

CREUSA. My child, let us go home.

ATHENA. Go, and I will attend you.

CREUSA. Worthy is the guardian of our path.

ATHENA. And friendly to your city.

CREUSA. Sit you upon the ancient throne.

ION. It is a possession to be prized.

[Athena disappears; exeunt Creusa and Ion.]

CHORUS. Hail Apollo, child of Zeus and Leto! He whose house is vexed by misfortunes ought to revere the deities and be of good courage! For at the last the good shall attain their deserts, but the evil, as their nature is, will never fare well.

[Exeunt.]

Ten Plays by Euripides

trs. M. Hadas + J. McLeon,

New York, 1960

Euripides

## The Trojan Women

AT the end of his fifth book Thucydides tells how the Athenians destroyed the ancient Greek city of Melos, which had wished to remain neutral in the Peloponnesian War, slaughtering its men and enslaving its women and children. Then his sixth book describes the feverish enthusiasm with which the Athenians were embarking on their ruinous Sicilian expedition. It was at the height of this enthusiasm that Euripides presented *Trojan Women*—a passionate and poetic expression of the horror and futility and degradation of war at any time, but desperately urgent in its particular setting. The culminating horror of Melos had shattered the patriotic idealism of the poet of *Andromache*. The Athenian audience must surely have been startled and sobered when, in the prologue, their own patron deity Athena asks Poseidon, who was Troy's champion, to bring disaster upon the Greeks on their long voyage. Perhaps the best evidence of the soundness of the Athenian democracy is that it could give such a play official sponsorship at such a time.

In the background a great and rich city with ancient traditions is burning, and in the cold dawn a broken old woman, once queen of this city, is lying on the ground. Over her there sweeps one piece of gruesome heartlessness after another, each more wanton than the last, each politically expedient in the conviction of the conquerors. Yet this crushing of humanity does not lend the conquerors the glory they

expected; they are plainly uneasy and frightened—to the point of sacrificing Polyxena to a ghost and dashing Astyanax to his death. Even so there is a touch of desperate humanity in the pity of Talthybius and in the gift of Hector's shield, the Greeks' most valuable prize, to be Astyanax' coffin. The final stroke is the appearance of self-assured and bedizened Helen among the havoc she had caused. It was for this paltry toy that vanquished and victors alike had suffered degradation.



## THE TROJAN WOMEN

### CHARACTERS

POSEIDON	CASSANDRA, daughter of
ATHENA	Hecuba, and Priestess
HECUBA	of Apollo
CHORUS of Trojan Women	ANDROMACHE, widow of
TALTHYBIUS, Herald of the	Hector
Greeks	MENELAUS, husband of
	Helen
	HELEN

The scene is the camp of the Greeks before Troy, in the background the smoking ruins of the city. At the entrance of one of the tents Hecuba is stretched on the ground.

The play was produced in 415 B.C.

[Poseidon enters, unseen by Hecuba.]

POSEIDON. I am Poseidon, come from the salt depths of the Aegean sea, where the bands of Nereids ply their lovely feet in the intricacies of the dance. Ever since Phoebus and I threw the stone circle of towers, true and plumb, round this Troy, my goodwill toward the city of my Phrygians has not failed. Now the city is a smoking ruin, sacked by the Argive spear. That man of Parnassus, Epeius the Phocian, aided by the devices of Pallas, constructed a horse teeming with armed men, and sent the fatal monster inside the towers. Therefore men of after time will call it the Horse of Spears.

The sacred groves are abandoned. The shrines of the gods run with human blood. On the steps of the altar of Zeus the Protector, Priam lies dead. All the gold, all the spoils of Phrygia are being transported to the Achaean ships. They are now waiting for a following wind: after ten winters and summers they yearn to see their wives and children, those Greeks that came in war against this city. I too, vanquished by Hera the Argive goddess and Athena, who united to destroy the Phrygians, now leave famous Ilium and my altars.

When the evil of desolation overtakes a city, a blight falls on the cult of the gods; they delight no more in their worship. Scamander echoes to the loud wailings of multitudes of captured women being allotted their masters. Some have fallen to the Arcadians, others to the Thessalians, others to the two sons of Theseus, princes of Athens. All the Trojan women that are not to be assigned by lot are within these tents, specially picked for the first men of the army. With them is the daughter of Tyndareus, Helen the Laconian, rightly regarded as a captive woman.

If any one wants to see an unhappy woman, here is Hecuba prostrate before the entrance, weeping many tears for many miseries. Her daughter Polyxena has been slain at the tomb of Achilles, bravely dying, hapless girl. Priam is gone and the children, all but the virgin Cassandra, whom Lord Apollo has given over to prophetic frenzy. And now Agamemnon, religion and reverence forgot, forces her to be his concubine.

O city that once was fortunate, O shining battlements, farewell! If Pallas, daughter of Zeus had not willed your ruin, you would still be standing on firm foundations.

[Enter Athena.]

ATHENA. You who are nearest in lineage to my father, god powerful and respected in heaven, may I end our ancient feud and address you?

POSEIDON. You may, queen Athena. The company of kinsfolk is a great charm to the heart.

ATHENA. I thank you for your courtesy. My lord, I have a plan for you and me to discuss.

POSEIDON. Do you bring some news from heaven? Is it from Zeus or some other god?

ATHENA. No, it is for Troy's sake, whose soil we tread. I have come to enlist your might in a common cause.

POSEIDON. Have you renounced your former hatred and taken compassion on the city, now it is in flames and ashes?

ATHENA. First get back to where we were. Will you share my plan and help me to work out my will?

POSEIDON. I will. But I wish to learn your purpose in coming here. Does it concern the Achaeans, or the Phrygians?

ATHENA. I wish to bring gladness to my former enemies, the Trojans, and to inflict on the host of the Achaeans a sorrowful homecoming.

POSEIDON. Why do you jump like this from mood to mood and rush to excesses of hate and love?

ATHENA. Have you not heard of the insult to me and my temples?

POSEIDON. I have: Ajax dragged Cassandra off with violence.

ATHENA. Yes, and nothing was done to him by the Achaeans, nothing even said to him.

POSEIDON. And yet it was thanks to your might that they captured Ilium.

ATHENA. That is why, with your help, I will do them an injury.

POSEIDON. Anything you want from me is at your disposal. But what do you mean to do?

ATHENA. I mean to give them a homecoming they will not recognize.

POSEIDON. While they are still on land, or when they are on the salt sea?

ATHENA. Whenever they sail off home from Ilium. Zeus will send torrents of rain and hail and hurricanes that will black out the sky. He says he will lend me the fire of his thunderbolts to smite the Achaeans and set their ships ablaze. You, on the other hand, must do your part. Make the crossing of the Aegean a din of monstrous waves, a maelstrom of waters. Fill the sheltered straits of Euboea with drowned bodies. The Achaeans must learn in future to stand in proper awe of my shrines and to respect the other gods.

POSEIDON. So shall it be. You need make no long speech to get this favor. I shall stir up the waters of the Aegean sea. The shores of Myconus, the reefs of Delos, Scyros, Lemnos, and the promontories of Caphareium will receive innumerable bodies of drowned men. But go to Olympus, get the Father's thunderbolts in your hands and be on watch when the Argive fleet loosens its cables.

[Exit Athena.]

The mortal is mad who sacks cities and desolates temples and tombs, the holy places of the dead; his own doom is only delayed.

[Exit Poseidon. Hecuba begins to rise, slowly.]

HECUBA. Up, poor soul, lift your head, your neck, from the ground. This is no longer Troy nor we Troy's royal fam-

ily. Fortune veers; be brave. Sail with the stream, sail with the wind of fate. Do not run your ship of life head-on into the billows of disaster. Alas! I weep. And why may I not weep in my misery? My country is lost, my children, my husband. O ancestry, with your spread of pride lowered, you come to nothing after all.

