

A god walks on stage, holding an apple in his hand.

POSEIDON

I am Poseidon.  
From the depths of the wine dark sea  
I have come.

My city has fallen.  
The beautiful city I built  
with my brother Apollo  
Now lies in ruins.

Troy has fallen.

For ten long years  
Crowned with gleaming towers  
Her high stone walls  
Resisted the armies of Greece gathered  
On the great plain below her.

Until she was deceived  
by a giant wooden horse.

(CHORUS walks on stage with a chair and places it on the stage.)

A giant wooden horse built  
by the armies of Greece,  
Guided by the goddess  
grey-eyed Athena,  
my niece,  
who delights in strategy and battle.

When it entered my beautiful city  
The people of Troy offered  
The giant wooden horse  
To Athena for defending them  
Against the armies of Greece.

A giant wooden horse  
Crammed with Greek soldiers.

(POSEIDON looks at his apple.)

The Greek soldiers  
Hiding in the wooden horse  
Dropped from its belly

And threw open the gates  
Of sleeping Troy.  
The waiting armies of Greece  
Rushed through her wide streets,  
Flooding my beautiful city  
With death and destruction.

(Another look at his apple)

In the temple of Zeus  
Greek soldiers slit the throat of King Priam  
and stained the pale walls with his blood.

In the shrines of the gods  
Greek soldiers profaned their sacred altars  
with the blood of men and young boys.

In the temple of Athena  
Greek soldiers violated the priestess Cassandra  
on its stone altar.

In the cemeteries of the city  
Greek soldiers defiled women and young girls  
on the tombs of their husbands and fathers.

Greek soldiers pillaged  
The wealth and beauty  
of Troy.

Greek soldiers sacked  
The glory and splendor  
of the gods.

(CHORUS walks on stage with a chair and places it on the stage.)

On the beach below,  
Groaning under the weight of their plunder  
Once hollow Greek ships wait for a following wind.  
After ten long years of war against my beautiful city  
The armies of Greece yearn to see their wives and children.

(Another look at his apple)

They are now loading the last spoils of war.  
The women of Troy.  
They have been assigned by lot to their Greek masters.

Some will be taken by the men of Arkadia  
Some by the men of Thessaly  
Some by the men of Argos  
All of them will die as slaves  
In strange lands far from Troy.

Since dawn the shore below has echoed  
With the wailing of the women of Troy.

Listen.

(SILENCE)

POSEIDON

Now there remain only the trophies of war.  
Reserved for the generals of the armies of Greece

Queen Hecuba and the priestess Cassandra  
The wife and daughter of King Priam.  
Andromache, the wife of his dead son Hector.

And Helen of Sparta, the daughter of Tyndareus  
And the wife of Menelaus.

The Trojan women wait for their new masters.  
Helen of Sparta waits for her death.  
Menelaus will punish her for betraying him  
and fleeing to Troy with Paris,  
the son of King Priam,

(POSEIDON looks at his apple)

Why did the armies of Greece  
Lay siege to Troy  
For ten long years  
to return a straying wife?

Why did the people of Troy,  
the tamers of wild horses,  
Not restore Helen to her husband  
And spare by beautiful city?

Because of the jealousy of men.  
Because of the vanity of gods.  
Because of a golden apple.

(He looks at his apple for a long moment.)

At the wedding of the mortal Peleus  
And the goddess fair-haired Thetis,  
The mother of grief bearing Achilles,  
The goddess black eyed Eris  
who delights in discord and strife,  
carved the baneful words  
“for the most beautiful one”  
on a golden apple and tossed it  
to Hera, Athena and Aphrodite.

(He holds the apple in front of him.)

Seeing what was carved on the apple,  
Each goddess claimed it as her own,  
And began to quarrel loudly over  
who was the most beautiful.

Hearing their shrill squabble  
My brother Zeus, the father of the gods,  
Told Hermes to bring the golden apple to Paris  
who tended sheep on the grassy slopes of Mount Ida,  
and to command him to judge which goddess  
was the most beautiful.

Each goddess stood naked and perfect before Paris.  
Each goddess offered the shepherd prince a gift.  
Hera offered him all the kingdoms of Greece.  
Athena offered him skill and victory in battle.  
Aphrodite offered him Helen of Sparta.

Paris gave the golden apple to Aphrodite.

The shepherd prince sailed to Sparta and brought Helen to Troy.  
Menelaus begged his brother Agamemnon,  
the king of Mycenae,  
to raise a great army  
from all the kingdoms of Greece  
to return his straying wife.

One thousand swift ships with one hundred thousand men set sail for Troy.  
For ten long years the armies of Greece laid siege to my beautiful city.  
Until yesterday.  
When they destroyed and defiled her.

(CHORUS walks on stage with a chair and places it on the stage. POSEIDON walks to the chair and looks at it a moment. He places the apple on the chair. CHORUS does not see him.)

POSEIDON

Although Athena has defeated me  
And has brought devastation to my beautiful city,  
I will punish the armies of Greece for their sacrilege.

There will be no safe passage home  
To their wives and children  
Who have waited so long for their return.

I will shake the earth and stir up the seas.  
I will split the Greek ships from stem to stern.  
And sink the armies of Greece  
Beneath towering waves.

The rocky shores of Mykonos,  
The sharp reefs of Delos and Lemnos,  
The steep cliffs of Kephareus  
Will choke with the sodden bodies of the dead.

I will drown a thousand men  
For every temple of the gods they desecrated  
For every tomb of the dead they defiled  
In my beautiful city.

(Pause)

Look at her.

(A woman in a torn dress walks stiffly on stage. She wraps her arms around herself as holding herself together. She stops abruptly and sinks silently to the floor. The god gazes at her a moment.)

Her sorrow is as great as mine.  
Hecuba.  
A queen without her king.  
A wife without her husband.  
A mother without her sons.

There are more sorrows to come.  
She does not yet know  
Greek soldiers slit the throat of her daughter Polyxena  
and poured her warm blood on the grave of Achilles.

She does not yet know  
Agamemnon, the king of the armies of Greece,  
Will drag her daughter Cassandra to his lustful bed.

She does not yet know  
Astyanax,  
the baby son of Hector and Andromache,  
The last royal son of Priam,  
will die before darkness falls.

(The god gazes at HECUBA a moment.)

The gods have abandoned Troy.  
Her people are being herded away on Greek ships.  
Nothing of her will remain.  
Only sorrow and silence.

(He gazes again at HECUBA.)

I will not yet bid farewell to her.  
I will wait until the Greek ships set sail.

(POSEIDON moves to the side of the stage and watches.)

HECUBA: Get off the ground.  
This is not Troy.  
I am not queen.

Lift your head.  
Troy is gone.  
Priam is dead.

Sit up straight.  
I am Hecuba.  
A queen without her king  
A mother without her sons  
A woman without her home.

All is destroyed.  
All is lost.  
All is changed.

What should I do?  
Should I fight?  
I cannot fight.

Should I flee?  
I cannot flee.  
Should I change?  
I cannot change.

My husband and my sons are dead.  
My city is devastated.  
Should I weep?  
I can weep.  
All I have left are my tears.

Should I keep silent?  
Should I speak?  
What for?  
Why?  
The ground is hard.  
My body aches.  
I should get up.

(HECUBA stands, almost apologetically.)

Look at the Greek ships.  
Waiting to return with Helen of Sparta  
Who seduced my son,  
Who betrayed her husband,  
Who destroyed my city.  
I will leave Troy on one of those ships.  
The slave of a Greek general.  
My head shaven  
My body bent  
My clothes torn.

(HECUBA fixes her dress.)

Who am I that I wait here?  
I who was once Queen of Troy.  
I who led the songs in the temples.  
I who led the dances in the palaces.  
Raising the scepter of Priam,  
I beat the rhythm with my foot.  
I shaped the melody with my hand.  
The swell of singing voices.  
The beat of dancing bodies.  
The song of Troy  
rising to the gods  
at my command.

(She sings softly)

Aiai Aiai Aiai.

I am Hecuba.  
I am still queen.

Aiai Aiai Aiai.

Kassandra and Polyxena.  
My daughters still live.

Aiai Aiai Aiai.

Astyanax.  
My grandson still lives.

Aiai Aiai Aiai.

Troy will rise again.  
I still have hope.

Aiai Aiai Aiai.

(CHORUS runs on with a chair. Like his queen he is dressed elegantly but his clothes are torn.)

CHORUS: My queen, my queen, my queen.

(CHORUS rushes over to her and places the chair beside her. HECUBA looks at him a moment, distracted.)

CHORUS  
I heard you singing, my queen.  
I was weeping.  
For we are slaves now.  
I am afraid.

HECUBA  
Look at the Greek ships.  
They are unfurling their sails.  
They are lowering their oars.  
They will leave soon.

CHORUS

Where will they take us?  
What will they do to us?

HECUBA

I do not know.  
I fear the worst.

CHORUS

The worst?  
What could be worse?  
We are wretched.

HECUBA

I do not know.  
We must wait.

CHORUS

I will call the others.  
We will wait with you, my queen.  
Until the worst comes.

(CHORUS goes to leave.)

HECUBA

Leave Cassandra.  
She must remain inside.  
She must rest

CHORUS

She will not let me tend her.  
She stares at the ships below.  
She whispers secret words.

HECUBA

Oh my poor daughter.  
Why did Apollo not protect you?  
Oh my poor husband.  
Why did Zeus not shield you?  
Oh my poor city.  
Why did Poseidon not defend us?  
Troy is gone.  
Suffering are we who leave you  
Both the living and the dead.

CHORUS

Our suffering will end, my queen.

HECUBA

Kassandra will never recover.  
My beautiful daughter is ruined.  
She is so fragile  
Like a broken bird.

(HECUBA begins to weep.)

HECUBA

Do not bring her out here.  
The Greek soldiers will mock her.  
I will not have her shamed again.  
I could not bear it.

CHORUS

No, my queen.

(CHORUS turns to go.)

CHORUS

What will the Greek soldiers do with us?

HECUBA

They will keep us  
As high-born slaves.  
Nursing their children.  
Raising their animals.  
We will keep watch  
by the doors of our Greek masters  
And wait for their commands.

We will be the fortunate ones.

Others will be less fortunate.

CHORUS

Whose slave shall I be, my queen?

I will not leave you.

HECUBA

We shall be together like always.  
We shall comfort one another.  
We shall endure.  
What else is there?

