

EURIPIDES'
"ANDROMACHE"
(or, according to Callimachus, "Democrates")
ca 427 BCE
Place of first performance or prize awarded unknown

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Dramatis Personae

Andromache

(Hektor's widow, now Neoptolemos' Trojan slave)

Hermione

(Neoptolemos' wife and Menelaos' daughter)

Menelaos

(King of Sparta, Helen's husband)

Peleas

(Achilles' father and Neoptolemos' grandfather)

Orestes

(Hermione's cousin)

Thetis

(Achilles' mother, Peleas' wife, a nereid)

Trojan Female Slave

(Once of Andromache now of Neoptolemos)

Chorus

(Of Thessalian women)

Molossos

(Young son of Andromache and Neoptolemos)

Nurse

(Hermione's aged servant)

Messenger

(To Neoptolemos)

Various servants and attendants

In the distance we see Neoptolemos' palace.

Nearer is the temple and a statue of the nereid, Thetis.

Andromache, dressed in the clothes of a suppliant, comes out of the palace and walks to the temple. She stands before it and prays for a few seconds before she turns to the audience

Andromache:

Thebes! Thebes, my country! The brightest gem in all of Asia!

It was from there that I went to King Priam's Palace, in Troy, baring a rich dowry of gold, to be made Hektor's wife and mother of his children. Yes, that was me then: Andromache, a woman most envied by all other women.

That was me, then!

Now, I am the most unfortunate of all the women ever born, or will be born in the future!

I, Andromache, have witnessed my husband being slaughtered by Achilles and my son, Astyanax, hurled down from Troy's tall towers, when Troy was captured and destroyed by the Greek spears.

And I, Andromache, a member of a household of free people have been dragged here, to Greece, as a slave, a spoil of war, a prize to the islander Neoptolemos for his bravery!

So now, I live here, in Phthia, next to Pharsalia, part of Thessaly. These are the lands where Thetis, the sea nymph and her husband, Peleas lived. They lived here, alone, away from the rest of the world and, in their honour, the Thessalians called these precincts Thetideion.

20

That building there belongs to Achilles' son, Neoptolemos, who did not want to take the throne of Pharsalia from his grandfather, Peleas and so Peleas is still our King.

It was in this house that I gave birth to Molossos, my master's, Neoptolemos' boy and Achilles' grandson.

And with all the misery that has engulfed me, I had this one hope that kept me going: That if my son survived I would have some sort of support, some help against my fate.

30

But then, my lord abandoned my bed, the bed of a slave and married the Spartan Hermione who now torments me with her cruel abuse.

She accuses me of using drugs of magic powers against her, of making her barren and of making her husband despise her! She says I'm trying to force her out of the palace so that I can take over as its rightful mistress but I did not come to this bed of my own free will but it was forced upon

men and now, look! I have given way to her and here I am, a suppliant at this temple!

Zeus, mightier than all, is my witness and he will testify that it was not my wish to become this woman's rival in bed.

But I just can't convince her of this and now she is plotting to kill me.

40

Her father, Menelaos, is her accomplice in this plot and he has come here all the way from Sparta. He is inside the palace right now, while I have come out here, to stand as a suppliant by this nearby temple, hoping that the goddess, Thetis, will help me escape death. Peleas and his descendants honour this nereid as a symbol of his marriage to her.

50

I have sent my son and only child to another house to save him from death because his father isn't here to protect either of us. He is at Delphi right now, seeking forgiveness from Apollo so that Apollo might be good to him in the future. Neoptolemos is seeking forgiveness because once he did something which only the insane would do. He had gone to Pytho and demanded of Apollo recompense for the death of his father, Achilles, whom the god had killed!

Enter Nurse from the palace

Nurse:

My lady... I'll continue calling you that, since I've been calling you that when we were at your palace, back in Troy and I was your friend then and your husband's friend while he was still alive.

60

But now, I'm here, my Lady, with news for you but I'm terrified that our masters will see me here, talking to you... but I feel sorry for you, my Lady.

My Lady, Andromache, I must tell you that Menelaos and his daughter are plotting against you. They are devising horrible things against you. Be very careful, my Lady!

Andromache:

Dear, dear slave-sister! Yes, now that misery has fell upon me, you are my sister in slavery, even though once I was your Queen. Tell me, what are they up to?

What snares are they preparing in their efforts to take this miserable life of mine?

Nurse:

They want to kill your son, my poor Lady!

You have sent him secretly away but they want to kill him!

70

Andromache:

Ah, no!

Has she found out I've sent my son away? But how? Who told her?

Ah! This suffering is overwhelming!

Nurse:

I don't know, my Lady. I just heard that they did. Menelaos has already gone to fetch him.