What should I tell of, what leave untold? What a sorry bed on which I lay my heavy, weary limbs, lying stretched on my back, in a hard, hard couch! Oh my head, my temples, my sides! Oh how lovely, to shift my bony back, to let my body keel over to this side and that, to the rhythm of my complaints, my unceasing tears. This is the music of the sorrowful—to chant the jarring dirges of their doom.

O prows of ships, to the horrid call of the trumpet and the loud scream of fifes you came on swift oars over the purple brine, across the safe seas of Hellas to sacred Ilium, and in the bay of Troy (alas!) you dropped your cable ropes, produce of Egypt. You came to fetch Menelaus' loathsome wife, that affront to Castor, that scandal of the Eurotas. It is she who has murdered the father of fifty sons and grounded me on these sorry shoals of disaster.

Ah me! Here I sit, a sorry seat, beside the tents of Agamemnon. They carry me off to slavery, an old woman like me, my poor head laid bare by sorrow's cutting edge. Enough! Woeful widows of Troy's warriors, and you virgin brides of violence, Troy is in smoke, let us weep for Troy. Like a mother hen clucking over her fluttering chicks, I shall lead your song, ah how unlike those songs I used to lead in honor of the gods, leaning on Priam's sceptre as my foot gave the loud stamp, and the dance started to the Phrygian strains.

[Enter Chorus in two halves, one consisting of the older women, the other of the younger.]

LEADER. Hecuba, why those shouts, why those cries? Has word come for one of us? I heard your piteous lamentations ringing through the tents. And shuddering fear grips the hearts of the Trojan women within, who are bemoaning their slavery.

HECUBA. My child, the crews of rowers are stirring down by the Argive ships.

LEADER. Ah me! What does that mean? The time has come,

I suppose, when the ships will carry me away from my native land.

HECUBA. I do not know, but I suspect the worst.

LEADER. Ho! woeful women of Troy, come and hear your doom, out of the tents with you, the Argives are setting sail for home.

HECUBA. Ah! do not bring frenzied, fey Cassandra out here, for the Argives to insult. Spare me grief on grief. O Troy, hapless Troy, this is your end. Hapless are they that have lost you, the living and the dead.

CHORUS. Ah me! In fear and trembling I quit these tents of Agamemnon to hear your words. O queen. Have the Argives made their decision? Is it death for hapless me? Or are the sailors already preparing to push off and ply their oars?

HECUBA. My child, I have been here since daybreak, my heart in a swoon of dread.

CHORUS. Has some herald of the Greeks been here already?

HECUBA. The hour of allotment must be near.

CHORUS. Oh! Oh! Will it be to Argos or Phthia or one of the islands that they will take me, unhappy me, far from Troy?

HECUBA. Alas! Alas! Whose wretched slave shall I be? Where, where on earth shall this old woman toil, useless as a drone, poor counterpart of a corpse, a feeble, ghastly ornament? To be posted to watch at the door, to become a children's nurse—I who in Troy was paid the honors of a queen!

CHORUS [the mark at the beginning of a line indicates a change of speaker]. Alas! Alas! How piteous are the lamentations with which you bemoan your indignities!

—No more shall I ply my flying shuttle in Trojan looms.  
—For the last time I see the graves of my parents, for the very last time.

—I shall have worse sorrows, forced to lie in the bed of Greeks—

—my curse on the night when that is my fate.

—or kept as a slave woman to draw water from holy Pirene.

—May I come to Theseus' land, the glorious, the blessed.

—Never, never, I pray, to the swirling Eurotas, the cursed abode of Helen, there to look upon Menelaus as my master, the sacker of Troy.

—I have heard tales of the loads of wealth, the profusion of fine fruitfulness, in the grand land of Peneus, the beautiful

pedestal of Olympus. There let me come; that is my second choice, after Theseus' land, holy, august.

—Then there is the land of Etna and Hephaestus, *(Sicily)*, mother of mountains, looking across to Phoenicia; I have heard of its fame, of its crowns of valor. Likewise its neighbor, as you sail over the Ionian sea, the land watered by the loveliest of rivers, Crathis, whose mysterious waters (waters that put yellow fire in your hair) bring prosperity to the land and a breed of valiant men.

—And now here comes a herald from the army of the Danaans; he comes, quickening his steps at his journey's end, to dispense his budget of news. What does he bring? What has he to tell? What matter? We are already slaves of the Dorian land.

[Enter Talthybius.]

TALTHYBIUS. Hecuba, you know I made many trips to Troy as messenger from the Greek army. That makes me an acquaintance of yours, of long standing. I am Talthybius, here to announce the latest news.

HECUBA. Here it comes, my Trojan friends. This is what I have long been dreading.

TALTHYBIUS. The assignments have already been made, if that was your dread.

HECUBA. Ah! Where do we go? Some city in Thessaly or in Phthia or in the land of Cadmus?

TALTHYBIUS. You were each assigned individually to separate masters.

HECUBA. Then who got whom? Is there good luck ahead for any of Troy's daughters?

TALTHYBIUS. I can tell you, but you must particularize your questions, one at a time.

HECUBA. Then tell me, who got my daughter, poor Cassandra?

TALTHYBIUS. King Agamemnon took her, as a special prize.

HECUBA. What? To be the slave of his Lacedaemonian wife? Ah me!

TALTHYBIUS. No, she is to be his concubine.

HECUBA. His concubine? The virgin of Phoebus, the girl on whom the golden-haired god bestowed virginity, as a peculiar favor?

TALTHYBIUS. Love's shafts pierced him for the prophetic maiden.

HECUBA. O my daughter, throw away the holy branches, throw off the sacred livery of chaplets that deck your person.

TALTHYBIUS. Why? Isn't it a great thing to get a king for a lover?

HECUBA. And what of the daughter you lately took away from me? Where is she?

TALTHYBIUS. You mean Polyxena? Or whom do you speak of?

HECUBA. Just her. To whom did the lot yoke her?

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

HECUBA. Ah me! My daughter? To serve at a tomb? But what new usage or ordinance is this that the Greeks have?

TALTHYBIUS. God bless your child. She rests well.

HECUBA. What words are these? Tell me, does she see the sun?

TALTHYBIUS. She is in the hands of fate; her troubles are over.

HECUBA. And what of fire-eating Hector's wife, unhappy Andromache? What luck had she?

TALTHYBIUS. Achilles' son took her also, as a special gift.

HECUBA. And whose servant am I, this ancient body who needs a staff in her hand to help her two legs to walk?

TALTHYBIUS. The king of Ithaca, Odysseus, got you for his slave.

HECUBA. Ah! Hecuba, smash your shaven head, tear your two cheeks with your nails. Ah me! An abominable, treacherous scoundrel I have got for master, an enemy of justice, a lawless beast, whose double tongue twists all things up and down and down and up, who turns every friendship to hate, who—O women of Troy, wail for me. I go to my doom, ruin and misery are mine. The unluckiest lot has fallen to me.

LEADER. Mistress, you know your fate, but which of the Peloponnesians, which of the Thessalians, is the master of my life?

TALTHYBIUS. On, servants, you must fetch Cassandra out here at once. I will put her into my general's hands and then come for the others.

Ha! What is that torch flame blazing inside? What are these Trojan women up to? Now that they are about to be carried abroad to Argos, are they starting a fire in the heart of the tents? Are they deliberately burning themselves to death? Truly, in people like these the love of freedom does not offer an easy neck to misery. Open up! Open up! Their

death may be all very fine for them, but the Achaeans won't like it, and I don't want it to get me into any trouble.