## CHORUS

Oh my Queen  
Never to see Troy again.  
Her great temples and her golden palaces.  
Never to see the house of my parents.  
We shall have greater sorrows than these.  
Either dragged as a wife  
to the bed of a Greek general.  
Or driven as a slave to draw water  
from the sacred springs of Corinth.  
I fear that we will be taken to Sparta  
To serve in the palace of the hated Menelaus.  
Oh my queen that we could go  
to the beautiful and sacred lands of Theseus.

(The CHORUS begins to dance.)

## CHORUS

I have heard tell  
The valley of the river Peneus in Thessaly  
The beautiful pedestal of Olympus,  
Is laden with wealth,  
And the lands are plenteous and fruitful.  
There let us go.  
This would be my second choice, my queen,  
after the beautiful and sacred lands of Theseus.

I have heard tell  
Sicily  
The land of Aetna and Hephaestus,  
Mother of the mountains,  
Across the glittering seas  
From the shining city of Carthage,  
Is famed for her crown of high peaks.  
There let us go.

I have heard tell,  
In the land of Thuri  
That lies along the Ionian sea  
The waters of the river Crathis  
Put yellow fire in your hair.  
Her sacred streams cherish the land  
And nurse a breed of brave men.  
There let us go.

## HECUBA

We will endure.  
There is always hope.  
Troy will rise again.  
We will return.

CHORUS

How shall we return, my Queen?  
We are slaves of the Greeks.

HECUBA

Astyanax.  
Prince of Troy  
He will be a noble king like Priam.  
He will rebuild our city.  
He will return our people.  
He will restore Troy.

CHORUS

We will endure.  
We will return.  
Troy will rise again.  
There is hope, my queen.

(CHORUS kisses her hand. And rushes off to fetch the other women. HECUBA sits on the chair and gazes out, entranced by a dream of the future.)

(TALTHYBIUS enters.)

TALTHYBIUS

Hecuba?  
Your highness?

(HECUBA looks at him.)

TALTHYBIUS

Talhybius.  
Your envoy.  
I have news.

(CHORUS returns with three women – all in beautiful torn dresses. One carries a small baby. HECUBA sees KASSANDRA and rises to go to her.)

HECUBA

I fear the worst.  
What is your news, envoy?

TALTHYBIUS

Agamemnon has assigned you by lot  
To your new masters.

HECUBA

We are the trophies of war.  
The prizes of victory.  
Where shall we go?  
To Thessaly?  
To Pthia?  
To Thebes?

TALTHYBIUS

Odysseus advised drawing lots  
To avoid dissent among  
the generals of the Greek armies.  
You will not stay together.  
Each of you will go  
To a different general.

KASSANDRA

I will be wed.  
I will be wed.  
I will be wed.

(HELEN laughs.)

HELEN

Who will wed you, Cassandra?  
You are mad.

HECUBA

Silence!  
Who has claimed my daughter Cassandra?

TALTHYBIUS

Kaassandra is indeed fortunate.  
Agamemnon has won her.  
She will be his concubine.

KASSANDRA

I will be wed.  
I will be wed.  
I will be wed.

HECUBA

She is a sacred virgin  
Chosen by Apollo.  
Agamemnon mocks us.  
He shames my daughter.  
He offends the gods.

TALTHYBIUS  
Agamemnon will not be denied.  
Your daughter will live in his palace.  
She will sleep in his bed and bear his children.  
It is a great honour to be the concubine of a king.

KASSANDRA  
Do not weep for me.  
I will be wed.  
I am happy.  
I will be free.

HECUBA  
What of my youngest daughter?  
Where is Polyxena?  
Who has won her?

TALTHYBIUS  
She has been assigned to serve at the tomb of Achilles.

HECUBA  
What strange Greek ritual is this?  
Where young girls serve at the tombs of dead Greek heroes?

TALTHYBIUS  
Her life is complete.  
She has no cares.

ANDROMACHE  
What of my son and me?

TALTHYBIUS  
Neoptolemus has won you.

ANDROMACHE  
I will not go.  
Anyone but him.

TALTHYBIUS

The son of Achilles is a noble warrior.  
He will make a fine husband.  
You should be thankful.

ANDROMACHE

Thankful? Thankful?  
His father killed Hector.  
I watched Achilles tie  
The body of my husband  
To the back of his chariot  
And drag him along the shore,  
Tearing his flesh on the sharp rocks.  
Achilles defiled the body of Hector.  
Now I will be whore to his son.

TALTHYBIUS

Neoptolemus could have you executed.  
And your son Astyanax.

(Pause.)

ANDROMACHE

Then I am thankful.

HECUBA

What of my grandson?  
What will happen to Astyanax?

TALTHYBIUS

He will be slave in the house of Neoptolemus.

ANDROMACHE

No.

HECUBA

Astyanax will be safe with you.  
He will still be your son.

ANDROMACHE

He will be a slave.  
I will be a whore.  
How can I protect him?

HECUBA

You must.

You are his mother.

TALTHYBIUS

It is better to be a slave than dead.

ANDROMACHE

The day a man becomes a slave

Zeus strips him of half his being.

TALTHYBIUS

Better half his being than none.

Your son will forget his father.

He will not remember this war.

He will hear of this city in stories

Told of our great victory at Troy.

He will be slave to a Greek

But he will live in a palace.

He will know no better.

ANDROMACHE

But I will.

I will.

(ANDROMACHE gets up and walks to another chair. She sits down, and begins rocking her baby, crooning gently to him.)

HECUBA

What of me, envoy?

Hecuba.

CHORUS

I am afraid, my queen.

What will become of us?

(HECUBA takes his hand.)

TALTHYBIUS

You are the most fortunate.

Odysseus has won you.

HECUBA

NO!

Odysseus is the most hated of all the Greeks.

Beloved only of the goddess Athena.

He twists everything with his deceitful tongue,  
Causing strife where before there was peace.

TALTHYBIUS

Without the quick thinking and wise counsel of Odysseus  
We would not have defeated Troy.

HECUBA

Odysseus deceived Troy.  
I will not serve in his palace.  
Anyone but him.

CHORUS

We have no choice, my queen.  
We are slaves now.  
We shall be together like always.

TALTHYBIUS

Odysseus has no use for you.

HECUBA

I have need of him.  
He will remain with me.

TALTHYBIUS

You are no longer queen.  
You are a slave, Hecuba.  
What need has a slave for another slave?

HECUBA

He is not a slave.  
He is a priest.  
You will treat him with respect.

TALTHYBIUS

What god does your slave-priest serve?

CHORUS

I serve Kybele  
Mother of us all.  
I serve Hecuba  
Queen of us all.

TALTHYBIUS

A Trojan goddess.  
Where is her temple?

CHORUS

Kybele is mother of us all.  
Mother of the sky  
Mother of the mountains  
Mother of the plains  
Mother of the seas.

HECUBA

'evoe saboe  
'evoe saboe

ANDROMACHE

'hyes attes,

KASSANDRA

attes hyes

ANDROMACHE

'hyes attes,

KASSANDRA

attes hyes

HECUBA

'evoe saboe  
'evoe saboe

CHORUS

During her festival  
We leave the city at night  
and go into the mountains.  
Where we sing

ANDROMACHE

'hyes attes,

KASSANDRA

attes hyes

HECUBA

'evoe saboe  
'evoe saboe

CHORUS

Where we dance

ANDROMACHE

'hyes attes,

KASSANDRA

attes hyes

HECUBA

'evoe saboe

'evoe saboe

CHORUS

Where we lie with one another.

ANDROMACHE

'hyes attes,

KASSANDRA

attes hyes

HECUBA

'evoe saboe

'evoe saboe

CHORUS

We offer our bodies to Kybele.

We cry out in pain and joy.

We bathe her in our sweat and blood

Like newborn children.

ANDROMACHE

'hyes attes,

KASSANDRA

attes hyes

HECUBA

'evoe saboe

'evoe saboe

TALTHYBIUS

Enough!

I have heard stories of these rites

Where Trojans lie with one another

like wild animals in heat.  
You will join the men and young boys on the shore.  
You will be assigned to a ship with the other male slaves.

(CHORUS giggles suddenly. HECUBA laughs and so do her daughters – it is sudden and strange, both fearful and relieved.)

CHORUS

I am not a man.

(TALTHYBIUS suddenly strikes him.)

CHORUS

I am not a man.

(TALTHYBIUS raises his hand to strike him again.)

HECUBA

He tells you the truth, envoy.  
He serves Kybele but he is not a man.  
To serve Kybele a man must offer her  
all that makes him a man.

(TALTHYBIUS recoils from the CHORUS.)

TALTHYBIUS

You are a half woman!

CHORUS

I am not a woman.

TALTHYBIUS

They gelded you for your Trojan goddess.  
A half woman priest.  
You disgust me.

CHORUS

It was my gift to her.  
Offered by me alone.

TALTHYBIUS

No wonder we defeated Troy.  
Your men are weak like women.  
Much worse.  
Like half-women.  
No Greek soldier would cut off

His manhood for a god.

ANDROMACHE  
He needs it to violate  
The wives and daughters  
of the men of Troy.

TALTHYBIUS  
Odysseus will decide his fate.  
You can keep your gelding priest, Hecuba.

KASSANDRA  
I will be wed.  
I will be wed.  
I will be wed.

(She takes out a Zippo lighter, and holds it aloft.)

TALTHYBIUS  
What is this?  
What is your daughter doing, Hecuba?

KASSANDRA  
I raise this torch to Apollo

HECUBA  
Kassandra....

KASSANDRA  
Mother, do not be afraid  
I will be wed to Agamemnon  
the King of the Greeks.

HECUBA  
You will not be wed.

KASSANDRA  
Mother, do not be afraid.  
Look at my torch.  
It will light my way  
to our wedding bed.

HECUBA  
My poor child.  
It is not a torch.

KASSANDRA

A Greek soldier gave it to me.

I have nothing else.

Mother, dance with me.

(HECUBA does not move. CHORUS goes to her.)

CHORUS

Give me your torch, my princess.

KASSANDRA

No, it is mine.

Mother, dance with me.

TALTHYBIUS

What is wrong with your daughter, Hecuba?

HELEN

She is mad, envoy.

HECUBA

Be quiet.

HELEN

Your daughter is mad, Hecuba.

Apollo possesses her.

I speak the truth.

