

The Philomela Code (based on a shortened version)

What could Philomela do?

Prevented flight and mutilated, she
could not communicate with anyone..
spreading the Thracian web upon the loom
she wove in purple letters on white cloth
a story of the crime: and 'twas done
she gave it to her one attendant there
and begged her by appropriate signs to take
it secretly to Procne. She took the web
she carried it to Procne, with no thought
of words or messages by art conveyed

Ovid *metamorphoses*

Original text:

What can Philomela do? A guard prevents her flight; the walls of the house are hard, built of solid stone: her speechless mouth is deprived of the means of discovering the crime. But in grief there is extreme ingenuity, and inventive skill arises in misfortunes. She skilfully suspends the warp in a web of Barbarian design, and interweaves purple marks with white, as a mode of discovering the villany of *Tereus*; and delivers it, when finished, to one of her attendants, and begs her, by signs, to carry it to her mistress. As desired, she carries it to Procne, and does not know what she is delivering in it. The wife of the savage tyrant unfolds the web, and reads the mournful tale of her sister, and (wondrous that she can be so!) she is silent. 'Tis grief that stops her utterance, and words sufficiently indignant fail her tongue, in want of them; nor is there room for weeping. But she rushes onward, about to confound both right and wrong, and is wholly *occupied* in the contrivance of revenge.