HECUBA. It is not that. It is no fire. It is my child, frantic Cassandra; here she comes hurrying out.

*[Enter Cassandra, dressed as Apollo's priestess, and waving a nuptial torch. She fancies she is about to be married in Apollo's temple, while the god himself leads the choir.]*

CASSANDRA. Lift up the torch, bring it to me. I bear the flame, I do reverence, and look! look! I light up this temple with the blaze. O King hymeneal, blessed is the bridegroom, blessed too am I; in Argos I am to marry a royal lover. Hymen, O King hymeneal! Poor mother, your time is all taken with mourning for my dead father and our dear country, with tears and lamentations. Therefore I now must hold aloft the blazing torch myself, for my own wedding. See its radiance, see its brilliance, giving light to thee, Hymenaeus, and thee, Hecate, as custom prescribes for the weddings of maidens.

Lift high the light foot. On, on with the dance. Evan! Evoe! Let it be as in the proudest days of my father's prosperity. The choir is sacred; lead it, Phoebus, in honor of thy priestess, in thy temple among the laurels. Hymen, O Hymen hymeneal! Sing, mother, sing and dance, whirling mazily in and out, trip it with me, as you love me. Shout the marriage greeting to the bride, wish her joy with songs and shouts. Come, daughters of Phrygia, in your loveliest robes, sing my wedding, sing the husband that Fate brings to my bed.

LEADER. Queen, will you not seize your frantic daughter before she trips lightly off to the Argive host?

HECUBA. Hephaestus, you carry the torches at the weddings of mortals, but this was cruel of you to fan this flame. How unlike the high hopes I had!

Ah me! my child, never, never did I think your nuptials would be held amidst the spears and lances of Argives. Give me that light. In your frantic haste you do not hold the torch straight. Our disasters have not made you sober; you are still the same.

Women of Troy, take the torches; let your tears answer her wedding songs.

CASSANDRA. Mother, crown my conquering head; rejoice in the royal match I make. Escort me; if you do not find me

eager, push me by force. As Loxias exists, Agamemnon, the Achaeans' noble king, will find me a more fatal bride than Helen ever was. For I shall kill him; I shall ruin his house. I shall take vengeance for my brothers and my father—

But these things can wait: I shall not sing of the axe which will fall on my neck and another's, or of the matricidal tournament which my wedding will start, or of the utter overthrow of Atreus' house.

But I will show that our city is more fortunate than the Achaeans. Possessed though I am, I shall for once emerge from my frenzy. For the sake of one woman and one woman's passion, the Greeks went chasing after Helen and perished in their thousands. Their general, their clever general, to help those he should hate most, sacrificed the dearest thing he owned; his own child, the joy of his house, he gave up for his brother; and that for a woman, who had not been carried off by force, but had left home willingly. Then after they had come to the banks of Scamander, they met their deaths, not resisting any encroachments on their border lands nor in defence of their towering cities. Those that Ares took never saw their children; no wives' hands wrapped them in their cerements; they lie in a foreign land. And back home the misery was no less: widows dying lonely, old men left childless in their halls, the sons they reared serving others, none to visit their graves and make them blood offerings. This is the praise the expedition has earned. . . . Of their crimes it is better to say nothing; may my muse never lend her voice to sing of evil things.

As for the Trojans, in the first place, what fame could be more glorious than theirs? They died for their country. When any fell in battle, their bodies were brought home by their comrades; they were dressed for the grave by the proper hands, and the soil of their native land wrapped them about. All that did not fall in battle spent their every day with their wives and children in their own homes. The Achaeans were denied those pleasures. Hector's fate brought you grief, but hear the truth of it; he is gone, but he lived long enough to win a hero's fame. And it was the coming of the Achaeans that brought this to pass. If they had stayed at home, his virtues would have remained unknown. Paris, too, married the daughter of Zeus. If he had not done so, nobody would have heard of him or the bride in his house.

It comes to this: if a man is wise he will shun war. But if war must come, it is a crown of honor for a city to perish in

*T. in low class words*  
a good cause; in an evil cause there is infamy. Therefore, mother, you must not feel sorry for our country or my concubinage. This wedlock of mine is the means by which I shall destroy our worst enemies, mine and yours.

LEADER. It is fine to be able to laugh at your own miseries and sing riddling songs. Perhaps some day you will show your meaning.

TALTHYBIUS [*who has been listening, at first in amazement, then with impatience*]. It's as well Apollo gave you crazy wits. Otherwise it would have cost you dear to be speeding my commanders from the land with such maledictions.

Right enough, the grand folks in the world, the folks everybody thinks so clever, are no better than the nobodies. Witness Atreus' precious son, the all powerful king of united Greece, saddled with a peculiar passion for this daft creature. I'm a poor man, to be sure, but I would never have taken a woman like this to my bed.

[*To Cassandra.*] Here you, since you are not quite right in the head, I'll let your words go down the wind, this reviling of the Argives and praising of the Phrygians. Come with me to the ships, a fine bride for the general.

[*To Hecuba.*] And you, be ready to come when Laertes' son wants you brought. It's a virtuous woman whose servant you will be, judging by the reports that have come to Ilium.

CASSANDRA. What a rogue of a servant. Why do heralds have such an honorable name, that profession which the whole world unites in detesting, these go-betweens of kings and states?

So you say my mother will go to the halls of Odysseus? Where then are the declarations of Apollo, made plain to me, which say she will die here?—The insulting details I omit. Hapless Odysseus, he does not know the dreadful trials in store for him. The day will come when my woes and my city's will seem to him like golden joys. Ten weary years must roll by, in addition to the years spent here, before he gets back to his native land, companionless. He must see dread Charybdis, whose dwelling is in the ebb and flow of that rockbound strait, and that cannibal of the mountains the Cyclops, and Ligurian Circe who changes fine men into swine; he must endure shipwreck on the salt sea, and the temptations of the lotus, and the holy cows of the Sun, whose flesh will take voice and utter a tale of agony for Odysseus. To cut a long story short, he will descend alive to Hades, and when he finally escapes from the clutches of

the sea he will come home to a multitude of sorrows in his house.

But why launch forth all the sorrows of Odysseus? [*To Talthybius.*] March; let me lose no time, let me fly to my bridegroom's bed—of death. Great general of the Greeks, miserable will be your interment, in the night, not by day. O you whose fortune seems so grand! I too, of course, must die; my body will be thrown naked down a ravine, into a torrent of winter floods, near the grave of my bridegroom; I shall be given to the wild beasts to devour, I Apollo's servant. O chaplets of the god whom I love most of any, O raiment of exaltation, farewell; I leave the feasts in which once I gloried. Go, I wrench you from my skin. While my body is still undefiled I give them to the rushing winds, to carry them to you, O Lord of Prophecy.

Where is the general's ship? Where must I embark? There is no time to lose, be on the look-out for a breeze to fill your sails, to carry me off, one of three Furies. Farewell, mother, do not weep. O dear country, O my brothers under the earth and my father that begot me, you will not have long to wait for me. But I shall descend to the dead a conquering hero, having destroyed the house of Atreus, by whom our house was destroyed.

[*Exeunt Cassandra and Talthybius. Hecuba collapses.*]

LEADER. Nurses of old Hecuba, don't you see that your mistress has fallen, prostrate and speechless? Take hold of her. Will you leave the old woman lying? O cruel! Lift her upright.

HECUBA. Leave me, my daughters; an unwanted service is no service. Let me lie where I have fallen. I have full cause for falling, the things I have to endure and have endured and shall endure. O ye gods! It's poor helpers indeed I am now invoking; but still it's the fashion to call upon the gods when trouble overtakes us. This is my swan-song; first I will sing of my blessings and thus accentuate the pity of my woes.