Andromache:

Ah, I am lost! Lost, my son!

My son, my son! These two vultures will grab you and tear you apart!

They will kill you while your father is still at Delphi!

Nurse:

True, my Lady! Had he been here, you'd be in no danger but now, you're all alone with no one to help you!

Andromache:

What about Peleas? Does anyone know if he's coming?

80

Nurse:

My Lady, even if he was here he wouldn't be able to help you. He's just too old.

Andromache:

Yes, but I've sent for him a number of times!

Nurse:

My dear, do you really think that any of these messengers care at all about your plight?

Andromache:

No, of course, why should they care about a slave. Will you go for me then?

Nurse:

But how will I explain to the folks inside where I've been all that time?

Andromache:

Nurse, you're a woman! You can find many excuses!

Nurse:

This is a dangerous task, my Lady. As a guard, Hermione is no child!

Andromache:

I see!

So, when the need arises you abandon your friends!

Nurse:

No, no! You can't accuse me of that!

I'll go! And if anything happens to me, well, so what? What's a slave's life worth, anyhow, not much.

91

Andromache:

Go then nurse and I will let my sighs and tears, the groans of pain which were my life's companions, fill the high heavens!

Exit the Nurse

It is a woman's way to constantly speak of her misery, in the hope it will lessen the pain. Her bitterness is always on her lips.

There is so much for me to feel bitter about, to cry about! Not just one, single thing but many things!

I cry for my country and for my dead husband; and I cry for the miserable fate that has brought me to slavery for no good reason.

100

We cannot call any mortal happy until we see how he has spent his last day and went to the world below.

The rest of her soliloquy is a lament which, director-willing, she sings.

And Paris took Helen to his bed not as a bride

But as a mortal blow to Troy!

The Greek fleet, a thousand war ships strong,

Rushed to you, Troy and burned you to the ground!

Fire and sword!

And they rushed to kill my Hektor!

Ah, my Hektor!

Ah, my husband!

Achilles, Thetis' son, the nereid's son,

Tied him at his chariot and dragged him round the walls of Troy!

And I!

They took me from my chamber to the shore

My head covered with the shroud of slavery.

110

The tears I shed then! So many tears rolled down my face!

My city, my home and my husband I had left behind lying in ashes!

Ah what wretched misery is this?

Why live if this is the only life I can live? Why look upon the light of day as a slave to Hermione?

She torments me!

She runs to the statue of Thetis and throws her arms around it

Ah, she tortures me! She drove me here, to the statue of this goddess

And I wrap my suppliant arms around it!

Ah! I am melting in tears!

Gushing tears like the waters of a spring from a rock!

Enter the Chorus

Chorus:

Andromache!

Woman, you have not moved from Thetis' temple all day!

I, a Thessalian, have come to help you, even though you are a daughter of Asia.

120

Chorus:

To see if I can find some means of ending your bitter clash with Hermione, a clash most unfortunate because you both share the bed of Neoptolemos, the son of Achilles.

Chorus:

Poor woman!

Realise the reality of your Fate, Andromache!

Look carefully at the impossible situation in which you find yourself!

Chorus:

Can you, a woman from Troy, go against your masters?

Hermione is a Spartan! A Spartan, born and bred!

130

Chorus:

Move away from that shrine, Andromache!

Chorus:

Leave that place of sacrifice!

This revered goddess will be of no help to you against your mistress' torment!

Chorus:

There is no point in you wasting your lovely body with worry about this.

Chorus:

Making it ugly with despair!

Chorus:

Know this, Andromache: The strong always win!

Chorus:

So why fight? You are the weak one!

Chorus:

Come now! Come away from that beautiful sanctuary of the divine nereid!

You are but a slave in a foreign land. In a land that belongs to others.

Chorus:

You must understand that well, Andromache! You are but a slave in a foreign land.

Chorus:

Poor woman, there is not a single friendly face here for you to look upon!

Chorus:

You are the most unfortunate of all women, the most wretched of them all!

140

Chorus:

Andromache, my soul felt deep pity for you when I first saw you; that

time when you first came here, to this palace, from Troy, but I was too afraid to speak!

Chorus:

Too afraid Andromache, too afraid that my mistress, daughter of Zeus' daughter, would find out how I felt about you...

Chorus:

...and so I kept quiet.

Enter Hermione dressed in royal gowns, jewels and crown.

She is accompanied by her servants.

Hermione:

The golden crown on my head, the jewels and the embroidered gown that adorns my body have not come from the glorious coffers of Achilles, nor of his father, Peleas!

150

No, they are gifts which my father, Menelaus has given me. A vast dowry from Sparta, from Laconia!

And so, I can speak to you all as a free woman, indebted to no one!