HECUBA

SILENCE!

Envoy, take this woman away.

She should not be here with us.

TALTHYBIUS

It is not yet time.

KASSANDRA

Mother, dance with me.

HECUBA

I will not dance with you.

KASSANDRA

You do nothing but weep.

For my poor dead father.

For my bothers and sisters.

HECUBA

My poor daughter.  
I weep for you.

KASSANDRA

Dance with me, mother.  
Measure your steps with mine.  
Sing with me, mother.  
Raise your voice with mine.  
Sing out my joy!

Today is my wedding day.  
I will be wed to a king.  
Destiny leads me to his bed.  
Lift your feet.  
Sing out my joy!

CHORUS

Give me your torch, my princess.  
You will dance your way to the Greek camp.

HECUBA

Oh gods, you are cruel.  
You mock my daughter  
And the hopes I had so long ago.

I never thought you would celebrate  
Your wedding day on a battlefield  
Among the wounded and dead.

Your torch does not light the way  
To your wedding bed.

Do you not understand, my child?  
There will be no more weddings for us.  
Only suffering and death.

Give me your torch, Cassandra.

(KASSANDRA gives HECUBA her Zippo lighter.)

KASSANDRA

Mother, I will be wed to a king.  
Lead me to my wedding bed.  
If I resist, drive me to it.

HECUBA

I will not.

KASSANDRA

Do not be afraid.

Apollo shows me what will happen.

My wedding will be a sacrifice.

My wedding bed will be a bloody altar.

I will kill Agamemnon.

I will destroy his house.

I will avenge my father.

I will avenge my brothers.

I will avenge us all.

I will die.

My neck will be severed.

My blood will stain my wedding bed.

Others will die also.

His wife will cut down

Agamemnon with an ax.

Like a bull for sacrifice.

Her son will kill Clytemnestra

Cleaving her breast with his sword.

TALTHYBIUS

The House of Atreus is a noble one.

KASSANDRA

My wedding will destroy the House of Atreus.

Do not be afraid, mother.

Sing my joy.

Dance with me.

TALTHYBIUS

Your daughter is mad, Hecuba.

KASSANDRA

Apollo has shown me my death, envoy.

I welcome it.

I will say no more.

Mother, do not be afraid.

We are the fortunate ones.

The great plain below our city is red

With the blood of Greek soldiers

Who have lost their lives in battle  
Not to defend their cities and their homes  
but to rescue the wife of Menelaus.  
Those Greek soldiers who were killed  
Will never again see their wives and children.  
They lie buried in unmarked graves  
in a strange land far from home  
Where no one sprinkles earth  
Or the blood of sacrifice.

Do I not speak the truth, envoy?

(TALTHYBIUS is silent.)

KASSANDRA

We are the fortunate ones.  
Trojan men gave their lives,  
Their greatest glory,  
Defending our city and our homes  
From the armies of Greece.

We carried their bodies home in loving hands.  
We buried them with all the rites.  
We sang death songs over them.  
We sprinkled the gentle earth of their fathers  
On their tender graves.

Trojan men who were not killed in battle  
Lived day by day with their wives and children.  
A pleasure denied to every Greek soldiers, envoy.

Any man shrinks from war.  
Any wise man.  
But when war comes  
A noble death garlands a city with victory  
and crowns the life of a man with glory.  
An ignoble death brings only shame to both.

Do not be afraid, mother.  
Do not weep for our city.  
Do not pity my wedding bed.  
I will destroy those we hate.  
I do not fear my death.  
I welcome it with loving arms.

(KASSANDRA laughs and hugs HECUBA, who grips her fiercely.)

CHORUS

O my princess, how can you smile at your misfortune?

HECUBA

My daughter.

My poor child.

I weep for you.

KASANDRA

Hush, mother.

I am not afraid.

TALTHYBIUS

I do not know why Agamemnon wants you.

But I would not take you to my bed.

KASANDRA

Do you fear me, envoy?

TALTHYBIUS

I will not report what you have said.

Your words are meaningless.

Apollo has driven you mad.

Hecuba, be ready to leave

When Odysseus summons you.

KASSANDRA

My mother will never leave here.

My mother will die here.

HECUBA

I thank the gods.

TALTHYBIUS

Your gods have abandoned you.

You will leave here on a Greek ship.

KASSANDRA

Apollo shows me what will happen.

KASSANDRA

Odysseus will not reach home for another ten years.

His suffering will be much worse than ours.

He will lose all his ships and all his men.

He will see terrible things.  
Terrible things.  
Ten years behind him.  
Ten years before him.  
Then he will reach home.  
And find more troubles.

(KASANDRA smiles.)

KASSANDRA  
Odysseus  
He is well named.  
The hated one

I have said enough.  
Take me to my Agamemnon.  
We will be wed in the House of Death.  
They will bury the once great King of Mycenae  
Not in brightest day but in darkest night.  
They will throw my naked body  
into the cleft of a mountain  
not far from his tomb  
for wild animals to devour  
and winter rains to wash away.  
I who serve Apollo.  
A priestess.  
A virgin.

(KASSANDRA tears at her clothes.)

Off off off off  
with these flowers.  
They belong to Apollo  
I tear them from my neck.  
Let the wind carry them to you  
Up up up up  
Into the clear blue sky.  
I offer them to you.  
I serve you still.  
I serve you still.  
I serve you still.

CHORUS  
Stop, stop, my princess.  
Your beautiful dress.  
Come with me.

(CHORUS leads KASSANDRA to a chair.)

KASSANDRA

I must go to my bridegroom.  
Agamemnon is waiting for me.

TALTHYBIUS

It is not yet time.  
The ships are not ready to sail.  
All of you must be ready to leave  
When you are summoned.

(TALTHYBIUS leaves. HECUBA slumps to the ground.)

CHORUS

My queen.  
She has fallen.

(ANDROMACHE rises from her chair.)

HECUBA

Leave me.  
Your kindness would be a cruelty.  
The gods will not help us.  
They have abandoned us.  
We are alone.  
We have already suffered so much.  
How much more will we suffer?

I was happy once.  
I married a king.  
I was a queen.  
I was a mother  
Of brave sons.

I saw them all cut down in battle.  
I buried them all with my own hands.  
I sprinkled their grave with my tears.

I saw their father slaughtered.  
His throat slit like a bull for sacrifice.  
I wrapped his body in my arms.  
I washed his face with my tears.

I saw my beautiful daughters seized.

Torn from my arms.  
To be shared among Greek soldiers.  
I weep for them.

And now I wait.  
I will be taken from my city.  
A slave to Odysseus  
And his noble wife.

I who was once a queen.

I can do nothing  
But watch and weep.

(CHORUS approaches HECUBA.)

CHORUS  
Let me help you, my queen.

HECUBA  
Leave me.  
Why do you help me?  
I am a slave now.  
I sleep on the ground.  
I keep watch at the door.  
Let me waste away in my tears.  
There is only suffering.  
No man is spared until he dead.

CHORUS  
Sing me, O Muse, of Troy  
A song of mourning  
New made of our tears.

I will sing a song of Troy, my Queen,  
How that giant wooden horse  
Destroyed our city and enslaved us.  
A giant wooden horse,  
Reaching to the sky,  
Decked with gold,  
Crammed with spears,  
Was abandoned on the shore  
Below our city  
By the armies of Greece.

The people of Troy stood

On her high stone walls  
And shouted with joy,  
“Victory! Victory! Victory!  
Let us offer this sacred statue  
To the goddess Athena,  
Virgin daughter of Zeus!”  
All the young girls,  
All the old men,  
Ran from their houses,  
Rejoicing and singing.  
They seized their ruin  
With hands outstretched.

Every son and daughter of Troy  
Rushed down to the shore  
To offer this monument of wood  
With its hidden Greek ambush,  
With its terrible ruin for Troy,  
to the goddess Athena.

With ropes of spun flax they dragged  
the giant wooden horse  
like the dark hull of a ship  
To the temple of Pallas Athena  
And set it on its stone floor  
That would soon run  
With the blood of Troy.

When black night fell  
On their labour of joy  
The Libyan flute shrilled  
The drum and tambourine called.  
Young girls lifted their feet,  
And raised their voices,  
Dancing and singing songs of Troy.  
Everywhere torch fires blazed  
And the rooms in every house glowed,  
banishing sleep.

I was dancing in the temple of Pallas Athena,  
I was singing to the daughter of Zeus,  
The goddess of the hills.  
A terrible scream rang out in the city.  
A cry of blood ripped through the houses.  
Beloved young children  
Clung with frightened arms

To the skirts of their mothers.  
Greek soldiers rushed from their hiding place.  
Pallas Athena had deceived us.  
Trojan men and young boys were slaughtered  
Around the altars and in their beds.  
The desolation wrought by the Greek blade  
Brought a victory garland of young women  
To Greece to bear them children  
And a terrible grief to the land of Troy.

(The CHORUS stops dancing.)

HELEN

The gods are cruel, Hecuba.  
We are their playthings.  
The gods have destroyed your city.  
They have abandoned you.  
Nobody will help you.  
You are all alone.

CHORUS

The gods did not destroy Troy.  
Men did.  
For a woman.  
For you.

HELEN

They did not destroy your city for me.

HECUBA

One thousand ships.  
One hundred thousand men.  
They came for you.

HELEN

They did not destroy your city for me.  
Do you see the Greek ships?  
They groan under the weight  
Of the wealth of Troy.  
The jewel of Phrygia.  
Your city is well named, Hecuba.  
The armies of Greece did not come for me.

ANDROMACHE

You lie.  
They came for you.

HELEN

Me?

A mere woman?

I am not so valuable.

ANDROMACHE

She lies.

They came for her!

HELEN

Menelaus has vowed to punish me.

For betraying him.

I am waiting here for my death.

Why would I lie?

SILENCE

ANDROMACHE

It is because of you

Our city was destroyed.

It is because of you

My husband is dead.

It is because of you

I will be a whore.

It is because of you

My son will be a slave.

You deserve to die.

For what you have done.

HELEN

I have done nothing.

Paris took me.

He brought me to Troy.

He wed me.

What did you do?

Nothing.

When Menelaus came

Did you release me?

When the war began

Did you help me escape?

You watched.

You waited.

You wept.

But you did nothing.

I did not destroy your city.

I did not kill your husband.  
I did not kill your son.  
You did.  
You all did.