I was a queen, I married into a king's house, and there I bore my excellent children, no mere figures but the best of the Phrygians [, of whose like no mother can boast, Trojan or Greek or barbarian]. These children I saw fall in battle with the Greeks, and I cut my hair over their tombs. And Priam their father—his loss was not reported to me by others; with

my very own eyes I saw him slaughtered at his own hearth, the hearth of Zeus Protector. I saw my city taken. The virgin daughters whom I reared to bestow on bridegrooms of the highest rank, have been snatched out of my hands; another type of bridegroom had the fruits of my care. No hope have I that they will ever see me again or I them. And finally, the crown of wretched misery, I go to Greece to an old age of slavery. They will put me to all the tasks that are most intolerable to the aged. I shall be a door servant, looking after the keys, I the mother of Hector! Or I shall have to bake bread, and lay to rest on the hard ground the wrinkled back that slept in palace beds. This poor battered body of mine will be dressed in rags and tatters, an insult to my former prosperity. Unhappy woman that I am, what a present, what a future, and all because of one woman's marriage.

O my child, O Cassandra and your divine ecstasies, how horrible the circumstances that have destroyed your sacred purity! And O Polyxena, poor girl, where, where are you? Of all my many children neither son nor daughter is here to help their poor mother. Why then do you lift me up? What is there to hope for? Lead me, me that once walked delicately in Troy and am now a slave, lead me to some grovelling lair, where the stones will be my pillow. Let me fling myself on the ground there and waste out my cursed life in weeping. Never hold any man happy, even the favorites of fortune, this side of death.

CHORUS. Sing me, O Muse, of Ilium. Sing a new strain, a strain of weeping, a funeral dirge. The song I shall now utter I dedicate to Troy. It was that four-footed wagon of the Greeks that was our sad undoing, that made us prisoners of war, from that moment when the Achaeans left at our gates that horse, accoutered in gold and rattling to heaven with the armor within. The population of Troy, standing on rocks around, cried out, "Come, men, your troubles are over, lead in this idol, consecrate it to the Maiden of Ilium, daughter of Zeus." All the young women left their homes, and all the old men. With singing and rejoicing they took possession of the deadly trap.

Every son and daughter of Phrygia rushed to the gates to do honor to the Immortal Virgin, to give to the goddess the cunning fabrication of mountain pine, wherein lurked the Argive ambush and Troy's destruction. They threw hempen ropes around it, as if it were some black ship they were launching, and brought it to the stone abode of Goddess

Pallas and set it on the floor, the floor that was to cost our land its lifeblood. On this labor of joy the darkness of night descended. Then the Libyan flute shrilled forth and the ringing songs of Phrygia. The air was filled with the patter of dancing feet, with the gladsome choruses of maidens. Everywhere was the glare of torch fire; even within the houses the rooms of the sleepers glowed darkly.

I myself that night was singing in the choirs before the temple of the Virgin of the Mountains, the daughter of Zeus, when suddenly the castle and all the city rang with cries of havoc. Darling infants clung in terror to their mothers' skirts. Ares issued from his ambush; the will of Pallas was accomplished. Phrygian blood ran on every altar. In their lonely beds the young women shore off their tresses, crowns of triumph for the Grecian breed, offerings of sorrow for the land of the Phrygians.

[A wagon enters. In it are Andromache and her young son Astyanax, also Trojan spoils, among them Hector's armor.]

Hecuba, look. Here comes Andromache in an enemy wagon, bound for a foreign land. Clutched to her heaving breast is her darling Astyanax, Hector's son. Hapless woman, where are they taking you on this wagon's top, seated amid Hector's bronze armor and the spoils of sacked Ilium, with which Achilles' son will adorn the temples of Phthia, far, far from Troy.

ANDROMACHE. Our masters, the Greeks, are haling me off.

HECUBA. Ah me!

ANDROMACHE. Why do you lament? Lamentation is mine—

HECUBA. Ah! Ah!

ANDROMACHE. —for grief is mine—

HECUBA. O Zeus!

ANDROMACHE —and misery is mine.

HECUBA. My children—

ANDROMACHE. —now no longer.

HECUBA. Gone is the glory, gone is Troy—

ANDROMACHE. O grief!

HECUBA. —and gone my children, my noble children.

ANDROMACHE. Alas! Alas!

HECUBA. Alas indeed, and again alas for what was mine—

ANDROMACHE. Ah me!



HECUBA. *The splendor, the fortune—*

ANDROMACHE. *—of the city—*

HECUBA. *—in smoke.*

ANDROMACHE. *O come, my husband, I beseech you—*

HECUBA. *You cry on one that lies with Hades, a son of mine, unhappy me!*

ANDROMACHE. *—come and save your wife.*

HECUBA. *And you, O you, whose foul murder dishonored Greece—*

ANDROMACHE. *—father of my Hector, Priam old and venerable—*

HECUBA. *—lull me asleep, the sleep of death.*

ANDROMACHE. *Deep are our yearnings—*

HECUBA. *Deep also (O cruel!) are the griefs we bear—*

ANDROMACHE. *—for the city that is gone—*

HECUBA. *Grief on grief accumulates.*

ANDROMACHE. *—destroyed by the illwill of the gods, from that hour when your infant son escaped death, the son who for a wicked woman destroyed the towers of Troy. Before the temple of Pallas the bloody bodies of our dead are exposed, for the vultures to harry. The end has come and the yoke of slavery for Troy.*

HECUBA. *O my country, my poor country—*

ANDROMACHE. *I weep at leaving you—*

HECUBA. *—now you see the bitter end.*

ANDROMACHE. *—and my own home, where my baby was born.*

HECUBA. *O my children, you have gone and left your mother in a deserted city—to the bitterness of dirges and lamentations and tears, fountains of tears, in our home. The dead shed no tears; they have forgotten their griefs.*

LEADER. *What a sweet thing tears are to the miserable, dirges and lamentations and songs burdened with pain.*

ANDROMACHE. *O mother of Hector, of the hero whose spear destroyed so many Argives, do you see this sight?*

HECUBA. *I see the hand of the gods; some men they raise from nothingness to towering heights, others they humiliate and destroy.*

ANDROMACHE. *Away we are led like stolen cattle, I and my son. Nobility enslaved! O the heavy changel!*

HECUBA. *Strange are the ways of Necessity. They have just now torn Cassandra away from me with violence.*

ANDROMACHE. *Alas! A second Ajax, I suppose, another ravisher, awaits your daughter. And you have other sorrows.*

HECUBA. *Ay, I have, beyond measure, beyond my counting. Sorrow outsorrows sorrow.*

ANDROMACHE. *Your child Polyxena is dead, slain at the tomb of Achilles, an offering to the lifeless dead.*

HECUBA. *Unhappy me! It becomes clear; this is what Talthibius meant just now with his dark riddle.*

ANDROMACHE. *I saw her myself. I got off this carriage and covered her with her robes and beat my breast for the dead.*

HECUBA. *Ah, my child! Brutally butchered! Ah and again ah! How shameful a death!*

ANDROMACHE. *She died as she died.—And yet in death she was luckier than I who live.*

HECUBA. *Death and life are not the same, my child. Death is nothingness; in life there is hope.*

ANDROMACHE. [*Lady, mother of Polyxena, listen to my words of comfort; let me breathe gladness into your heart.*] *The dead, I say, are as if they had not been born. It is better to die than to live in pain; the dead have no sorrows to hurt them, but when a man passes from happiness to misery his heart hankers restlessly after the joys he once knew. Polyxena is as dead as if she had never seen this life; she knows nothing of her sorrows. I aimed at fame, and the more I won the more I had to lose. In Hector's house I toiled to master all the accomplishments of a virtuous wife. In the first place I kept to the house and had no longing for those places where her mere presence is enough to earn a woman who does not stay at home an evil name, whether she is that sort of woman or not. I did not admit inside my doors the smart talk of women. I had my native wit to teach me virtue; I needed no more. My tongue was still and my countenance serene in my husband's presence. I knew when to insist with my husband and when to allow him to overrule me.*

*This was the reputation that reached the Achaean host and ruined me. For when I was captured, the son of Achilles wanted to make me his wife. I shall slave in the house of my husband's murderers. And if I forget dear Hector and open my heart to my present lord, I shall seem a traitor to the dead. On the other hand if I cherish Hector's love, I shall get myself hated by my lord and master. However, they say that a single night abates a woman's aversion for a man's bed. But I abominate the woman who marries again and forgets her first husband in the arms of the second. Why, even the draught-horse, separated from his old partner in the yoke,*

will pull reluctantly. And yet brutes have neither speech nor use of reason and are lower than man.

