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The Metamorphoses of Ovid. Tr. Mary M. Innes. Harmondsworth, Engl.: Penguin Books, 1973. Copyright © 1955 Mary M. Innes. 146-153.

were warring round her walls, filling the citizens with terror. Then Tereus came to their aid, from Thrace, and routed the foe with his troops, winning great renown by his victory.

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Pandion, king of Athens, seeing that Tereus was rich and powerful, and a descendant of mighty Mars himself, gave him his daughter's hand in marriage. But neither the Graces nor Hymen nor Juno, who bestows her blessing upon brides, was present at that ceremony. Furies lit the bridal pair upon their way, with torches stolen from funeral processions, Furies prepared the marriage couch, and the cursed screech-owl brooded over their house, perched on the roof above their marriage chamber. Such were the omens when Procne and Tereus were married, such the omens when they became parents. Thrace, little knowing what impended, rejoiced with their king and queen, as the royal pair themselves gave thanks to the gods; proclamation was made that the day on which Pandion's daughter had married the noble king of Thrace, and the birthday of their son Irys, too, should be celebrated as public holidays. So blind are men, regarding what is truly to their advantage.

Now five autumns had passed away, as the sun rolled on his yearly course, when Procne spoke coaxingly to her husband: 'If you love me at all, send me to see my sister, or else have my sister come here. You can promise my father that she will not be long away from home. A chance to see Philomela will be a magnificent gift for me.' Tereus gave orders for ships to be launched and, with the help of sail and oars, came to the harbours of Cecrops' land, where he disembarked on the shore of Piraeus. As soon as he was admitted to the presence of his father-in-law, the king, they shook each other by the hand, and exchanged the usual greetings. Then Tereus began to explain the reason for his coming, and to deliver his wife's message, promising that if her sister were allowed to visit her, she would not be kept away too long, when suddenly Philomela appeared, richly attired in gorgeous robes, but richer still in her own beauty. She was like the descriptions that one often hears of the naiads and dryads who haunt the depths of the woodlands, if only they wore ornaments and garments such as hers. A flame of desire was kindled in Tereus' heart when he saw her, flaring up as quickly as the fire that burns withered corn, or dry leaves, or stores of hay. Her beauty, indeed, was excuse enough, but he was further excited by his own passionate nature, for

the people of his country are an emotional race. So, thanks to the fault of the national temperament and of his own, he burned with ardent passion. His impulse was to bribe the attendants who guarded her, to undermine her nurse's loyalty, to tempt the girl herself with magnificent gifts, lavishing his whole kingdom on her: or else to seize her and carry her off, and then to defend his prize by savage fighting. There was nothing that his unbridled passion would not dare. His heart could not contain the fires that burned within. He was impatient, now, of delay, and eagerly turned back to deliver Procne's message, and to put forward his own plea under cover of hers. Love made him eloquent, and whenever his request seemed too pressing, he declared that Procne would have it so. He enforced his arguments with tears, as if his wife had entrusted him with those as well.

O gods above, how blind we mortals are! The very acts which furthered his wicked scheme made people believe that he was a devoted husband, and he was praised for his criminal behaviour. Moreover, Philomela shared his eagerness. Throwing her arms round her father's neck, she coaxed him to let her go to visit her sister, and begged him, as he hoped for her welfare, to agree to a plan which was, in fact, entirely contrary to it. Tereus gazed at the princess and already, in anticipation, held her in his arms. As he watched her kissing Pandion, throwing her arms about his neck, the sight of all this goaded him to greater frenzy, and added food and fuel to his desire. When he saw her embrace the king, how he wished that *he* were her father! Yet even had he been so, his desires would still have been equally wicked. The king yielded to the wishes of his two daughters: Philomela, overjoyed, thanked her father and supposed, poor girl, that his decision was a victory for herself and her sister, when in fact it was to be the ruin of them both.

Now the sun had but a little way to go, and his horses were galloping down the slope of the evening sky: a kingly banquet was spread upon the tables, and the golden goblets were filled with wine. After the feast, the guests retired to peaceful slumbers. But the Thracian king, though he had gone to bed, was in a fever of love for the princess and lay, recalling her face, her movements, her hands, and imagining the parts he had not seen to be just as he would have them. So he fostered his love, too restless to sleep.