HECUBA  
SILENCE!  
FETCH THE ENVOY!  
TAKE HER AWAY!

(CHORUS moves to leave.)

ANDROMACHE  
Wait.  
When Paris was born  
Why did you not kill him?

HECUBA  
He was my son.

ANDROMACHE  
But it was foretold.  
Before Paris was born  
You dreamed of a flaming torch.  
It filled the city with blazing fire.

HECUBA  
It was a dream.

ANDROMACHE  
It was foretold.  
The gods warned you.  
You did not heed them.

HECUBA  
Paris was my son.  
What would you have done?

(Pause)

ANDROMACHE.  
Troy lies in ruins, Hecuba.  
Because of your son.

HECUBA  
The gods have abandoned us.

They hurl us to the ground.  
They raise the Greeks to the skies.  
I see their game.  
They are playing with us.  
Why do they not kill us?  
Our fate is to suffer.  
Killing us would be a kindness.

ANDROMACHE  
Do you see what is happening?  
Achilles killed my husband.  
I will be a whore to his son.  
Astyanax will be his slave.  
Your grandson.  
Because of Paris.

HECUBA  
I loved Paris.  
I loved Hector.  
I have lost them both.  
I would not kill one to spare the other.  
I am their mother.  
A mother does not kill her children.

(SILENCE)

ANDROMACHE  
Polyxena is dead.

HECUBA  
No.

ANDROMACHE  
Your daughter is dead, Hecuba.

(HECUBA begins to weep.)

HECUBA  
No.

ANDROMACHE  
She was butchered on the tomb of Achilles.

HECUBA  
No.  
That is what the envoy meant.

I knew she was dead.  
I did not want to listen.

ANDROMACHE  
The Greek soldiers poured her blood on his grave.

HECUBA  
Polyxena,  
my poor daughter.  
Where is her body?  
We must bury her.

ANDROMACHE  
I saw her lying on his tomb  
On my way here.  
Staked like a hide in the sun.  
I begged the Greek soldiers  
To let me cover her body.

HECUBA  
A blood offering to Achilles.  
Even in death he defiles the bodies of my children.  
Polyxena,  
I weep for your brutal death.  
My poor child.

ANDROMACHE  
I washed her face with my tears.  
I sang a death song for her.  
I offered a prayer to the gods.  
I covered her body.  
One of the Greek soldiers gave me his cloak.

HECUBA  
I thank the gods  
For their kindness.  
It sweetens their cruelty  
Like a blade dipped in honey.  
Polyxena, my child.  
You will suffer no more.

ANDROMACHE  
I envy her.

HECUBA  
No.

ANDROMACHE

I envy her.  
She is dead.  
I still live.

HECUBA

No, Andromache.

ANDROMACHE

Her suffering is over.  
Her life is complete.

HECUBA

My child is gone.  
Your son still lives.  
Death is blindness.  
An empty endless night.  
We have sight and daylight.  
We still have hope, Andromache.

ANDROMACHE

Listen to me, Hecuba.  
The dead feel no pain.  
No fear. No sorrow.  
We have lost everything.  
What we once had.  
What we once were.  
Nothing remains.  
Only our sorrow and our memories.  
We would be happier dead.  
It would be better  
To never have been born.

HECUBA

I do not envy Polyxena.  
I gave birth to her.  
I watched her grow.  
She was beautiful.  
Her life was cut short.  
I weep for my child  
I hope her death was quick.  
A full life is better than empty death.  
Living is better than nothingness.

ANDROMACHE

I was a good wife.  
I loved Hector.  
He was noble and brave.  
He was a good husband.  
He was loyal and true.  
When the armies of Greece  
Gathered on the wide plain  
Below our city.  
I begged him not to fight.  
When their husbands and sons  
Were killed in battle  
Other women cursed me.  
Hector never said a word.  
But I saw the pain in his eyes.  
He remained by my side.  
But I knew.

HECUBA

Our soldiers needed him, Andromache.

ANDROMACHE

When I handed him his sword  
He smiled and kissed me.  
I sent him into battle  
I sent him to his death  
Because I loved him.

HECUBA

It was your duty, Andromache.

ANDROMACHE

I was a good wife.  
I kept my house in order.  
I treated my slaves well.  
I obeyed my husband.  
I was a faithful wife.  
My eyes did not stray.  
My tongue did not wag.  
I bore Hector a son.  
I did my duty.  
But I also loved him.

HECUBA

My son was a good man.

ANDROMACHE

I was a virgin when we wed.

I wept

When he took me to his bed.

He was gentle.

I was a young girl.

He was very patient.

(ANDROMACHE laughs.)

ANDROMACHE

I loved Hector.

He was my life.

He is gone now.

I love him still.

I remember his smell.

I remember his touch.

I remember his smile.

All I have left of him  
are memories and remorse.  
I have nothing else.

(SILENCE)

HECUBA

You have your son.

You have Astyanax.

ANDROMACHE

When I look at my son

I see Hector.

His blue eyes.

His sturdy legs.

His gentle mouth.

His strong back.

HECUBA

Astyanax will be brave.

Like his father.

ANDROMACHE

He is not Hector.  
He is my son.

When I look at him  
I see what I once was  
And what we have lost.

When I look at him  
I see what I will become  
And what more we will suffer.

I still envy Polyxena.  
You weep for you daughter.  
But my loss is worse than yours.  
You still have hope.  
I will not delude myself.

HECUBA  
Enough. Andromache!  
You will do your duty.

ANDROMACHE  
Tell me, Hecuba.  
What is my duty?  
I no longer know.  
Tell me what to do.

HECUBA  
Raise Astyanx to be a great warrior like his father.  
He will grow strong and fearless like Hector.  
He will gather an army and destroy the Greeks.  
He will rebuild Troy and return our people.  
Honour your husband. Rear your son  
These are the duties of a wife and a mother.

ANDROMACHE  
I am afraid, Hecuba.  
If I defy Neoptolemus, he will kill us both.  
If I yield to him, I will betray Hector.  
They say it takes only one night  
For a woman to yield to a man.  
Her body betrays her  
For its own pleasures.  
She forgets herself.  
Is it true?

SILENCE

ANDROMACHE

Tell me.

HELEN

Yes.

HECUBA

No.

HELEN

It depends on the man.

HECUBA

It depends on the woman.

ANDROMACHE

I feel disgust for the woman  
Who betrays her husband  
To lie down with another man.  
I am afraid of what I will do.

HELEN

You are still a young girl.  
You know nothing of the world.

ANDROMACHE

I know I will not betray Hector.  
I will not forget him.  
Whatever happens.

HELEN

You have no choice.  
You are a woman.

HECUBA

You must protect your son.  
Hector is dead.  
Astyanax lives.

I refuse to drown  
In the waves of misery  
The gods sweep over me.  
I still have hope.  
If I did not

I would sink without a word  
Beneath the surge of my sorrows.

Forget Hector.  
My son is gone  
Our tears will not bring him back.

I see the envoy returning.

Your duty is to your son.  
No harm must come to him.  
Wed Neoptolemus.  
Be a good wife to him.  
Astyanax will destroy him.  
He will avenge us all.

ANDROMACHE  
I will be a good mother  
To my son.  
For Hector.

(TALTHYBIUS arrives.)

HECUBA  
Is it time to leave, envoy?

TALTHYBIUS  
The Council has ordered me to take Astyanax.

ANDROMACHE  
To a different master?

TALTHYBIUS  
No Greek will ever be his master

HECUBA  
Have you decided to leave him here?

ANDROMACHE  
He must remain with his mother, envoy.

TALTHYBIUS  
Your grandson is a threat, Hecuba

HECUBA

Do the Greeks fear a baby?

TALTHYBIUS

He will grow into a man.

ANDROMACHE

He will be a slave.

In the house of Neoptolemus.

He is no threat.

TALTHYBIUS

He is the son of Hector

Hero of Troy.

The grandson of Priam.

King of Troy.

ANDROMACHE

Astyanax is a baby.

What harm can he do?

TALTHYBIUS

The vote went with Odysseus.

The Council fears what he will become.

A new hero of Troy.

He will raise an army and destroy us.

(SILENCE)

HECUBA

What will happen to him?

TALTHYBIUS

I have been ordered to kill him.

ANDROMACHE

No

TALTHYBIUS

I have been ordered to take him

To the top of the highest tower/

ANDROMACHE

No.

TALTHYBIUS

And hurl his body  
From the walls of Troy.

HECUBA  
NO!  
You cannot do this, envoy.

TALTHYBIUS  
I have my orders.

HECUBA  
Look at him!  
He is only a baby.

TALTHYBIUS  
The Council has voted.  
I have my orders.

HECUBA  
I will not allow it.  
Look at him!

TALTHYBIUS  
I am a soldier.  
I have no choice.

HECUBA  
You are a murderer, envoy.  
What you are doing is wrong.

TALTHYBIUS  
In war there is no right and no wrong.  
There is only what is necessary.  
I have my orders.

HECUBA  
Have you no pity, envoy?  
No shame?

TALTHYBIUS  
I no longer know  
Why we came to Troy.  
Why we fought for ten years.  
They tell me it was for a woman.  
For her?  
Thousands of men have died for her.

For a woman?  
No.  
I do not understand.

This has been a terrible war.  
The things I have seen here  
The things I have done here  
Will chase me to my grave.

I have my orders.  
Give me your son.  
His death will be quick.

(ANDROMACHE hugs her baby fiercely.)

TALTHYBIUS  
Give him to me, Andromache.  
Your husband is dead.  
Your city is destroyed.  
There is no one to help you.

ANDROMACHE  
I am his mother.

TALTHYBIUS  
There is nothing you can do.

ANDROMACHE  
He is my son.

TALTHYBIUS  
There is nothing you can do.

ANDROMACHE  
I must protect him.

TALTHYBIUS  
I do not want to take him from you.

(ANDROMACHE hugs him tighter.)

ANDROMACHE  
Astyanax.  
My beautiful son.  
You are so like Hector.  
Those eyes.

That mouth.  
But he is gone.  
No one will protect us.  
There is only me now.

(ANDROMACHE kisses him.)

ANDROMACHE  
My brave boy.  
I am here.  
I will protect you.  
Don't be afraid.

(ANDROMACHE hugs him even tighter.)

ANDROMACHE  
Don't cry, my sweet baby.  
There is nothing more to fear now.  
No more pain.  
No more sorrow.  
No more suffering.  
You are free.  
Sleep well, my love.