In you, dear Hector, I had all the husband I wanted: wise, noble, wealthy, brave, a great man. You got me virgin from my father's house; you were the first to enter my innocent bed. And now you are dead, and I am being shipped captive to the yoke of slavery in Greece. [*To Hecuba.*] Do you not think that the death of Polyxena, whom you weep for, is a lesser evil for her than my evils? Even hope, that remains to all the living, stays not with me; I nurse no delusion that things will ever be all right for me—it would be pleasant if I could even think so.

LEADER. Your misery is mine. As you bewail *your* lot, you teach me the depth of my own sorrows.

HECUBA. Never in my life have I set foot on a ship myself, but the pictures I have seen and the stories I have heard have taught me. If sailors have to face a storm that is not too great, they rally eagerly to the task of saving themselves from peril; one man takes the helm, another looks to the sails, another keeps out the sea water. But if the waves are too high, the storm too fierce, they give in to fate and submit to the mercy of the running seas. So I who have sorrows aplenty am dumb; I submit, I have no use for words. The waves of misery, heaven-sent, overpower me.

My dear child, think no more of Hector's fate. Your tears will not save him. Respect your present master; ply your husband with the allurements of your ways. If you do that, you will have a happiness in which all your friends will share, and you will bring up this grandson of mine to be a mighty aid to Troy; some day descendants of his may return and settle here, and Troy be again a city.

But what is this? One thing after another. Here I see the servant of the Achaeans, with word of new decisions. What brings him back?

[*Enter Talthylbius and armed escort.*]

TALTHYBIUS. Wife of Hector who was the bravest of the Phrygians in days gone by, do not hate me. It is not of my choice that I bring you word of the common purpose of the Danaans and the sons of Pelops—

ANDROMACHE. What is it? I feel you are beginning a song of sorrows.

TALTHYBIUS. They have decided that the boy here. . . . How can I speak the word?

ANDROMACHE. What? Is he not to have the same master as I?

TALTHYBIUS. None of the Achaeans will ever be this boy's master.

ANDROMACHE. Are they leaving him here, sole survivor of the Phrygians?

TALTHYBIUS. I don't know how to break the sorrowful news gently.

ANDROMACHE. I thank you for your consideration. But I will not thank you for a tale of sorrows.

TALTHYBIUS. They are going to kill your child. Now you know the extent of your sorrow.

ANDROMACHE. Ah me! This word you bring me is a greater sorrow than my new marriage.

TALTHYBIUS. Odysseus prevailed in the general council with his advice—

ANDROMACHE. Alas and alas! My sorrows are too much.

TALTHYBIUS. He advised them not to allow the son of a heroic father to grow up—

ANDROMACHE. May his advice be applied to his own children.

TALTHYBIUS. But to hurl him from the battlements of Troy.

Come now, let things take their course, and you will show wisdom. Don't hold on to the boy. Bear the agony of sorrow gallantly. You are powerless; don't think you are strong. There is no help for you anywhere. Just look around. Your city is destroyed, your husband dead, yourself overpowered. We are quite able to contend with a solitary woman. Therefore, do not invite a struggle; don't do anything that will humiliate you and just make things more objectionable. And another thing: I don't want you to utter imprecations against the Achaeans. If you say anything to provoke the army, this boy may get no burial, no service of tears. Say nothing; make the best of the situation, and you will not leave this boy's body unburied, and you yourself may find the Achaeans kindlier to you.

ANDROMACHE. My dearest child, my special care, you will leave your hapless mother, you will be slain by our enemies. Your father's gallantry, that brought salvation to others, has brought death to you. Your father's virtues flowered unseasonably for you.

Ah my luckless bridals, the luckless wedding that brought me long ago to Hector's hall [, not to bear a son to be slaughtered by Greeks, but one to rule over the broad acres

repetition - immortality

of Asia]. My child, are you crying? Do you realize your evil fate? Why do your hands clutch me, why do you hang on to my skirts, like a little bird cowering under my wings? Hector cannot come to you, snatching up his famous spear; he cannot leave his grave to succor you. Your father's kinsmen cannot help you, nor the strength of Phrygia. A dolorous leap you must make; mercilessly hurled head first from the heights, your broken body will give up the ghost. O young thing, your mother's lovely armful! How sweet the fragrance of your body! So it was in vain that this breast suckled you, as you lay in your baby clothes. In vain I labored, in vain I wore myself out with toil. Greet your mother, now, it is your last chance. Embrace her that gave you birth. Wrap your arms around me, right around me. Press your lips to mine.

O you Greeks, un-Greek are the tortures you devise. Why are you killing this innocent child? O scion of Tyndareus, Zeus was never your father. I declare you are the daughter of many fathers, first the Spirit of Evil, then Hate, and Murder, and Death, and every monster that earth rears. Never shall I affirm that Zeus begot you, to be the death of Greeks and barbarians innumerable. Be damned! The loveliness of your eyes has brought hideous ruin on the famous fields of Phrygia.

[*She hands Astyanax to Talthybius.*]

There! take him, take him away, hurl him to his death, if that is your will. Feast on his flesh. It is the gods who are destroying us and I shall never be able to save my child from death. Cover my poor body, hurry me to the ships. I go to a fine wedding, having lost my child.

LEADER. Hapless Troy, you have lost thousands of your sons, thanks to one woman and her hateful bed.

TALTHYBIUS. Come, child. Leave your poor mother's loving embraces. Come to the highest parapet of your ancestral towers. There you must relinquish life, as the decree demands. Seize him. You want another sort of herald for jobs like this, one who is merciless, one whose heart has more taste for brutality than mine has.

[*Exit Talthybius with party.*]

HECUBA. O my child, son of my poor son, we are robbed of you, unjustly robbed, your mother and I. What has come over me? What can I do for you, luckless one? Here is my offering to you; I smite my head, I rend my breasts. This is

all I am mistress of. I grieve for my city, I grieve for you. What sorrow is not ours? What more is wanting to complete our utter ruin?

[*She collapses.*]

CHORUS. O Telamon, king of Salamis, haunt of the bees, you established your abode on the sea-girt isle that nestles under the sacred hills where Athena revealed the first green shoots of olive, shining Athens' heavenly crown of glory. Then you went away, away to the field of valor, with Alcmena's archer son, to sack Ilium, our city of Ilium [yes, ours even in that far-off time when you came from Greece].

In his fury at the loss of the mares, he brought with him the flower of Greece's chivalry. Over the sea came his ships and in the lovely estuary of Simois he hove to and made fast his cables to the sterns. Then he took from his ship his sure arrows, that meant death for Laomedon. The walls that the chisel of Phoebus had made square and plumb he destroyed with the red breath of fire and he pillaged the land of Troy. Thus twice has the blow fallen; twice has the bloody spear overthrown the defences round Dardania.

