

*Iphigenia in Splott*  
By Gary Owen

Synopsis

Gary Owen's *Iphigenia in Splott* is a one-woman adaptation of *Iphigenia in Aulis*, the classical Greek tragedy by Euripides. It begins with the title character, a young woman from Cardiff named Effie, proclaiming to the audience that they are in her debt, and have come to give her thanks— they just don't know it...yet.

Effie begins by identifying herself as the type of person that the presumably middle-class theatre-going audience would avoid if they encountered on the street. She is unemployed, vulgar, and prone to acts of aggression. Her weeks operate through cycles of benders and hangovers, in part funded by small dispensations of money from her Nan, who laments the way the neighborhood has decayed in recent years.

One night she meets and has sex with an amputee war veteran named Lee, with whom she falls in love. In a euphoric walk through a post-industrial wasteland, she decides her newfound purpose in life is to help Lee recover from his trauma.

Much to Effie's dismay, Lee turns out to be a married man. Moreover, Effie's encounter with him has left her pregnant. Initially planning to seek an abortion, Effie finds that she has grown into the new feeling of being not-alone that she was left with after meeting Lee. Unable to bring herself to abort the pregnancy, she instead decides to bring it to term, and that her purpose can be the raising of this child.

However, Effie's personal poverty and the lack of resources available in her community eventually lead to premature labor.

While in hospital, she is told that there are no available beds in the special care unit, and that she will have to be transferred to another, far away hospital if her baby is to have a chance. A midwife offers to accompany her in the ambulance, but a wealthier couple having twins convince the midwife to stay. The ambulance ends up stuck on the journey, Effie gives birth in the ambulance, and the baby does not survive.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, Effie seeks damages from the hospital, and her lawyer assures her of a handsome payout. Yet the midwife tells Effie that the lack of special care beds was due to the cost-cutting implemented as part of government austerity measures, and if the hospital pays what Effie is seeking, that will only lead to further cuts to care, causing additional unnecessary tragedies.

Considering this, Effie decides to drop the case, letting her baby and her future stand as a sacrifice for the greater public good. In the play's closing moments, Effie leaves the audience with the question of how much longer people like her will have to withstand such cuts to their means to pursue a meaningful life, and what might happen if they refuse to take it anymore.