(ANDROMACHE kisses him.)

TALTHYBIUS  
Give him to me, Andromache.

(ANDROMACHE kisses him one last time. She covers his head with his swaddling.)

ANDROMACHE  
Take him.  
He is sleeping.  
Do it quickly.

(TALTHYBIUS takes the baby. He is about to lift the swaddling.)

ANDROMACHE  
Let him sleep.  
It is better this way.  
Please go.

(TALTHYBIUS looks at her a moment.)

TALTHYBIUS

I will let him sleep.

HECUBA

Let me look him one last time.

ANDROMACHE

No, Hecuba.

He is sleeping.

It is better this way.

Take him away, envoy.

(TALTHYBIUS leaves.)

HECUBA

Astyanax.

Son of my son.

Torn from us.

A sleeping baby

Taken for slaughter.

By hate filled men.

What can I do?

Strike my breast?

Beat my head?

Weep useless tears?

Nothing more.

Farwell my child.

Farewell my city.

All hope is gone.

Our destruction is complete.

CHORUS

O Telamon, king of bee-nurturing Salamis,

Who lived on a wave washed island

That nestles under the sacred hill

Where the shoot of the grey-green olive

Was first revealed by Athena.

A divine garland of glory for shining Athens.

You came, you came, you came here

On a great expedition with Herakles,

the archer son of Alcmena

To sack Troy.

Our beautiful city of Troy.

Herakles brought with him soldiers,

The finest flower of Greece.  
And over the sea they came.  
In the mouth of the Samoia  
With its sweet waters  
They let go of their sea oars  
And tied ropes to their sterns.  
Herakles released his unerring arrows  
And brought death to Laomedon  
Who had cheated him of his prize,  
The divine horses of Zeus,  
When he rescued fair eyed Hesione,  
From the sea monster of Poseidon.  
With the red breath of fire  
Herakles destroyed  
The high stone walls of the city  
That Poseidon had raised  
And he ravaged the land of Troy.

Twice have the high stone walls of Troy fallen.  
Twice has the bloody spear struck her down.

O son of Laomedon,  
You who walk with delicate step  
Among wine cups of gold.  
O Ganymede,  
You who fill the wine-cup Zeus holds.  
Your most noble service is in vain.

The land that gave you birth burns with fire.  
The shore by the sea is wailing  
Like a bird screaming over her young.  
Wailing for husbands, for children  
For aged mothers who gave them birth.  
The watering places where you bathed  
The race courses where you ran  
Are all gone now.

Yet by the throne of Zeus  
You keep your young face,  
Serene and calm  
As the Greek spear destroys  
the land of Priam.

Eros, Eros, Eros  
You once came to the halls of Troy,  
Troubling the minds of the gods.

How greatly you exalted Troy in those days,  
Binding her fast to the gods with wedding ties

Of Zeus and his shame, I shall say no more.  
But the love the gods once held for Troy  
Is now fled and gone.

(SILENCE. Someone approaches. MENELAUS arrives – a little drunk.)

MENELAUS  
What a glorious day!  
Today I will claim my wife.  
My queen  
My Helen.  
After so many years  
so many troubles  
so many battles  
I Menelaus have arrived.

HELEN  
Menelaus  
My husband  
My love

(MENELAUS ignores her. He addresses HECUBA instead.)

MENELAUS  
I did not come to Troy  
Because of her.  
A beautiful woman.  
I came here  
Because of a man.  
A deceitful man  
Who came to my house  
And stole my wife.  
My queen.  
But the gods have smiled on me.  
The man is dead.  
His city is destroyed.  
I am here to claim my wife.  
My... I cannot say her name.  
My whore.  
What a glorious day!

HECUBA

What will you do to her, Menelaus?

MENELAUS

I have not yet decided.  
The Council gave her to me to punish.  
I will bring her home to Sparta  
If I do not kill her here.  
I will hand her over to the people.  
They will stone her to death.  
Her blood will atone for the loss  
Of their loved ones at Troy.

HECUBA

I thank the gods.  
You are a just man.  
Listen to the gods, Menelaus.  
They will guide you.

MENELAUS

What do you mean?

HECUBA

I approve of your decision.  
Kill your wife, Menelaus.  
Let the gods guide you.  
Do not let her near you.  
She is a liar and a whore.  
She will enthrall you.  
She steals the eyes of men.  
She destroys cities.  
We know well, you and I  
What she can do.

(HELEN laughs.)

HELEN

Am I witch, Hecuba?

HECUBA

You cast spells  
With your beauty.  
You enslave men  
with your body.

HELEN

Did I enslave *your* husband, Hecuba?

HECUBA

Priam was an old man.  
He looked at you  
And was young again.  
Kill her, Menelaus.  
Now.

HELEN

You must hate me, husband.

MENELAUS

You are a whore.

(MENELAUS looks a way.)

HELEN

I am not a whore, Menelaus.  
Paris stole me from you.

HECUBA

NO!  
She lies.

MENELAUS

SILENCE!  
My people will punish her.  
I have made my decision.  
I told you, Hecuba.

HECUBA

The gods will guide you.

HELEN

At least let me speak.  
I will show you  
how if you kill me  
I will die unjustly.

MENELAUS

No.  
I came here to punish you.  
Not to argue.

HELEN

I am innocent, Menelaus.

(HECUBA laughs.)

HECUBA

Let her speak.

At least that.

She should not die

Unheard.

I will speak as well.

I will show you

The wrongs she has done.

Everything I say

Will call for her death.

MENELAUS

I will let her speak, Hecuba

Because you have asked me.

Not as a favour to her.

We will punish her together

For what she has done.

HELEN

I will argue for my life.

You hate me, Menelaus.

Even if you think I speak

The truth or not

You will not believe me.

But everything I say

Will call for my release.

I know your mind, husband.

I will answer what I think

You would say if you spoke to me.

You will hear my wrongs

as well as your own.

Who began these troubles?

Hecuba.

When she gave birth to Paris.

Priam.

When he refused to kill the baby

Even though he was warned

His son would burn Troy.

You brought ruin to Troy and to me.

What happened next?  
They sent Paris away  
To herd sheep on Mount Ida.

What happened next?  
Zeus asked this shepherd prince  
To judge which goddess  
was the most beautiful.  
Hera, Athena or Aphrodite?

What happened next?  
Standing naked and perfect before him  
Each offered Paris a gift.  
Hera offered him all the kingdoms of Greece.  
Athena offered him skill and victory in battle.  
Aphrodite offered him Helen of Sparta.

(HECUBA laughs.)

HELEN  
The goddess offered me, Menelaus.  
A woman.  
Your queen.  
Your wife.

What happened next?  
Paris chose Aphrodite.

What would have happened  
If Paris had chosen Hera?

What would have happened  
If he had chosen Athena?

The shepherd prince  
Would have conquered all  
The kingdoms of Greece  
With a goddess at his side.  
You would be a slave, husband.  
To the man you hate.

When Paris chose Aphrodite  
All Greece was spared.  
And I was ruined.

I was bartered for my beauty.  
Now I am to be punished  
When I should rewarded  
With a garland of victory.

Is that what you are thinking?

No.

(SILENCE)

HELEN  
Why did you leave our home?

MENELAUS  
Yes.

HELEN  
Why did you flee our country?

MENELAUS  
Yes.

HELEN  
Why?

MENELAUS  
Yes

HELEN  
Because of *him*.  
The son of Hecuba.  
I was his prize.  
What power had I,  
A woman,  
Against Aphrodite  
Who walked beside him?

And where were you, my husband?  
You set sail for Crete to hunt wild boar.  
You left him alone with me in our palace.

I will not ask you why you left.  
I will ask myself why I went with him.  
Why did I abandon  
My husband and my home

For this stranger?

MENELAUS

Yes!

HELEN

Was I mad?

Yes.

Was I possessed?

Yes.

By a goddess.

By Aphrodite.

Punish her.

Be mightier than Zeus,

Master of all the gods,

But not of her.

He is her slave.

Do not punish me, Menelaus.

What are you thinking now?

Why did I stay in Troy after Paris was killed in battle?

MENELAUS

Yes.

HELEN

Why did I not escape when Aphrodite

no longer cared who was in my bed?

MENELAUS

Yes.

HELEN

I should have fled back to you, my husband.

I tried to escape many times.

The guards in the palace.

The sentries at the gates.

They are my witnesses.

Ask them how many times

They caught me trying to escape,

A rope wrapped around my body,

Climbing down the high stone walls.

(HECUBA laughs.)

HECUBA

But I was kept prisoner.  
By her.  
These Trojan women did not help me.  
Nobody did.

So why do you punish me, my husband?  
I have lived as a slave in Troy.  
Without joy or hope.  
Only bitter suffering.  
My ruin spared Greece.

Am I now to die at your hands?  
Is that right? Is that just?  
No.  
So why, my husband?  
Are you above the gods?  
Or is it just your vanity?

Release me, Menelaus.  
I want to come home.

CHORUS

You must defend your children, my queen.  
You must defend you country.  
Her words are treacherous.  
She lies so sweetly and so well.  
That is a dangerous thing.

HECUBA

Listen to me carefully, Menelaus.  
Let the gods guide you.  
Do not be deceived by her lies.

First let me defend the goddesses.  
Neither Hera nor Athena  
Would ever betray Greece to Troy.  
They have abandoned Troy  
to *you*.

Why would they go to Mount Ida?  
What need have they of beauty prizes?  
Would Hera find a better husband than Zeus?  
Father of the Gods?  
Would Athena give up her sacred virginity  
A gift from Zeus

For a husband?

You make fools of the gods.  
To hide your own treachery.  
No one believes you.  
You are a liar and a whore.

This is what happened.  
My son was young.  
He was beautiful.

You saw my son and you desired him.  
It was your lust that possessed you.  
Not Aphrodite.  
Men always blame Aphrodite  
when they stray from their wives.

You saw his dark skin.  
His black eyes.  
His young body.  
There was no one like him in Sparta.  
Your husband paled beside him.  
This beautiful stranger.

You dreamed of Troy.  
The Jewel of Phrygia.  
With her great temples.  
Her golden palaces.  
Her wide streets.  
So different from Sparta.  
Its temples were small.  
Its palace was poor.  
Its streets were narrow.

My son was beautiful.  
Troy was magnificent.  
So you escaped Sparta.