Then it is of no avail, it seems, O son of Laomedon, that you walk delicately with goblets of gold and have the filling of Zeus's cups, a most honorable service. And the land that gave you birth is devastated by fire. On the shore by the sea there is wailing, like the scream of a bird over her brood; wailing for husbands, for children, for aged mothers. Gone are the baths that refreshed you, gone are the gymnasiums and the race tracks. Yet you, beside the throne of Zeus, compose your lovely young face in untroubled serenity, while the Greek spear destroys the land of Priam.

Love, Love, you came of old to the halls of Dardanus, troubling the hearts of the Heavenly Ones. How greatly you exalted Troy in those days when she made connections in heaven. Of Zeus and his shame I shall say no more. But this very day Dawn with her white wings, the light that mortals love, saw the havoc of our land, saw the destruction of our towers. Yet in this land she got the husband of her bridal bower, the father of her children (Tithonus) carried off to Heaven on a golden car drawn by four stars. High ran the hopes in his native land. But Troy has lost the charm that held the gods.

[Enter Menelaus, with soldiers.]

MENELAUS. How beautiful is the brilliance of the sun to-day, this day in which I shall get possession of my wife [Helen. I am Menelaus and I have labored much for her, I and the Achaean army]. I came to Troy not so much to get my wife (that's what men are thinking) but rather to meet the man who deceived his host and carried off my wife from my house. That man, thanks to heaven, has paid the penalty; the Greek spear has destroyed him and his country. Now I am come to take away the Woman of Sparta—I hate to say the name of my wife, my wife that was. She is within these prisoners' tents, reckoned amongst the other Trojan women. They that fought this weary war to get her have given her to me to kill—or, if I do not choose to kill her, to have her taken back to the land of Argos. For my part I have decided to postpone her fate while I am in Troy and to take her back on my ship to the land of Greece and then hand her over to the vengeance of those whose friends have died at Ilium; they will kill her.

Well then, my men, enter the tents and fetch her here. Drag her by her cursed hair. Whenever favorable breezes come, we shall escort her to Greece.

HECUBA [rising.] O you who are the support of the earth and are by earth supported, whatever you are, you who defy the guess of our knowledge, O Zeus, whether you are the Law of Necessity in nature, or the Law of Reason in man, hear my prayers. You are everywhere, pursuing your noiseless path, ordering the affairs of mortals according to justice.

MENELAUS. What's this? You are starting a new fashion in prayer.

HECUBA. I commend you, Menelaus, for your intention to kill your wife. But flee the sight of her, lest she captivate you with longing. She captivates the eyes of men, she destroys cities, she sets homes aflame. Such are her witcheries. I know her; so do you and all her victims.

[Enter Helen, beautifully dressed, and her guards.]

HELEN. Menelaus, this is a prelude well calculated to terrify me; your servants lay rude hands on me and hustle me out of these tents. I can well imagine, of course, that

you may hate me, but still I want to ask: what is the mind of the Greeks and you concerning my life?

MENELAUS. Your case was not specifically discussed, but the whole host has given you to me, whom you wronged, to be put to death.

HELEN. Have I permission to reply, to prove that my death, if I am killed, will be unjust?

MENELAUS. I did not come here to argue; I came to kill you.

HECUBA. Give her a hearing, Menelaus; you don't want to kill her without a hearing. But allow me to handle the prosecution's case against her. You do not know the evils she did in Troy; the indictment, compact and comprehensive, will justify her death and leave her no loophole of escape.

MENELAUS. I must have little to do to grant this favor. But if she wants to speak, she may. But I hope she realizes that I am making this concession on *your* urging, not as a favor to her.

HELEN [to Menelaus]. Since you regard me as your enemy, I don't suppose you will try to meet my points, however sound or unsound you may think them. But I think I know what charges you would make against me if it came to a debate, and I shall arrange my answers correspondingly [your charges against mine, mine against yours].

In the first place, it was this woman here who gave birth to the whole bad business when she gave birth to Paris. Secondly, it was old Priam who ruined both Troy and me, when he did not kill the infant, the dream of the firebrand come true, too true, the future Alexander. That was the start of it; hear now the sequel. This Alexander was made the judge of the three goddesses. The offer of Pallas was the leadership of a Phrygian army that would overthrow Greece. Hera promised him empire over Asia and the furthest limits of Europe, if he would decide in her favor. Cypris told of my marvellous beauty and promised it to him, if she surpassed the other goddesses in beauty. Consider what follows logically from that. Cypris prevails, and see what a boon my nuptials conferred on Greece: she was not conquered by the barbarians, you had neither to meet them in battle nor submit to their empire. Greece's good fortune was my ruin. I was bought and sold for my beauty. And now I am reproached for what ought to have earned me a crown of honor for my head. You will say that I have not yet come to the point at issue, the explanation of my secret flight from your

house. The evil genius that was this woman's son, whether you wish to call him Alexander or Paris, brought an ally along with him, a most powerful goddess. Yet you, my unworthy husband, left him in your halls and sailed off to Crete on a Spartan ship. So be it. The next question I shall put to myself, not to you. Was I in my right mind when I ran away from home with a stranger and left my country and my house? Chastise the goddess, be stronger than Zeus who bears rule over the other divinities but is the slave of Love. I am not to blame.

There is another point which might afford you a specious argument against me. When Alexander was dead and gone below the earth, that ended divine interference in my love affairs; I ought then to have left my home and returned to the ships of the Argives. That is the very thing I sought to do. My witnesses are the guards of the towers, the sentinels on the walls, who time and again discovered me stealthily letting myself down by ropes from the battlements. [Moreover it was by force that that new husband of mine, Deiphobus, took me and kept me as his wife, in defiance of the Trojans.] What justification then would you have, my husband, if you put me to an undeserved death? On the one hand I was married against my will. On the other hand my services to my own people have earned me bitter servitude, instead of a victor's prize. So be stronger than the gods if you want to, but it's a silly thing to want.

LEADER. O queen, defend your children and your country. Destroy the cogency of her pleadings. Eloquence allied to wickedness, it is a fearful combination.

HECUBA. First of all I shall come to the defense of the goddesses and show that her charges against them are unjust. For my part I do not believe that Hera and virgin Pallas were ever so silly that the one was ready to barter away Argos to the barbarian, and the other to make her Athens the slave of Phrygia, and all for a childish whim that took them to Ida to quarrel about their beauty. For why should goddess Hera have conceived such a passion for beauty? Did she hope to get a better husband than Zeus? Was Athena laying her lines for a match with one of the gods, Athena who shuns wedlock and begged the Father to let her remain virgin? Don't make the gods silly to cover up your own wickedness. You'll find you cannot convince the wise. And Cypris—this is very funny—you say she came with my son to the home of Menelaus. Could she not have

stayed quietly in heaven and brought you, Amyclae and all, to Ilium?

My son was of surpassing beauty; at the sight of him your heart transformed itself into Cypris. Every lewd impulse in man passes for Aphrodite. Rightly does her name begin like the word Aphrosyne—lewdness. So when you saw my son in the splendor of gold and barbaric raiment, mad desire took possession of your heart. In Argos you were used to a small retinue; having got rid of the Spartan city, you looked forward to a deluge of extravagance in Phrygia with its rivers of gold. The halls of Menelaus weren't large enough for your luxury to wanton in.