When the dawn came, and Tereus was on the point of departure,

Pandion clasped his hand and, with tears in his eyes, begged him to look after his companion. 'My dear son,' he said, 'since your affectionate pleading leaves me no choice, I entrust this child of mine to you, in accordance with your own wishes, Tereus, and those of my two daughters. I beg you, by your honour, by the gods above, and by the relationship that binds us, to watch over her like a father, and to send back to me, as soon as may be, this dear girl who is the comfort of my old age. The time will drag for me, all the while she is away. And you, Philomela, if you love me at all, come back to me as soon as you can. It is enough that your sister is so far from home.' With these injunctions, he kissed his daughter good-bye, crying quietly as he did so. He asked them both to give him their hands as a pledge that they would keep their promise and then, joining their hands together, begged them to remember to convey his greetings to his absent daughter and to his grandson. Sobs choked him, so that he could scarcely manage to utter a last farewell: his mind was filled with anxious foreboding.

Once Philomela was on board the painted ship, when the sea was churned up under the oar-blades, and the land left behind, then the barbarous prince cried out: 'I have won! I have on board with me the girl I prayed for!' In his triumph he could scarcely wait for the joys which he anticipated, could not tear his eyes away from his prize: as when an eagle, seizing a hare in its crooked talons, deposits the prize in its lofty eyrie - then the captor gazes gloatingly on the prisoner, for whom there is no escape.

They had accomplished their journey and, on reaching their own shores, disembarked from the travel-worn ship. The king dragged Pandion's daughter to a high-walled steading, hidden in the dark depths of an ancient forest, and there he shut her up. She, for her part, pale and trembling, frightened of everything, begged him with tears to tell her where her sister was. Instead, he told her of his guilty passion and, by sheer force, overcame the struggles of the lonely and defenceless girl, while she vainly called aloud to her father, to her sister, and above all to the gods, for help. She was quivering with fear, like some timid lamb which has been mauled and cast aside by a grey wolf, and cannot yet believe in its safety: or like a dove, its feathers matted with its own blood, still trembling and afraid of the greedy talons which held it fast.

Soon, when she came to herself again, she tore her disordered hair, clawed at her arms and beat them against her breast, as if she were in mourning. Then, stretching out her hands, she cried: 'You horrible barbarian, you cruel scoundrel! Are you quite unmoved by the charges my father laid upon you, by the affectionate tears he shed as he let me go? Do you care nothing for my sister's anxiety, for my innocent youth, or for your own marriage? You have confounded all natural feelings: I am my sister's rival, you a husband twice over, and Procne ought, by rights, to be my enemy. You traitor, why not take my life from me as well, to complete your crime? How I wish that you had done so, before I was forced into that unspeakable union! Then my ghost would have been guiltless. Yet if the gods above take notice of these things, if the power of heaven is more than an empty name, if all has not been lost, though I am lost, then one day no matter when, you will pay the penalty for this. I myself will throw aside all modesty, and proclaim your deeds. If I have the chance, I shall come forward before your people, and tell my story. If I am to be kept shut up in the woods, I shall fill the forests with my voice, and win sympathy from the very rocks that witnessed my degradation. Heaven will hear my cries, and any god that dwells there!'

Her words roused the fierce tyrant to anger, and to fear no less. Goaded on by both these passions, he snatched his sword out of its scabbard where it hung at his waist, and seizing his victim by the hair, twisted her arms behind her back, and bound them fast. Philomela, filled with hopes of death when she saw the sword, offered him her throat. But even as she poured out her scorn, still calling upon her father, and struggling to speak, he grasped her tongue with a pair of forceps, and cut it out with his cruel sword. The remaining stump still quivered in her throat, while the tongue itself lay pulsing and murmuring incoherently to the dark earth. It writhed convulsively, like a snake's tail when it has newly been cut off and, dying, tried to reach its mistress' feet. Even after this atrocity, they say, though I can hardly bring myself to believe it, that the king in his guilty passion often took his pleasure with the body he had so mutilated.