Who in Sparta saw you dragged away?  
No one.  
Who in Sparta heard you cry out?  
No one.

My son did not steal you.  
You seduced him.  
My beautiful son.

You fled to Troy.  
With your husband  
and one hundred thousand Greek soldiers  
in hot pursuit.  
And this terrible war began.  
This is what happened.

You brought death and destruction  
To my city and to my country.  
This is what happened.

Each time news came of a Greek victory in battle  
You would praise Menelaus to shame my son.

Each time news came of a Trojan victory in battle  
You would praise Paris to dishonor your husband.

Whatever happened on the battlefield  
You always chose the winning side.

Now you talk of trying to escape  
Of climbing down ropes  
From the high stone walls of Troy.

(HECUBA laughs.)

HECUBA  
Who saw you?  
No one.

No one ever saw you  
Tying a noose around your neck  
Or sharpening a knife  
As any good woman,  
As any noble queen,  
As any loyal wife,  
Should do if she loved  
The husband she had lost.

How many times did I tell you to leave?  
How many times did I say,  
“Go, my daughter?  
My son will find another wife.  
I will help you escape Troy.  
Return to your husband

And end this terrible war.”

(HELEN laughs.)

HECUBA

But you did not want to leave Troy  
You enjoyed life in her great temples and golden palaces.  
You liked the way Trojan men,  
Young and old, fell at you feet.  
You loved the attention.  
Look at you now.  
Look at the dress you wear.  
Look at your jewels.

Why do you stand before your husband?  
You should kneel before him.  
Head bowed.  
Begging for your life  
For all the wrongs  
That you have done.

Where is your humility?  
Where is your shame?  
I see only deceit and vanity.  
You are a liar and a whore.  
Kill her, Menelaus.  
Her death will crown your victory.  
You honour requires it.  
Justice demands it.  
Make a new law for all women.  
Death to her who betrays her husband.

CHORUS

King Menelaus  
Be worthy of your ancestors.  
Be noble in the eyes of your enemies.  
For the honour of your House.  
Punish your wife.

MENELAUS

I see her as you do.  
She is a liar and a whore.  
She fled my house  
For the bed of another man.  
A guest in my house.  
Because she wanted him.

A stranger.  
All her talk of Aphrodite.  
Only words.  
Empty words.  
Nothing more.

(To HELEN)

I have decided.  
You will leave this place.  
My men are waiting for you  
On the shore below.  
In their hands are stones.  
They will punish you  
For all the wrongs you have done.  
Your death is a small price to pay.  
You will dishonour me no more.

HECUBA

Let the gods guide you, Menelaus.  
Let the gods guide you.

(HELEN slowly kneels before him)

HELEN

No, Menelaus, no.  
Look at me, my husband.  
I am on my knees before you.  
My head is bowed.  
Do not punish me, Menelaus.  
Forgive me, my love.

MENELAUS

My Helen.

HECUBA

DO NOT LOOK AT HER!  
Remember the men who fought beside you.  
Remember the men who died beside you.  
Do not betray them.  
The Greeks called you woman  
They shamed you for what she did to you.  
Do not let her dishonour you again.

MENELAUS

Silence!  
She is nothing to me.  
I have decided.  
She will not die here.  
She will be taken to my ship.  
She will be kept there until we sail for home.  
She will be punished in Sparta.  
By my people.

HECUBA  
Do not let her set foot on your ship.  
Do not let her sail with you.

MENELAUS  
What is wrong?  
Is she too heavy for my ship?

(MENELAUS laughs.)

HECUBA  
Once a lover, always a lover.

MENELAUS  
But not after the love is lost.  
I will do as you ask.  
She will not sail with me on my ship.  
She will be punished in Sparta.  
A cruel and hard death.  
It will be a lesson to all wives  
Who betray their husbands.  
It will teach all women  
not to stray from their homes.  
Not an easy lesson but a necessary one.

(MENELAUS helps HELEN from the ground)

MENELAUS  
You will be brought to one of my ships when the time is right.

HELEN  
Yes, my king.

(HELEN drops her head, and looks at the ground. MENELAUS hesitates and then leaves. HELEN lifts her head, and watches him leave.)

(SILENCE.)

HECUBA

You will pay for your crimes.  
 Your husband will punish you.  
 The gods will guide him.  
 They are cruel but they are just.  
 You will die, Helen.  
 You will die.

CHORUS

O Zeus, you have betrayed us to the Greeks.  
 You have deserted your temple in Troy.  
 The stone altar laden with incense.  
 The flames from sacrificial cakes.  
 The smoke of myrrh borne on the air.  
 You have abandoned sacred Pergamum.  
 The valleys of Ida, abundant with ivy  
 Ida, where the river runs swollen with melted snow  
 Ida, where the sky comes to an end.  
 The sacred ground that catches  
 the radiant light of the first shafts of the sun.

Gone are the sacrifices and the songs of choruses,  
 Gone are the festivals of the gods in the darkness of night  
 Gone are the statues wrought of gold.  
 I wonder, o Zeus, I wonder whether you see these things  
 As you sit on your throne in Olympus  
 While my city perishes.

Oh my love  
 You wander in the house of death  
 Unburied and unsung  
 While I will be taken  
 by a swift ship with flashing oars  
 To Sparta  
 The land of wild horses  
 Where men dwell in the high walls of stone  
 Built by the Cyclops.

At the gates of Troy,  
 Beloved children cling with frightened arms  
 To the skirts of their mothers.  
 Weeping and wailing, a young girl cries,  
 "Mother, o mother, the Greeks are taking me  
 Away from your eyes to their dark ships.  
 Flashing oars will carry me to sacred Salamis

Or to the headland between the two seas,  
Where stand the gates to the citadel of Pelops.”

Oh may a blaze of lightning  
Hurled by Zeus  
Fall on the flashing oars of his ship  
When Menelaus crosses the open sea,  
Taking me in tears from the land of Troy  
As a slave to Greece.  
While Helen gazes in mirrors of gold.  
Oh may he never reach Sparta  
Or the hearth and home of his fathers  
Menelaus has taken his straying wife  
Who brought shame on mighty Greece,  
And suffering and sorrow to Troy.

(TALTHYBIUS arrives, carrying the baby ASTYANAX. He is pale as he approaches ANDROMACHE and hands her the baby. She takes him and presses him gently to her breast.)

CHORUS

After one woe comes another.  
Astyanax is dead.  
The Greeks have killed him.  
Hurling him with hate  
From the high stone walls Troy  
To the sharp rocks below.

ANDROMACHE

My son.

(ANDROMACHE begins weeping.)

ANDROMACHE

My beautiful son.

(Suddenly TALTHYBIUS slaps her across the face. ANDROMACHE looks defiantly at him.)

ANDROMACHE

I am his mother.

HECUBA

Envoy!

TALTHYBIUS

Her son is dead.

HECUBA  
You murdered him.

TALTHYBIUS  
I did not kill him.

HECUBA  
He lives?  
The gods are just.  
Let me see him.

(HECUBA moves to take the baby from ANDROMACHE, who clutches him tighter).

ANDROMACHE  
No.

TALTHYBIUS  
He is dead.  
Andromache killed him.

(SILENCE)

ANDROMACHE  
Yes.  
I am his mother.

HECUBA  
You killed him?  
He is dead?

ANDROMACHE  
He is free.  
No more fear  
No more pain.  
No more sorrow.  
No more suffering.  
He sleeps.  
He will never wake.

(HECUBA sinks to the ground. The CHORUS rushes to her.)

CHORUS  
My Queen.

HECUBA

Leave me.

There is nothing left.

All hope is gone.

There is only death.

TALTHYBIUS

I carried him towards the high stone walls.

He was so quiet in my arms.

I lifted his woolen blanket.

I pinched his sturdy leg.

He would not wake.

His body was so still.

His eyes were closed.

I stroked his pale cheeks

I kissed his blue lips.

I held him to my chest.

He would not wake.

(He begins to weep.)

I was afraid.

I had my orders.

I am a soldier.

I carried his small body

To the top of the high stone walls.

The armies of Greece

were gathered on the plain below.

Silent and waiting.

A hawk circled above my head.

The wind dropped.

I held his small body in my hands.

I raised my arms.

The hawk screamed.

And I let him fall.

The soldiers below me roared.

Their voices crashed over me like a wave.

I looked at my hands.

They were empty.

His small body was gone

(He begins to shake.)

TALTHYBIUS  
You killed him, Andromache.

ANDROMACHE  
I am his mother.  
A mother protects her son.

TALTHYBIUS  
You killed him!

ANDROMACHE  
HE WAS MY SON!

SILENCE

ANDROMACHE  
You were going to harm him.  
To hurl him on the rocks below.  
I am his mother.  
I had no choice.  
Like you, envoy.  
Like you.

(TALTHYBIUS staggers under words.)

ANDROMACHE  
My son is dead.  
I weep for him.  
But he is safe from harm.  
I will bury his body beside Hector.  
I will sing death songs.  
I will leave this place.  
My son will stay here  
He will sleep in the arms of his father.  
In the House of Death.  
Never to wake.

(ANDROMACHE sits on a chair and hugs her dead son. HECUBA sits beside and holds her hand. KASSANDRA kneels in front of her, and strokes her knee. They weep quietly. The CHORUS stands beside them protectively. TALTHYBIUS watches them.)

TALTHYBIUS  
For ten long years I have watched

The great plain shake  
with death and destruction.  
Its red earth churning  
With the bodies of men  
killing and screaming  
and dying.

But there is glory in battle.  
I am a soldier.  
I understand.  
But today.  
In this place.  
I do not understand.

There is no glory here.  
There is only madness and death  
without meaning.  
I fear Troy.  
This is a terrible place.  
It should be burned to the ground.  
Nothing of it should remain.

(ODYSSEUS arrives.)

ODYSSEUS  
Where is she?

(HECUBA stands.)

HECUBA  
Odysseus

(He bows his head.)

ODYSSEUS  
Queen Hecuba.  
Where is Andromache?

HECUBA  
What do you want with her?

ODYSSEUS  
The Council demanded the death of Astyanax  
Because it feared he would grow into a man.  
Now the Generals fear Andromache,  
The Trojan mother who killed her own son.

Where is she, Hecuba?

(ANDROMACHE stands.)

ODYSSEUS

I salute you, Andromache.  
The brave and loyal wife of Hector.  
You are a worthy prize indeed  
For the son of Achilles.