And so to your next point. You say you were *forced* to go with my son. Did anybody in Sparta hear anything? What sort of outcry did you make? Yet Castor was there, a strong young man, and his brother, not yet translated to the stars. Then when you had come to Troy with the Argives at your heels and the deadly jousting of spears had started, whenever a success of Menelaus was announced to you, you would praise him, just to torment my son with the reminder that he had a formidable rival in the lists of love. But if ever the Trojans were successful, Menelaus here was nobody. You kept an eye on Fortune and made it your practice to stick to her side. You had no taste for Virtue's side. Furthermore, you speak of trying to escape by stealth, of letting ropes down from the towers, as if you were there against your will. When, tell me, were you ever caught fixing a noose for your neck or whetting a sword? Yet that's what a noble woman would do who yearned for her former husband. In any case, I was constantly at you, remonstrating with you. "Go away, my daughter. My sons will find other brides, and I will have you conveyed out secretly to the Achaean ships. Stop this fighting between the Greeks and us." But you didn't like that. Why? Because you gloried and revelled in the palace of Alexander, because it gave you pleasure to receive the adoration of barbarians. [That, to you, was greatness.] And after all this you titivate yourself and come out here and brave the light of day beside your husband. O you abomination! You should have come crawling out in rags and tatters, in fear and trembling, your hair cropped to the scalp; modesty would become your guilty past better than impudence.

Menelaus, here is the culmination of my argument: crown Greece with honor, and do yourself justice, by killing this

woman. And make this law for all other women: the woman who betrays her husband dies.

LEADER. Menelaus, be worthy of your ancestors and your house. Punish your wife. You have proved your quality to the Trojans; save yourself from the tongues of Greece, from the reproach of uxoriousness.

MENELAUS. You have come to the same conclusion as I, that she willingly left my home for a foreign bed; Cypris has been injected into her argument to make it sound well. [*To Helen.*] March, to the stoning party; die, and in an instant atone for the Achaeans' years of labor. You will learn not to dishonor me.

HELEN. Do not kill me, by your knees I ask you, do not blame me for the trouble that came from heaven. Forgive me.

HECUBA. There are also your allies whom she slew; do not betray them. On behalf of them and their children I entreat you.

MENELAUS. Say no more, old woman; I do not give her a thought. I command my servants to lead her away to the ships on which she is to sail.

HECUBA. Do not let her on board the same ship with you.

MENELAUS. What do you mean? Is she heavier than she was?

HECUBA. No lover ever loses all his liking.

MENELAUS. That depends on what comes of the disposition of the loved one. But your wish will be granted. She will not embark on the same ship as I. And when she comes to Argos she will get her deserts, a vile death for a vile woman, and she will teach all women to be chaste. No easy task, to be sure, but her death will put a godly fear in their lewd hearts, even if they are more detestable than she is.

[*Exit Menelaus with Helen. Hecuba lies down.*]

CHORUS. *So you have betrayed us to the Achaeans, O Zeus, you have deserted the temple in Ilium with its altars and incense, the burning wafers and the air filled with the fumes of burnt myrrh; you have forsaken holy Pergamum and the ivy-clad glens of Ida, where the torrents run swollen with snow, Ida where the sky ends, the holy ground that catches the radiance of the first shafts of the sun.*

*Gone are the sacrifices and the cheerful songs of the dancers; gone are the festivals of the gods in the darkness of*

*night, gone are the graven images of gold. The moons of Phrygia look down no more on the Feasts of the Twelve Cakes. I wonder, O Lord, I wonder if you take thought of these things, mounted on your ethereal throne in heaven, while my city perishes, destroyed by the blazing rush of fire.*

*O my beloved, O husband mine, in the world of the dead you wander, unburied, unpurified, while I must cross the seas on the wings of a swift ship to Argos, land of horses, where men inhabit the soaring walls of stone that the Cyclopes built. At the gates a multitude of children cling to their mothers' skirts, weeping and wailing. A young girl cries: "Mother, ah me! The Achaeans are taking me away from you, away to the dark ship; over the sea the oars will carry me, either to sacred Salamis or to the peak at the Isthmus looking down on the two seas, the gates to the stronghold of Pelops."*

*When the ship of Menelaus is half way over the sea, may a blazing Aegean thunderbolt, hurled by Jove's holy hands, come crashing down into the midst of his fleet; for he is carrying me away from Ilium's land to exile and tearful servitude in Greece, while the daughter of Zeus takes up in her hands her golden mirrors that maidens love. May he never reach the Laconian land and the hearth and home of his fathers; may he never see the city of Pitana or the temple of the Bronze Gates; for he has taken his evil wife who brought shame on great Hellas and sorrow and suffering to the streams of Simois.*

[*Talthybius and his men arrive with the body of Astyanax.*]

*Oh! Oh! Here are fresh sorrows, succeeding sorrows still fresh, for our land. Hapless wives of the Trojans, you see here the body of Astyanax, whom the Danaans have slain, hurling him (O cruel throw!) from the battlements.*

TALTHYBIUS. Hecuba, one ship is left; its oars are about to take the rest of the booty of Neoptolemus to the shores of Phthia. He has already put to sea on hearing of fresh disasters that have befallen Peleus. They say that Acastus, son of Pelias, has driven him out of his land. This moved Neoptolemus more than any pleasure in staying here. So he is gone, and Andromache with him. When she left she brought tears aplenty to my eyes, as she wept for her native

land and bade farewell to Hector's tomb. She asked Neoptolemus to grant burial to this body, your Hector's child, who lost his life when he was thrown from the walls. She begged him also not to take with him to Phthia this brazen shield, the terror of the Achaeans, with which the boy's father used to cover his sides, not to install it (a sorry sight to see) in the same chamber in which she herself, this dead child's mother, would receive her new bridegroom; but to let it serve as a cedar or stone coffin for her son's burial. The body was to be put into your arms, to be wrapped in its cerements and crowned with flowers, and everything done for it that your strength and your circumstances would allow. For she has gone and her master's urgency has prevented her from burying her own boy. So whenever you have dressed the corpse, we will cover it with earth and set sail.

You must lose no time in fulfilling your appointed task. There is one labor I have spared you. When I came across the streams of Scamander here I took the body and washed out the wounds. Well, I'll be off to break up the ground for his grave. You and I sharing the work together, will save time and get our ship launched for home all the sooner.

HECUBA. Lay Hector's shield on the ground. Its trim lines are a sorry sight, and a dear one, for my eyes.

O you Achaeans, with whom prowess in war bulks larger than wisdom, why did you fear this child and add slaughter to slaughter? Were you afraid he might some day raise fallen Troy? Then you are cowards after all. Our city is taken, Phrygia is destroyed, yet you were afraid of a child, a little child, though even Hector's victories and thousands of brave men besides could not prevent our doom. I do not admire a fear that has no basis of reason.

O dearest child, what a sorry death has overtaken you! If you had died in your city's defence, if you had enjoyed youth and wedlock and the royal power that makes men gods, then you would have been happy, if there is any happiness in these. As it was, my child, your life did know these joys, but knew them only by sight; you got no use of the kingship which was your heritage. Poor boy, what a tragic death! Your own ancestral walls, the battlements of Loxias, have shorn off the curls on which your mother lavished her care and her kisses. From the crushed skull (forgive me!) Death grins forth. O arms so sweet, to me so like your father's, you hang now loose and lifeless from the sockets.

O dear mouth, you are gone, with all your pretty prattle. It was not true, what you used to say to me, climbing on to my bed: "Mother, I'll cut off from my hair a great big curl for you and I'll bring crowds of my friends to your grave and give you fond farewells." But it was the other way round; it is I, the old crone, landless, childless, who bury your poor young corpse. Ah me! All my kisses, all my care, all our nights asleep together, all have been wasted. What will be the verse inscribed on your tomb? "Within this grave a little child is laid, slain by the Greeks because they were afraid." An inscription to make Greece blush. At any rate though you have lost your patrimony you will still have your father's bronze shield to be buried in.