To Andromache

As for you! You are here, as a slave, captured by the war spear, yet you want to throw me out of my own palace and take it for your own!

Your magic potions have turned my husband against me and made my womb barren and useless! Asian women are experts at such evil things!

160

But I will stop you nevertheless. The temple of the nereid will not help you. Not its altar nor its sanctuary. You will die!

And if some mortal or immortal wants to or can save you, well, forget your old airs and graces and learn about being humble.

You must fall at my feet and sprinkle the floors of my halls with water that you will bring from the river Achelos in golden jugs and, while doing so, learn what your true station in life is now!

Here you will not find Hektor's gold, nor his father's, Priam. This is a city of Greece!

170

You are a destroyed woman! You have reached the direst depths of your stupidity, woman! You now sleep with the son of the man who has murdered your husband and to have his children!

But that's the barbarians for you!

They're all the same!

Father sleeps with daughter and mother with son! Brother with sister!

The closest relatives will kill one another with no restraint from law.

Don't bring such customs to our city, woman!

180

It is not proper for a man to control the reins of two women here! Those

men who want to live a decent, honourable life will be content with one woman in their bed.

Chorus:

Women!

Jealous souls! They will always hate those women who share their husband's bed with them.

Andromache:

Ah, youth!

Youth is a dreadful thing if it's not accompanied by an understanding of justice. It is a curse to all of us!

And now, young woman, I am afraid that, even though I have much justice on my side, my position as a slave will stop you from hearing me out. Or, even if you do and I win my case, that, too, will hurt me! Those with mighty pride cannot tolerate being beaten by the wise arguments spoken by the weak!

190

Yet, I will not subvert my own rights!

Well then, tell me young woman, what would give me the courage to come and destroy your own, lawful marriage? Is not your Sparta far superior in strength to my Troy? Is not your fortune far superior to mine? Or am I, in your eyes, a free woman?

Where will I find the audacity to throw you out of your home and become its mistress? To have your husband's children –wretched slaves to drag around behind me? Where? In a beautiful, healthy body? In a large and powerful city full of friends?

201

My dear, if you don't have any children, then do you think anyone will allow one of mine to sit on the throne of Phthia? Yes, the Greeks love me because I was once Hektor's wife; and was I not a member of Troy's royal family and not a mere commoner?

No, Hermione! If your husband doesn't love you it's not because of any destructive magic potions of mine. It's because you don't know the art of being a good wife –and there's your destructive magic potion! There's your problem! There's the only reason why he doesn't love you! It is our manners young lady, it is our manners, our ways, that win the love of our husband. It's not only about our beauty.

But what do you do?

210

The moment something bothers you, you immediately start throwing insults at your husband's country, Skyros and loudly boast about your father's, Sparta! You whine about being a rich woman among the poverty stricken and declare to all and sundry that your father, Menelaos, is far greater a man than Achilles!

That's why your husband hates you!

Understand this, young woman: that even if a woman is given to a terrible, man she must be patient and silent and not fight with him battles of pride!

If you were in snow covered Thrace and had married a king who shares his bed with many women, would you have tried to kill all of them? What would happen then? Because of your murder, the whole race of women would be condemned for being insatiable in lust.

220

It would be a shame accusation!

It is true, in this we are worse than men but we should at least cover this shame with some modesty!

Ah, my Hektor! Even if Aphrodite delivered you into the arms of another, I would still offer my breast to your bastard sons so as not to make you feel any bitterness towards me.

And that's how I kept a hold of my husband's love, Hermione! With kindness, with a good heart! Not you though! Because of your jealous fear you wouldn't let even a drop of heavenly dew fall and settle upon your husband's head!

Take care, Hermione, that you do not surpass the madness your mother had about men! Wise children must avoid the habits of their evil mothers!

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Chorus: *To Hermione*

My Lady, listen to her! Try as much as it is possible for you to come to some agreement with her.

Hermione: *To Andromache*

Ha! Such big words, such arrogance!

You talk as if you're wise and virtuous and I am not!

Andromache:

Your words show no wisdom.

Hermione:

And I hope my heart never entertains such wisdom as yours!

Andromache:

You are young and speak of things that are shameful!

Hermione:

And you? You may not utter the words but you do practice the deeds as best you can!

240

Andromache:

Can you not shut up about your love pains?

Hermione:

Shut up? Why should I? Is not love a woman's greatest concern?

Andromache:

It is, but she should not be shamefully crazed by it!

Hermione:

But are not Aphrodite's gifts good and honourable?

Andromache:

Not if you don't use them honourably!

Hermione:

This is Greece. The customs of barbarians don't apply here!

Andromache:

Shame is shame both here and there.

Hermione:

You are indeed clever, Andromache but you must die just the same!