But now Neoptolemus fears you.  
Will you kill the children you bear him?  
Will you slit his throat as he lies sleeping?

ANDROMACHE

Yes.

(ODYSSEUS laughs.)

ODYSSEUS

You are a remarkable woman, Andromache.  
The Generals fear you more than Hector.  
The Hero of Troy.

ANDROMACHE

I am not a soldier.  
I am a mother.  
I protected my son.

ODYSSEUS

Are all Trojan women like you, Andromache?

ANDROMACHE

Why did you order the death of my son?

ODYSSEUS

Astyanax would grow into a man.  
A great warrior like his father.  
He would gather an army  
And conquer all the kingdoms of Greece.  
I did not want to kill your son.  
But I could not let him live.

We did what was necessary, Andromache.  
I destroyed a symbol.  
You protected your son.

The last royal son of Priam is dead.  
Your defeat is absolute.  
Our victory is complete.  
You will make a fine wife to Neoptolemus.

ANDROMACHE

I will slit his throat as he sleeps.

ODYSSEUS

You will not.  
You are not a killer.

(ANDROMACHE is quiet.)

ODYSSEUS

You are a good woman, Andromache.

TALTHYBIUS

Sir, she must be punished.

ODYSSEUS

It is you who should be punished, soldier.  
Astyanax was already dead.  
Your orders were to kill him.  
The Armies of Greece saw him fall to the rocks below.  
The last royal son of Troy.  
That is the story that will be told of this day.  
That is what will be remembered.  
That is all that matters.

SILENCE

ODYSSEUS

Hector and her son are dead.  
Neoptolemus will wed her.  
She will bear his children.  
She will die in a strange land.  
Far from her native home.  
Is that not punishment enough?

TALTHYBIUS

Sir, yes sir.

ODYSSEUS

Your ship is ready to leave, Andromache.  
Take her away, soldier.

HECUBA  
No.

ANDROMACHE  
Let me bury my son before I leave.

ODYSSEUS  
Your son will be buried.  
Take her away.

(ANDROMACHE kisses her baby, and hands him to HECUBA, who begins to weep. She kisses ANDROMACHE on the forehead. TALTHYBIUS begins to drag her away.)

HECUBA  
My poor child.

ANDROMACHE  
Farewell, sister.

KASSANDRA  
Farewell, sister.

CHORUS  
My princess.

(As ANDROMACHE is being dragged away.)

ANDROMACHE  
Bury Astyanax beside Hector.  
He will watch over him.  
Wrap him tightly.  
Sing to him.  
Cover him gently.  
Let him sleep without end.

(ANDROMACHE is gone.)

HELEN  
Why did you not kill Andromache, Odysseus?

(ODYSSEUS smiles.)

ODYSSEUS  
You are still as clever as you are beautiful, Helen,



HELEN

You are still as devious as you are cunning.  
Why did you not kill her, Odysseus?

ODYSSEUS

When I saw her I knew.  
Neoptolemus had nothing  
To fear from Andromache.

HELEN

Andromache hates him.  
His father killed Hector.

ODYSSEUS

She will not kill him.

HELEN

She killed her son.

ODYSSEUS

She did not kill Astyanax out of hate.

HELEN

What then?

ODYSSEUS

Love.  
She killed her son out of love.

(HELEN looks at him and laughs.)

ODYSSEUS

Andromache is not like you, Helen.  
She is a loyal wife and a dutiful mother.  
She loves her husband and her son.  
She is a good woman.

HELEN

Like your wife.

(ODYSSEUS looks at her.)

ODYSSEUS

Like Penelope.  
I will see her soon.  
And my son.

Telemachus.  
It has been too long.  
He will be a man soon.

(TALTHYBIUS returns.)

TALTHYBIUS  
General Menelaus has ordered me  
To bring his wife to his ship.  
He is ready to set sail.

HECUBA  
Envoy, you are mistaken.

TALTHYBIUS  
His orders were quite clear.

HECUBA  
No, we had an agreement.  
She would not sail with him on his ship.

(HELEN looks at HECUBA.)

HELEN  
The journey to Greece is a long one, Hecuba.

(HECUBA falls back in her chair. HELEN leaves with TALTHYBIUS.)

HECUBA  
Menelaus will not kill her.

ODYSSEUS  
Menelaus will return home with Helen by his side.  
The people of Sparta will celebrate their return.  
They will make offerings to the gods  
For the safe return of their queen.  
When night falls and the celebrations are ended  
They will lie together in their wedding bed.  
Helen will make him forget her betrayal.  
She will fall asleep in his arms.  
He will lie awake in the darkness  
And wonder why he went to war.  
Helen is a beautiful woman.  
Cunning and ruthless.  
She fears no man.  
Menelaus is no match for her.

HECUBA

She is a monster.  
She brought death and destruction to Troy.  
She should be punished for what she has done.

ODYSSEUS

She did not destroy Troy.  
Your son did.  
She did not bring the Greek armies  
To your city.  
I did.  
We are to blame.

HECUBA

You lie.

ODYSSEUS

Do I?  
When your son was born  
The gods warned you  
He would destroy Troy.  
You did not kill him  
You are to blame.

HECUBA

And you, Odysseus?  
How are you to blame?

ODYSSEUS

I was a suitor to Helen of Sparta.  
Until I saw her cousin Penelope.  
Who was not as beautiful  
But she was brave.  
And loyal.  
A good woman.

I went to Tyndareus to tell him  
I would no longer be suitor to Helen.  
I found him on the walls of his palace.  
Gazing down on the plain below  
Where a hundred suitors  
Awaited his decision.

Tyndareus feared these men.  
These proud princes of Greece,

Come to claim Helen as their wife.  
They would not leave without their prize.  
Even then Helen of Sparta  
Sowed strife in the hearts of men.

I offered Tyndareus my counsel.  
I told him to command all the suitors  
To swear an oath to serve the husband of Helen  
If anything threatened their marriage  
No matter which suitor he chose.  
The suitors agreed to his terms.  
Tyndareus chose Menelaus.

When Helen fled Sparta with your son.  
Menelaus begged his brother Agamemnon  
to gather an army to attack Troy.  
All the suitors heeded his desperate call.  
I left my wife and baby son on Ithaka.  
I set sail for Troy with the armies of Greece  
One thousand swift ships  
With one hundred thousand men  
To return one straying wife to her husband.

(ODYSSEUS laughs)

ODYSSEUS  
Men will do anything to gain what they want.  
They will lie.  
They will steal.  
They will kill.  
I serve grey-eyed Athena.  
She delights in strategy and invention.

HECUBA  
In cunning and deceit, Odysseus

ODYSSEUS  
They are more effective than force.  
In return for my counsel  
Tyndareus offered me his niece.  
Penelope.  
My prize, Hecuba.  
Despite all that has happened,  
All the death and the devastation  
Of this long terrible war.  
I would not undo what I have done.

HECUBA

I would not kill my son.

ODYSSEUS

I would not give up my wife.

We both destroyed Troy, Hecuba.

We are the playthings of the gods.

They walk beside us.

They whisper in our ears.

They dazzle our eyes.

We must follow

Where they lead us.

If we defy them, we suffer.

If we obey them, we suffer still

But our lives are crowned with glory.

Troy was our destiny, Hecuba.

Yours and mine.

HECUBA

The gods have abandoned me.

They have left me nothing.

Not even hope.

I am to be your slave, Odysseus.

This is not a life of glory.

But of shame and cruelty.

ODYSSEUS

We must all bow under the yoke of the gods.

Their glorious necessity.

Today you are a slave.

Yesterday you were a queen.

Today I am a victor.

Tomorrow I might be a beggar.

Only the gods know what will happen.

HECUBA

Leave me here, Odysseus.

To lie beside my husband.

I want to die in Troy.

CHORUS

No, my queen.

You must live.

ODYSSEUS

I have given orders to raze Troy to the ground.  
Nothing will be left standing.  
Her ruins will be a terrible monument  
To the might and power of Greece.

HECUBA  
No no no.

ODYSSEUS  
Nothing of Troy will remain.  
Her great temples.  
Her golden palaces.  
Her wide streets.  
Her wealth and glory will vanish  
Like ashes in the wind.

HECUBA  
No no no.

ODYSSEUS  
It must be so, Hecuba.  
As long as Troy stands  
She threatens all Greece.  
Her gods have abandoned her.  
And will not return to her.  
Her people have deserted her  
And will not rebuild her.  
Troy will not rise again.

HECUBA  
Leave me here, Odysseus.  
I am an old woman.  
Let me die here alone.

(HECUBA falls to her knees.)

HECUBA  
I beg you, Odysseus.

ODYSSEUS  
No, Hecuba.  
You are my prize.  
I will not leave without you.

(TALTHYBIUS arrives)

TALTHYBIUS

King Agamemnon awaits his prize.  
His ship is setting sail.

ODYSSEUS

Bid farewell to your daughter, Hecuba.  
Agamemnon is not a patient man.

HECUBA

Kassandra, my daughter.

KASSANDRA

I am not afraid, mother.

(HECUBA begins to weep. KASSANDRA kisses her.)

KASSANDRA

Do not weep for me.  
Soon I will be free.

(HECUBA, holding ASTYANAX, clutches KASSANDRA to her breast. She lets her suddenly. KASSANDRA kisses the baby in her arms.)

KASSANDRA

Look how he sleeps.  
Sing to him softly.  
Bury him with gentle hands.  
So he will not wake.

HECUBA

My heart is breaking.  
But it will not let me die.

(KASSANDRA kisses her once more.)

KASSANDRA

Farewell, mother.

HECUBA

Farewell, daughter.

(KASSANDRA hugs the CHORUS.)

CHORUS

My Princess.

(The CHORUS begins to weep.)

KASSANDRA

Do not weep.

Watch over her.

Help her bury Astyanax.

CHORUS

I am not afraid.

Kybele will protect us.

(KASSANDRA hugs him one last time, and strides off to her death. TALTHYBIUS hurries after her.)

(ODYSSEUS sees the apple the god left on the chair. He picks it up. And takes a bite. ODYSSEUS looks at HECUBA a moment.)

ODYSSEUS

How do you endure such suffering, Hecuba?

When we return to Ithaka

You will lead a simple life.

During the day

I will plough my fields.

You will tend your loom.

When night falls

We will sit together

And talk of this terrible war.