O shield that kept safe my Hector's strong arms, you have lost the hero that kept you safe. How sweet it is to see in your loop the mark of Hector's arm, and on the skilful fashioning of the rim the sweat which dripped from Hector's face as, chin on shield, he bore the brunt of many a fight. Come, let such stores as we have afford a decent burial to this poor corpse. As god has shaped our circumstances, we cannot aim at splendor. But all I have is yours to take.

The mortal is mad who rests his happiness on the expectation of lasting welfare. Fortune is a whirling dervish that twists and turns and leaps now this way, now that. Success is not of a man's own making.

LEADER. Look, here are your women bringing in their arms from the spoils of Troy adornments to wrap the corpse in.

HECUBA. O my child, not for a triumph won over your fellows with chariot or bow in the honored exercises of Phrygia does your father's mother bring you these poor adornments; better she cannot hope for, from the wealth that was once yours. Now accursed Helen has robbed you of it, robbed you and destroyed your life, and ruined utterly your whole house.

CHORUS. *Ah! you move me, Ah! you touch my heart. O the mighty one I have lost, the prince of my land no more!*

HECUBA. The robes, the pride of Phrygia, which you were to wear on your wedding day, when you would wed the proudest princess in Asia, I now put on your body. And you, dear shield of Hector, mother of triumphs innumerable, for the glory of victories past receive this garland. Immortal shield, you will die with the dead. Yet you are much more



to be honored than the armor of Odysseus, wise only in wickedness.

FIRST PART OF CHORUS. *Alas! What a bitter sorrow—*

SECOND PART OF CHORUS. *O child, the earth will receive you.*

FIRST PART. *—for you to bewail, mother.*

HECUBA. *Alas!*

SECOND PART. *'Tis the Song of the Dead.*

HECUBA. *My grief!*

FIRST PART. *Ah grief indeed! Ghastly are your afflictions.*

HECUBA. With bandages I shall play the doctor to your wounds, a sorry doctor, doctor in name with no skill to heal. For the rest, your father will take care of you, amongst the dead.

CHORUS. *Strike, strike your head. Sound the measured beat of hands. Ah me! Ah me!*

HECUBA [*gazing fixedly at the sky*]. *Oh dearest women—*

[*She breaks off, rapt, intense.*]

CHORUS [*alarmed*]. *Hecuba, we are with you, tell us, what means that cry?*

HECUBA [*as if coming out of a trance*]. In Heaven—there is nothing there for us—only my miseries—only hate for Troy, most hated of cities. We have been slaughtering our hecatombs for nothing. If only god had taken us—sunk beneath the earth—disappeared—unknown to fame. . . .

Go then, bury the body in its wretched grave. It has received such tendance as Hell requires. I imagine it makes little difference to the dead to honor them with rich ritual. It is the living who attach importance to such vanities.

[*Cortege departs.*]

CHORUS. *Oh! Oh! Your unhappy mother! Your death has torn to shreds and tatters her high hopes for the future. Greatly envied you were for your noble birth, but horrible was the death by which you perished.*

*Ah! Ah! What do I see yonder on the heights of Ilium, arms waving wildly in the blaze of firebrands? Some fresh sorrow threatens to fall on Troy.*

[*Enter Talthibius and soldiers.*]

TALTHYBIUS. You captains who have been assigned to set fire to this city of Priam, I give you the word. No longer keep the torches idle in your hands; apply the fire. Let us demolish the city of Ilium and then sail away happy to our homes.

As for you, daughters of Troy, I have two commands in one. The rest of you, march to the ships of the Achaeans whenever the commanders of the army sound the shrill note of the echoing trumpet, and you, old Hecuba, unhappiest of women, go with these men whom Odysseus has sent to fetch you. The lot made you his slave; he will take you away from Troy.

HECUBA. Ah wretched me! It has come at last, the culmination and crown of all my sorrows. I leave my country; the torch is put to my city. Old legs, press on, try hard; let me bid farewell to my hapless city. O Troy, that once held your head so high amongst barbarians, soon you will be robbed of your name and fame. They are burning you and leading us out of the land to slavery. O ye gods! Yet why should I call upon the gods? In the past they did not hear when they were called. Come, let us rush to the pyre; our greatest glory will be to perish in the flames in which our country perishes.

TALTHYBIUS. Poor thing, your sorrows are driving you frantic. [*To the soldiers.*] Come there, lead her away. Don't stand on ceremony. We must take Odysseus his prize and put her into his hands.

HECUBA. *Alas! Alas! Alas! Son of Cronus, Lord of Phrygia, Father of our folk, do you see how they treat us, how they outrage the seed of Dardanus?*

CHORUS. *He sees, but the city, the great city, is a city no longer, it is fallen. Troy is dead.*

HECUBA. *Alas! Alas! Alas! Ilium is ablaze; the fire consumes the citadel, the roofs of the city, the tops of the walls!*

CHORUS. *Like smoke blown to heaven on the wings of the wind, our country, our conquered country, perishes. Its palaces are overrun by the fierce flames and the murderous spear.*

HECUBA. *O land that reared my children!*

CHORUS. *Ah! Ah!*

HECUBA. *Hear me, my children, listen to the voice of your mother.*

CHORUS. *You call on the dead with lamentation.*



HECUBA. Yes, I call on them, as I lay my old limbs on the ground and knock on the earth with my two hands.

CHORUS. We too in turn kneel on the earth and call on our husbands in the world of the dead.

HECUBA. We are driven off, we are haled away—

CHORUS. Grievous, grievous is your cry.

HECUBA. —to the halls where we must slave.

CHORUS. Ay, far from our fatherland.

HECUBA. Oh! Priam, Priam, dead, unburied, unbefriended, yet you are unconscious of my doom.

CHORUS. Yes, for darkness has enveloped his eyes, the darkness of blessed death, though cursed be his murderers.

HECUBA. O temples of the gods, O city of my love—

CHORUS. Ah! Ah!

HECUBA. —the deadly flames got you, and the spear of battle.

CHORUS. Soon you will fall, our dear land will cover you, and your name will be no more.

HECUBA. And the dust, like smoke, with wing outspread to heaven, will rob me of the sight of my home.

CHORUS. The name of the land will pass into oblivion. One thing after another, everything disappears. Hapless Troy is finished.

[The citadel collapses.]

HECUBA. Did you notice, did you hear?

CHORUS. The crash of the falling citadel.

HECUBA. Ruin, everywhere ruin—

CHORUS. It will engulf the city.

[Trumpets sound.]

HECUBA. Ah! My trembling limbs, lead me on my path. On with you, poor limbs, to lifelong slavery.

CHORUS. Ah hapless city! But still—forward, feet, to the waiting ships of the Achaeans.

[Exeunt.]

## Electra

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THE differences between this *Electra* and the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles on the same theme are an easy index to Euripides' dramaturgy. The scene is not a palace but a peasant's hut, and the personages are heroic only in name. They are not abstract types but carefully studied individuals whose conduct is referable to contemporary standards. Electra's language is full of nurses and babies and sex; she is motivated rather by envy of her mother than loyalty to her father. Orestes is a frightened vagabond who talks grandiloquently of nobility. The murders are merely repulsive, and the perpetrators are crushed when they see the results of behavior expected of an Orestes and an Electra.

The ridicule of the tokens by which Aeschylus effects Orestes' recognition is an expression of Euripides' wit; but his more sophisticated identification by means of a scar is significant of the verisimilitude his more realistic drama required. The hearty and homely sea-god out of the machine openly criticizes Apollo for instigating the horror, but we have seen enough to understand that it was not necessarily Apollo but false beliefs concerning him that caused the tragedy.