After such behaviour, he had the audacity to go back to Procne. When the queen saw her husband, she inquired for her sister, and he then told her a tale of his own invention: he declared that Philomela

was dead, groaning in pretended grief, and convincing the listeners by his tears. Procne tore from her shoulders her bright robes, with their broad golden hems, clothed herself in black, and set up an empty tomb, at which she made offerings to a ghost that was no ghost, and lamented the sad fate of her sister, whose sufferings were far other than she thought.

The sungod had driven his car through the twelve signs of heaven, and a full year had passed. What could Philomela do? She was closely guarded to prevent her escape, the walls of the steading were stout, built of solid stone, her dumb lips could not reveal what had happened. But grief and pain breed great ingenuity, and distress teaches us to be inventive. Cunningly she set up her threads on a barbarian loom, and wove a scarlet design on a white ground, which pictured the wrong she had suffered. When it was finished, she gave it to one of her servants and, by her gestures, conveyed to the girl that she wished her to take it to the queen. The servant did as she was asked, and carried the tapestry to Procne, without knowing what she was giving her.

When the cruel tyrant's wife unfolded the woven cloth, she read there the unhappy story of her own misfortunes. She uttered not a word: it was incredible how she restrained herself, but her grief was too great for speech and, when she sought for words, she could find none bitter enough. There was no time for tears. Instead, she concentrated on schemes for revenge, and rushed ahead with a plan that was to confound completely the issues of right and wrong.

It was the time of the solemn festival which the young women of Thrace celebrate every three years in honour of Bacchus. Their sacred rites are carried on by night, by night Rhodope rings with the clashing of shrill cymbals. By night, therefore, the queen left her home, all ready for the worship of the god, and carrying the ritual weapons of his frenzied followers. Her head was wreathed with vine leaves, a deerskin was slung over her left side, and she carried a light spear resting on her shoulder. Then she went whirling through the woods, accompanied by her attendants, a figure that struck terror to the heart. She pretended that she was being driven by Bacchus' frenzy, but it was the fury of grief that drove her on. At length she came to the hidden steading. Amid howls and Bacchic cries the gates were broken down; then Procne seized her sister, dressed her in the costume

of one of Bacchus' worshippers, concealing her face with ivy leaves, and led the bewildered girl back to the palace.

When Philomela realized that she had come to that accursed house, she shuddered in distress, and grew deathly pale: but Procne, having gained her home, removed the emblems of Bacchus' festival from her unhappy sister's brow, and uncovered her downcast face. She flung her arms around her, but Philomela did not dare to lift her head or meet her sister's eyes, considering herself the cause of the other's sorrow. She gazed steadfastly at the ground, and her gestures conveyed what her voice could not: for she was eager to swear by the gods that she had been forcefully assaulted and disgraced. Procne, blazing with uncontrollable anger, cut short her sister's sobs, saying: 'This is no time for tears, but rather for the sword, or anything more effective than the sword, if such you have. I am prepared to go to any lengths of crime, my sister - either to set the palace alight, and trap that scheming Tereus in the flames, or to cut out his tongue and his eyes, to hew off the limbs which wronged you, and drive his guilty soul from his body, through a thousand gaping wounds. The revenge prepared must be something tremendous: but I am still in doubt as to what it should be.'

While Procne was speaking, Itys came up to his mother. The sight of her son suggested what she could do and, looking at him with ruthless eyes, she murmured: 'How like his father he is!' Without another word, seething with silent rage, she prepared for her terrible deed. Even so, when her son came close and greeted her, drawing down her head with his little arms, kissing her and prattling childish endearments, the mother was shaken. Her anger was checked and, against her will, tears gathered in her eyes. But as soon as she felt her excessive love for the child weakening her resolution, she turned away from him again, to look at her sister's face. As her eyes went from one to the other, she upbraided herself, saying: 'Why does one of them speak to me lovingly, while the other has no tongue to speak at all? Why does he call me mother, when she cannot call me sister? See the kind of man you have married, you, Pandion's daughter! You are not worthy of your father! It is criminal to feel affection for a husband such as Tereus!'

