PERSONAE

The Day's Air, DAIANEIRA, daughter of Oineus.

HERAKLES ZEUSON, the Solar vitality.

AKHELOÖS, a river, symbol of the power of damp and darkness, triform as water, cloud and rain.

HYLLOS, son of Herakles and Daysair.

LIKHAS, a herald.

A messenger.

A nurse, or housekeeper, old and tottery, physically smaller than Daysair.

IOLE, Tomorrow, daughter of Eurytus, a King.

Captive women.

Girls of Trachis.

WOMEN OF TRACHIS

DAYSAIR:

"No man knows his luck 'til he's dead." They've been saying that for a long time but it's not true in my case. Mine's soggy. Don't have to go to hell to find that out.

I had a worse scare about getting married than

[any
girl in Pleuron, my father's place in Aetolia.
First came a three-twisted river, Akheloös,
part bullheaded cloud, he looked like,
part like a slicky snake with scales on it
shining, then it would look like a bullheaded

[man
with water dripping out of his whiskers, black
[ones.

Bed with that! I ask you!

And Herakles Zeuson got me out of it some[how,
I don't know how he managed with that wet
[horror,
you might find out from some impartial
[witness
who could watch without being terrorized.

Looks are my trouble. And that wasn't the end of trouble.

Herakles never gets sight of his children,

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WOMEN OF TRACHIS

[DAYS.] like a farmer who sows a crop and doesn't look at it again till harvest.

Always away on one assignment or another one terror after another, always for someone else.

We been outlawed ever since he kill'd Iphitz, living here in Trachis with a foreigner, and nobody knows where he is.

Bitter ache of separation brought on me, ten months then five, and no news, bitter childbirth in separation worried for some awful calamity. Black trouble may be connected with this memo he left me.

I keep praying it doesn't mean something horrible.

NURSE:

If a slave be permitted, milady?

I've heard you worrying time and again about

[Herakles...

If I'm not speaking out of my turn, ma'am,

[you got

a fine lot of sons here, why not Hyllos go look for his father?

He's coming now. There, hurrying! If you felt like to tell him, if....

DAYSAIR: See here, son, this slave talks sense, more than some free folks.

HYLLOS: What's she say? Lemme hear.

DAYSAIR: No credit to you, that you haven't gone to look

Ifor your father.

HYLLOS: I've just heard . . . if it's true.

DAYSAIR: Heard what? That he's sitting around

somewhere or other.

HYLLOS: Farmed out last year to a woman in Lydia.

DAYSAIR: He's capable of anything, if . . .

HYLLOS: Oh, I hear he's got out of that.

DAYSAIR: Do they say he's alive or dead?

HYLLOS: They say he's in Eubœa,

besieging Eurytusville

or on the way to it.

DAYSAIR: You know he left some sort of forecast

having to do with that country?

HYLLOS: No, I didn't know that.

DAYSAIR: That it would be the end of him,

or that when he got

through with the job, he would live happy ever

after.

It's on the turn of the wheel.

Don't you want to go and work with him?

If he wins we're saved,

[DAYS.]

if he doesn't we're done for.

HYLLOS:

Of course I'll go. I'd have gone before now if I had known.

I've never worried very much about him one way or the other. Luck being with him.

But now I'll go get the facts.

DAYSAIR Well, get going. A bit late. but a good job's worth a bonus.

KHOROS:

Str. I (accompaniment strings, mainly cellos):

PHOEBUS, Phoebus, ere thou slav and lay flaked Night upon her blazing pyre. Say, ere the last star-shimmer is run:

Where lies Alkmene's son, apart from me? Aye, thou art keen, as is the lightning blaze,

Land way, sea ways, in these some slit hath he found to escape thy scrutiny?

DAYSAIR is left alone. Ant. I

so sorry a bird.

For whom, afore, so many suitors tried. And shall I ask what thing is heart's desire. Or how love fall to sleep with tearless eye, So worn by fear away, of dangerous road, A manless bride to mourn in vacant room, Expecting ever the worse, of dooms to come?

NORTH WIND or South, so bloweth tireless Str. 2 wave over wave to flood.

Cretan of Cadmus' blood, Orcus' shafts err not. What home hast 'ou now, an some God stir not?

PARDON if I reprove thee, Lady, Ant. 2 To save thee false hopes delayed. Thinkst thou that man who dies, Shall from King Chronos take unvaried happiness? Nor yet's all pain.

(drums, quietly The shifty Night delays not, added to music) Nor fates of men, nor yet rich goods and spoil. Be swift to enjoy, what thou art swift to lose. Let not the Queen choose despair. Hath Zeus no eye (who saith it?) watching his progeny?

DAYSAIR: You've found out, I suppose, and want to help me stop worrying. Hope you'll never go through enough to understand how.

One grows up, gets fed. "Don't get sun-burnt." "Don't get wet in the rain. Keep out of [draughts,"

that's a girl's life till she's married.

Gets her assignment at night: something to think about,

that is, worry about her man and the children. You've seen my load, while it's been going on.

Well, here's another to wail about:

before King Herakles rushed off the last time, he left an old slab of wood with sign writing on

[DAYS.] Never could get a word out of him about it [before, for all the rough jobs he went out on,

for all the rough jobs he went out on, he just couldn't bear to speak of it, talked as if he were going to work, not to his [funeral.

Now? not a bit of it: all about my marriage property, what land each of the children was to get from [the entail.

Time to work out in three months, either he would be dead, or come back and [spend

the rest of his life without trouble, all fixed by the gods, end of Herakles' labours, as stated

under an old beech-tree in Dodona where a pair of doves tell you. Time up,

see how much truth was in it. I started from a sound sleep, shaking, in terror I should have to live on robbed of the best man ever born.

KHOROS: Hush. Here comes a man with a wreath on.
That means good news.

MESSENGER: Queen Daysair,
let me be the first to calm your anxiety.
Alkemene's son is alive, and has won,
and is carrying the spoils to the gods
of our country.

DAYSAIR: What are you talking about?

MESSENGER: You'll soon see him, the man you want, crowned with Victory. He's looking splendid.

DAYSAIR: You get this from some local bloke, or a [foreigner?

MESSENGER: There in the summer pastures

Likhas the herald is telling a whole crowd of

[people
I came on ahead, thought I might get

a tip for the news.

DAYSAIR: Why doesn't he come himself, if there's any[thing to it?

MESSENGER: He can't for the crowd, ma'am.

They're all jammed round him

wanting the details.

He can't move a step. They want it.

But you'll see him here pretty soon.

DAYSAIR: Zeus in the long grass of Oeta, joy hast Thou given me with its season.

Tune up, you there, you women, inside and out here.

I had given up hope. Never thought I would see it. Let's sing and be happy.