Hostage Situations in Euripides

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1) Orestes 1105 (Pylades)

Ἑλένην κτάνωμεν, Μενέλεως λύπην πικράν.

Let us kill Helen – that will be a bitter pain to Menelaus!

2) Orestes 1149-52 (Pylades)

ἵν δ᾽ οὖν τὸν Ἑλένης μὴ κατάσχωμεν φόνον, πρήσαντες οίκους τούτους καταθανομέθα. ἐνὸς γὰρ οὐ σφαλέντες ἐξομέν κλέος, καλὸς θανόντες ἢ καλὸς σεσφισμένοι.

But if we do not accomplish the murder of Helen, then we will burn the house and perish. Having accomplished either goal, we will attain glory whether by dying nobly, or being nobly saved.

3) Orestes 1163-74 (Orestes)

ἐγὼ δὲ πάντως ἐκπένων νυμῆν ἐμήν ὁράσας τι χρήζω τοὺς εἰμιδο ἐξήρως θανεῖν, ἵν’ ἀνταναλώσω μὲν οὐ μὲ πρόδοσαν, στένωσι δ᾽ οὔπερ κάμ᾽ ἐθηκαν ἄθλιοι.

But since I am going to perish utterly
I want to die having done something to my enemies in order that I destroy in requital those who betrayed me and that those who have made me wretched may lament. I am, you know, the son of Agamemnon, who was thought worthy to lead Greece – not as tyrant, yet he held some power of a god. This man I will not shame by submitting to a slavish death. Rather, like a free man I will take up my life, but take vengeance on Menelaus. But should we achieve one thing, we would be lucky, if perchance an unexpected salvation should befall us killing but not being killed. I pray for this!

4) Orestes, 1191-99 (Electra)

Ἑλένης θανατοῦσς, ἢ τι Μενέλεως σε δρᾶ ἢ τόνδε κάμε — πᾶν γὰρ ἐν φίλον τόδε — λέγ᾽ ὡς φωνεύσας Ἔρμιονιν: ἐξίσος δὲ χρὴ δέρῃ πρὸς αὐτὴ παρθένου σπάσαντ’ ἐχειν. κἂν μὲν σε σώζῃ μὴ θανεῖν χρήζων κόρην Ἐλένης Μενέλεως πτώμα ὡδὸν ἐν αἴματι, μέθες πεπάρακε πατρὶ παρθένου δήμας: ἢν δ᾽ ὀξυθύμου μὴ κρατῶν φρονήματος κτείνη σε, καὶ σὺ σφάξῃ παρθένου δέρῃ.

With Helen dead, if Menelaus does something to you or Pylades here and me – for we are of a piece in amity – say that you will kill Hermione. The sword you must draw and hold upon the very throat of the maiden. And if Menelaus saves you, not wishing his girl to die, having seen Helen lying in a pool of blood, allow the father to take the maiden’s body back. But if he cannot conquer his fierce mind and consigns you to death, then you cut the girl’s neck!
5) *Orestes* 1594-98 (Menelaus and Orestes)

[OR] οὐ φευξόμεσθα: πυρὶ δ᾽ ἀνάψομεν δόμους.

[MEN] ἦ γὰρ πατρὸν δῶμα πορθήσεις τόδε;

[OR] ώς μὴ γ᾽ ἔχης σύ, τὴν᾽ ἐπισφάξας πυρὶ.

[MEN] κτεῖν᾽: ώς κτανῶν γε τῶνδε μοι δόσεις δίκην.

[OR] ἔσται τάδε.

[MEN] ἁ ἁ, μηδαμῶς δράσῃς τάδε.

[OR] We will not attempt escape. We will light the house on fire!

[MEN] You will really burn down your ancestral house?

[OR] Yes, to make sure you never possess it, and I will slaughter this girl on the fire.

[MEN] Go ahead, kill her! But having done so, you will pay the price for these deeds!

[OR] Okay, here goes!

[MEN] Ah! Ah! Don’t do it!

6) *Orestes* 1616-20 (Menelaus and Orestes)

[MEN] πέπονθα δεινὰ.

[OR] τότε γὰρ ἦσθ᾽ ἀνωφελῆς.

[MEN] ἔχεις με.

[OR] σαυτὸν σὺ γ᾽ ἔλαβες κακός γεγώς.

[MEN] ἀλλ᾽ ἐι᾽, ὑφαντε τὸν δόματ᾽, Ἡλέκτρα, τάδε: σύ τ᾽, ὃ φίλων μοι τῶν ἐμῶν σαφέστατε, Πυλάδη, κάτιαθε γείσα τειχέων τάδε.

[MEN] I have suffered terrible things.

[OR] Yes, since you did not help me before.

[MEN] You have me.

[OR] You caught yourself, by being base.

Well then, Electra, light this house on fire!

And you, truest of all my friends, Pylades, burn the coping of these walls!

7) *Speed* (1994)

*The beautiful Sandra Bullock, cloaked in dynamite.*
Bibliography