She hesitated no longer, but dragged Itys away to a distant part of the lofty palace, like some tigress on the Ganges' banks, dragging an

unweaned fawn through the thick forest. He realized what was in store for him and, stretching out his hands, cried 'Mother, Mother!' and tried to throw his arms round her neck. But Procne drove a sword into his side, close to his breast, and did not even turn her face away. That wound alone was enough to kill him, but Philomela took the sword, and cut his throat as well. While his limbs were still warm, still retained some vestiges of life, the two sisters tore them apart: the room was dripping with blood. Then they cooked his flesh, boiling some in bronze pots, and roasting some on spits.

Next, Procne invited her husband, who knew nothing of what she had done, to partake of this feast. She pretended that it was a sacred ritual, practised in her own country, and that only her husband might be present at the meal. On this pretext, she got rid of their attendants, and the servants. So Tereus, all by himself, sat in state on his ancestral throne, and ate what was before him, swallowing down mouthfuls of flesh that was his own. He was so utterly blind to what was going on, that he called out: 'Bring Itys here!' Procne could not conceal her cruel exultation. Eager to be the first to announce the catastrophe she had brought about, she told her husband: 'The boy you are asking for is here, inside, with you.' Tereus looked round, asking where his son was. As he inquired for him and called his name once more, Philomela leaped forward in all her disarray, her hair spattered with the blood of the boy she had madly murdered. She thrust Itys' head, dripping with gore, before his father's face. Never would she have been more glad to have been able to speak, to express her glee in fitting words. With a roar of fury the Thracian king pushed away the tables, invoking the snaky-haired sisters from the Stygian depths. Could he have done so, he would willingly have burst open his breast and disgorged from it the frightful banquet of human flesh which he had eaten. Then again he wept, calling himself the wretched tomb of his own son. Drawing his sword, he was rushing in pursuit of Pandion's daughters, when it almost seemed that the girls' bodies were hovering in the air, raised up on wings: in fact, they were hovering on wings. One of them flew off to the woods, the other flew under the eaves of the roof: traces of the murder were still visible on her breast, her feathers were still crimson with blood. The king, made swift by grief and longing for revenge, was also turned into a bird. He had a crest of feathers on his head and, in place

of his long sword, wore a huge jutting beak. This bird is called the hoopoe, and it looks as if it were accoutred for battle.

When Pandion heard the story, his grief brought him down to the shades of Tartarus before his time, before he had completed the full span of a long life. Erechtheus succeeded to the kingship, and took over the government of the state, a man as upright as he was powerful in arms. He had four young sons, and as many daughters, and of his daughters there were two who rivalled each other in beauty. One of these, Procris, made Aeolus' grandson Cephalus, happy, by becoming his wife. Boreas fell in love with the other, who was called Orithyia, but he long wooed her in vain. He pleaded for her favour, preferring to use persuasion rather than force, but the memory of the Thracians, his countrymen, and of Tereus, their king, hampered his suit. When his endearments were of no avail, the wind bristled with rage, his normal temper which he all too commonly displays. 'And rightly so,' he cried. 'Why did I abandon my own weapons, violent savagery, anger and threats, and make humble prayers, quite unsuited to my character? Violence is natural to me: by violence I drive away the grim clouds, by violence stir up the sea, bring gnarled oaks crashing down, freeze the snow, and lash the earth with hail. Yes, and when I come upon my brothers in the open sky, the scene of our combats, I wrestle with them so stoutly that the intervening air rings with our clashes, and lightning darts from the hollow clouds; again, when I enter the hollow caverns beneath the earth, and fiercely thrust my back against its lowest vaults, my gusts make the whole world shake, and trouble even the ghosts. This is how I should have asked for the princess' hand in marriage, not begging but forcing Erechtheus to be my father-in-law.'

With these words and more in the same haughty strain, Boreas shook out the wings which, as he beats his way through the air, cause gusts of wind to blow over all the earth, and ruffle the surface of the sea. Trailing his dusty cloak over the mountain tops, the lover swept along the ground and, shrouded in darkness, engulfed the panic-stricken Orithyia in his dusky wings. As he flew, he fanned the flames of his passion, and it burned more strongly; nor did he check his onrush through the air, till he had borne his prize to the walls of the city where the Cicones dwell. There the Actaeon maiden became the icy despot's wife, and she was made a mother too, for she