You will die in Ithaka, Hecuba

Far from your native land.

(TALTHYBIUS arrives. He carries a shield.)

ODYSSEUS

It is time to bury Astyanax

TALTHYBIUS

Neoptolemus has set sail in his swift ship.

He has taken Andromache with him.

She was torn from her city in tears.

ODYSSEUS

You did your duty, soldier.

(ODYSSEUS bows to her, walks away, lost in thought and eats his apple.)

TALTHYBIUS

Andromache begged to have her son  
buried beside Hector.  
He will lie there beneath  
The great shield of his father.

Hecuba, you must wrap his body  
With what you have left  
And cover him with flowers.  
As soon as you have dressed him  
I will build a mound for him  
And crown it with a spear.

ODYSSEUS

You must perform the rites quickly.  
We sail before the tide turns.

(ODYSSEUS leaves.)

TALTHYBIUS

I will go and dig his grave.  
When your work and mine are done  
We can leave this terrible place  
And set sail for home.

HECUBA

Lay the shield on the ground, envoy.

(TALTHYBIUS lays the shield at HECUBA'S feet. She touches it with her foot.)

HECUBA

It is stained with his blood.  
My poor son.  
It could not protect you  
But it will shelter your son.

HECUBA looks at the baby in her arms. She falls slowly to her knees. She begins to shake. A howl of rage and pain escapes her lips.)

CHORUS

My queen.

(The CHORUS rushes to her. HECUBA pushes him away.)

CHORUS

Give me the baby, my queen.

(The CHORUS tries to take the baby from her. HECUBA pushes him away.)

CHORUS

Please, my queen, please.  
We must dress him quickly.

(The CHORUS begins to weep.)

CHORUS

Please, my queen, please.  
We must perform the rites for him.  
We have so little time.

(HECUBA begins to calm. She looks at the CHORUS. She sees his weeping. She reaches out and touches his face, wiping his tears.)

HECUBA

You are weeping.  
I am howling.  
Who is the more wretched?  
We have suffered so much.  
I cannot bear any more.

CHORUS

It will soon end, my queen.  
The worst is over.

(HECUBA looks at the baby, still in her arms.)

HECUBA

My poor child.  
We will dress him together.  
From all I have.  
Find what clothes you can.  
Bring them here.

CHORUS

Yes, my queen.

(The CHORUS leaves.)

HECUBA

My sweet baby  
The power and might of Greece  
Trembled before you.  
What did the Greeks fear in you?

That you would rebuild our city?  
That you would return our people?  
That you would raise fallen Troy?  
My hope was their terror.  
But no more.

Our beautiful city lies in ruins.  
The Greeks have destroyed her.  
Now they will obliterate her.  
Nothing of her will remain.  
Your father could not defend her.  
What could you have done?  
But still the Greeks feared you.  
My sweet baby.

I hate them.  
They are frightened men  
Who hide their terrible deeds  
With deceitful words.  
We were powerless against them.  
Your father.  
My beloved Hector.  
Your mother.  
My poor Andromache.  
You most of all.  
Sweet Astyanax.  
My sweet baby.

(HECUBA hugs the baby.)

What words will I put on your tomb?  
“Here lies an innocent baby  
Slain by Greek fear and vanity.”  
An epitaph to shame Greece  
For all eternity.

Hector and Andromache are gone.  
Troy is destroyed.  
Nothing of them remains  
Except this shield of bronze  
For your small tomb.

(HECUBA reaches for the shield, running her hand tenderly over it.)

HECUBA

Look here, traces of your father remain still.  
You can see on the bronze rim the marks of his sweat  
that poured from his face in the heat of battle.  
The stains of his blood on its bruised covering.  
The print of his hand on the leather of its curved handle.

(HECUBA begins to shake again. She hugs the baby.)

HECUBA

My sweet baby,  
As you lie beneath his shield  
Hector will defend you still.

(The CHORUS returns with torn dresses and flowers in his arms.)

CHORUS

These are all that I could find.

HECUBA

These are all that we have.  
They are precious and beautiful.  
They are yours to take.

(She places the baby tenderly on the shield. She picks up a torn tunic.)

HECUBA

My sweet baby  
This you would have worn on your wedding day  
With the most beautiful bride  
The noblest princess from the East  
by your side.  
I place these poor adornments on you  
From the wealth that was once yours.

(CHORUS kisses the baby.)

CHORUS

You have touched my heart.  
You have touched my heart.  
You have touched my heart.  
The prince of my city  
O, Astyanax  
I have lost you.

(HECUAB covers the baby, wrapping him gently. She picks up a flower and smells it.)

HECUBA

And for the shield of your beloved father

A delicate wreath.

You will die with the dead.

It is far better to honour you

Than the shield of Odysseus

The hated one.

(She places the flower beside the baby on the shield.)

(CHORUS gently chants.)

CHORUS

What bitter sorrow

Aiai aiai aiai.

Let the earth receive you, my child.

Aiai aiai aiai.

Cry out, mother, cry out

HECUBA

Aiai aiai aiai.

CHORUS

Sing a song, mother, for the dead

HECUBA

Aiai aiai aiai.

My grief!

Aiai aiai aiai.

My grief!

CHORUS

Your grief, mother, that none may forget

HECUBA

Aiai aiai aiai.

I wash your wounds with my tears

Aiai aiai aiai.

Your father will watch over you as you sleep

Aiai aiai aiai.

CHORUS

Strike, strike your head  
Aiai aiai aiai.  
Beat, beat your hands  
Aiai aiai aiai.

CHORUS

What is it, my queen?  
Why have you stopped?

HECUBA

It is clear to me now  
Why the gods have chosen Troy  
For destruction above all other cities.  
Why the gods have chosen me  
For suffering above all other women.  
They hate us both.

For ten long years in vain  
We have made offerings to the gods.  
Their divine reward is to bury us  
Beneath the dark earth of Troy.

But if they do not smother us  
With so much suffering and ruin.  
We will remain forever unknown.  
No one will remember us.  
No one will sing of us.  
to the living in times to come.

(She leans over the baby and kisses him, and wraps him tenderly.)

HECUBA

Take him to his little tomb.  
Bury him beside his father.  
We have done all we can.  
The dead do not need funeral rites.  
They are done to comfort the living.

(CHORUS look at her a moment.)

CHORUS

Yes, my queen.  
I will return soon.

HECUBA

I will wait for you here.  
Where else shall I go?

(CHORUS leaves.)

SILENCE

(HECUBA remains rooted to the ground. She watches POSEIDON.  
She begins to chant softly.)

Aiai aiai aiai!  
Aiai aiai aiai!

(The god watches her. Suddenly a loud roar. A fire burns).

(TALTHYBIUS hurries towards HECUBA.)

TALTHYBIUS  
Our soldiers are setting fire to the city.  
Troy is burning to the ground.  
It is time to leave, Hecuba.

(HECUBA continues chanting.)

TALTHYBIUS  
Did you hear me, Hecuba?  
It is time to leave.

(HECUBA looks up at him.)

HECUBA  
Do as you are told.  
You are a slave now.  
Get off the ground.  
I am Hecuba.  
A queen without her king  
A mother without her sons  
A woman without her home.

Troy is burning down.  
Her people are slaves.  
All is destroyed.  
All is lost.  
All is gone.

Hear me, gods!

Why call upon the gods?  
They did not listen to me before.

(She walks towards POSEIDON.)

HECUBA  
I will walk towards the flames.  
I will die in my home as it burns.  
It is better to die together.

TALTHYBIUS  
You have lost your mind, woman.  
Odysseus awaits you.  
You must leave Troy.

(TALTHYBIUS rushes towards her, and reaches out to restrain her. HECUBA turns and howls at him. TALTHYBIUS staggers backwards as if scorched. He flees.)

(HECUBA turns and begins a ritual howl as CHORUS returns.)

HECUBA  
Ottotototototot  
Ottotototototot

Kybele,  
Mother of us all  
Do you see what the Greeks  
Have done to your children?

CHORUS  
Kybele sees, my queen.  
Troy is a city no longer.  
She has fallen.  
Troy is no more.

(POSEIDON enters and sits on chair.)

HECUBA  
Aiai aiai aiai!  
Red flames are devouring the citadel.  
The great temples are falling.  
The golden palaces are collapsing.  
The wide streets are cracking.  
Troy is burning down.

CHORUS

Smoke is billowing into the sky  
Our city is vanishing in flames  
Razed by fire.  
Wasted by war  
Ravaged by hate.

(HECUBA kneels on the ground. The CHORUS moves chairs to the back of the stage and places them in a formal line – this activity will take place throughout the rest of the ritual. It should end before the collapse of the citadel of Troy.)

HECUBA  
Oh land that nursed my children.

CHORUS  
Eee...h! Eee...h!

HECUBA  
Hear me, my children, hear the cries of your mother!

CHORUS  
Call on the dead with your cries.

HECUBA  
Hear me, my children, hear me.  
I strike the ground with my two hands.

(HECUBA beats the ground with her hands, The CHORUS kneels beside her.)

CHORUS  
I call on our husbands  
I call on our wives  
I call on our children.

HECUBA  
Oh, Priam, Priam, Priam.  
You have died without burial.  
You have died without me.  
You do not know of our destruction

CHORUS  
Darkness has covered his eyes  
Gods curse his murderers

HECUBA  
O Kybele, help us  
We are being herded away as slaves

CHORUS

Eee...h! Eee...h!  
Away from our homes  
Away from our land  
Away from our country

HECUBA

O temples of the gods, O city of my love

CHORUS

Eee...h! Eee...h!

HECUBA

The flames are destroying you....  
Ash will bury my home from my eyes.

CHORUS

The name of our land will pass into oblivion.  
One thing after another  
Everything disappears.  
Troy is gone.

(POSEIDON stands. A loud crash. Then silence. HECUBA and the CHORUS stop and stare.)

HECUBA

Did you see...?

CHORUS

The citadel has collapsed.

HECUBA.

Everything is destroyed.  
All is lost.

CHORUS

All is lost.  
Troy is dead.

(The sound of trumpets.)

HECUBA

Start walking.  
Your master awaits you.  
I am a slave.

Walk.

(POSEIDON stands motionless.)

CHORUS  
Troy is gone.

CHORUS  
Forward, feet.  
The Greek ships are waiting.

(HECUBA and CHORUS lift their feet as if to step forward. Blackout.)