice.

Theseus  Member of the royal family. Crown against the crown? They're not stupid.

Man 1  Pig-shit thick, the lot of them.

Man 2  She was all right.

Man 1  She's dead.

Theseus  You don't hang on to the crown for centuries without something between your ears.

Man 2  That's right.

Theseus  Show trial. Him in the dock, sacrifice the reputation of a minor prince, expel him from the family.

Man 2  Exactly, exactly.

Theseus  Say they've rid themselves of the corrupting element. But the monarchy remains intact.

Man 1  What shall we do?

Man 2  Justice for all.

Woman 1  He must die.

Man 2  Has to die.

Man 1  For our sake.

Man 2  And hers.
Woman 1 Don’t deserve to live. I’ve got kids.
Man 1 We’ve all got kids.
Woman 1 You got kids?
Theseus Not any more.
Woman 2 Poor bastard.
Man 2 Knows what we’re talking about then, don’t he.
Man 1 Scum should die.
Woman 1 Here he comes.
Woman 2 The bastard.
As Hippolytus is taken past, the crowd scream abuse and hurl rocks.
Woman 2 Bastard!
Man 1 Die, scum!
Woman 1 Rot in hell, bastard!
Man 2 Royal raping bastard!
Hippolytus breaks free from the Policemen holding him and hurts himself into the crowd.
He falls into the arms of Theseus.
Man 1 Kill him. Kill the royal slag.
Hippolytus looks into Theseus’ face.
Hippolytus You.
Theseus hesitates, then kisses him full on the lips and pushes him into the arms of Man 2.
Theseus Kill him.
Man 2 holds Hippolytus.
Man 1 takes a tie from around a child’s neck and puts it around Hippolytus’ throat. He strangles Hippolytus, who is kicked by

the Women as he chokes into semi-consciousness.
Woman 2 produces a knife.
Strophe No! No! Don’t hurt him, don’t kill him!
Man 2 Listen to her.
Man 1 Defending an in-bred.
Woman 1 What sort of a woman are you?
Theseus Defending a rapist.
Theseus pulls Strophe away from Woman 2 who she is attacking.
He rapes her.
The crowd watch and cheer.
When Theseus has finished he cuts her throat.
Strophe Theseus.
Hippolytus.
Innocent.
Mother.
Oh, Mother.

She dies.
Man 1 pulls down Hippolytus’ trousers.
Woman 2 cuts off his genitals.
They are thrown onto the barbecue.
The children cheer.
A child takes them off the barbecue and throws them at another child, who screams and runs away.
Much laughter.
Someone retrieves them and they are thrown to a dog.
Theseus takes the knife.
He cuts Hippolytus from groin to chest.
Hippolytus’ bowels are torn out and thrown onto the barbecue.
He is kicked and stoned and spat on.
Hippolytus looks at the body of Strophe.
Hippolytus Strophe.
Theseus Strophe.
Theseus looks closely at the woman he has raped and murdered. He recognises her with horror.

When Hippolytus is completely motionless, the police who have been watching wade into the crowd, hitting them randomly. The crowd disperses with the exception of Theseus.

Two Policemen stand looking down at Hippolytus.

Policeman 1 Poor bastard.

Policeman 2 You joking?

(He kicks Hippolytus hard.)

I've got two daughters.

Policeman 1 Should move him.

Policeman 2 Let him rot.

Policeman 2 spits on Hippolytus.

They leave.

Hippolytus is motionless.

Theseus is sitting by Strophe's body.

Theseus Hippolytus.

Son.

I never liked you.

(To Strophe.)

I'm sorry.

Didn't know it was you.

God forgive me I didn't know.

If I'd known it was you I'd never have –

(To Hippolytus.)

You hear me, I didn't know.

Theseus cuts his own throat and bleeds to death.

The three bodies lie completely still.

Eventually, Hippolytus opens his eyes and looks at the sky.

Hippolytus Vultures.

(He manages a smile.)

If there could have been more moments like this.

Hippolytus dies.

A vulture descends and begins to eat his body.