Andromache:

Look, Hermione. Thetis' statue is watching you!

Hermione:

That goddess hates the Trojans who have killed her son, Achilles.

Andromache:

His death was caused by Helen, your mother, not by me.

Hermione:

How much deeper into my pains will you go on digging?

250

Andromache:

I shall stop right now. Here, see, I am shutting my mouth!

Hermione:

Let me hear from you the thing that brought me here.

Andromache:

I think you lack some wisdom.

Hermione:

Will you never leave this sacred shrine?

Andromache:

Never, if by leaving it I shall die.

Hermione:

The decision is mine and I won't even waste time waiting for my husband.

Andromache:

But nor I will I give myself up to you before he comes.

Hermione:

I shall set fire to the place and you can suffer the consequences, for all I care.

Andromache:

By all means! Burn the place. The eyes of the gods will watch on.

Hermione:

Your flesh will feel the worst of pains!

260

Andromache:

Go ahead, kill me! Paint the altar of the goddess with my blood, if you want.

She will make you sure you will pay for it.

Hermione:

Barbarian creature! So braze that you're prepared to defy even death! But you will see: soon, you will leave that shrine of your accord. I have the means to make you do it. But no more words from me. I will leave it to the deed to make my intentions clear.

Well, stay there, if you wish. I will make you move away even they pour molten lead all around you! I will have you out of there even before your trusted Neoptolemos returns!

Hermione exits into the palace

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Andromache: *Sarcastically, at Hermione's back*

Ha! My trusted Neoptolemos! Achilles' son! Ha!

How strange it is that gods have given mortals drugs to remedy the bites of wild venomous snakes, yet no one has devised drugs yet to remedy the bites of venomous women, bites that are far more terrible than those of snakes, or the burns of a blazing flame!

We, women, are such a dreadful curse to humanity!

Chorus:

Hermes, the son of Zeus and Maia, was the cause of great miseries when he brought the three golden goddesses, Athena, Hera and Aphrodite, to the valley of Ida.

Chorus:

Great miseries indeed!

Three golden fillies, under a golden yoke, fully armed to do battle for the prize of beauty, came to the grazing fields of a young shepherd's cows. Paris, who lived alone in his hut...

Chorus:

And when they came to the shady valley they bathed their splendid bodies in the mountain springs before appearing in front of Paris, Priam's son...

Chorus:

And when they came before the Prince, they each compared their charms in spiteful words...

Chorus:

And it was Aphrodite who finally won with sweet deceits and promises...

290

Chorus:

And they were words sweet indeed for the ear but bitter for the Phrygian city...

Chorus:

And for the citadel's tall towers! Such misery for Troy!

Chorus:

But how I wish, oh, how I wish, the woman who had given birth to him, yes, his mother, had smashed his wretched head before he came to settle by cliffs of Ida...

Chorus:

When his sister Cassandra, standing next to the prophetic laurel screamed for his slaughter...

300

Chorus:

She screamed for them to tear this curse out of Priam's land.

Chorus:

And she went everywhere and begged everyone, all the elders of the city, to have the baby prince killed.

Chorus:

If only they listened to her!

Slavery would not have yoked the Trojan women and you, dear lady, would still be sitting on the throne of a royal palace!

Chorus:

And Greece would have been saved from the torments and misery that her young men suffered, wandering about the walls of Troy, spear in hand, for ten long years!

Chorus:

No wedding beds would have been left bereft of men nor old fathers of their sons!

Enter Menelaos, dressed in full armour dragging young Molossos by the hand.

They are followed by an armed escort.

309

Menelaos:

Ha! You have sent your son to a stranger's house without my daughters knowledge!

But, here he is! We have caught him!

You thought that Thetis's statue over there would save you and this boy but, I'm far too clever for you! Now, if you insist on staying there, at that shrine, it'll be this child that I'll slaughter. Think about it, Andromache and do so carefully. Shall it be you or him who'll die for the wrongs you have committed against me and my daughter!

319

Andromache:

O, glory, glory!
You have puffed up the egos of so many worthless men!
Let those who have gained you honestly be truly blessed but those others!
Those who gained you falsely, let them be thought of as no more than
Fate's chosen! Glory gained by mere accident!
And so, you, Menelaos, a trivial man, was it you, a general of Greek
soldiers, who really took Troy from Priam? Was it really you?
You who just now got all flustered by the words of a mere child, of your
daughter, to come and strike at a poor captive woman?
You are not worthy of Troy, Menelaos and Troy did not deserve the likes
of you!

330

Some men appear wise from the outside, they make a splendid show of it,
but inside, inside they are distinguished from the common herd only by
their wealth.

Well, Menelaos, let's get to the nub of this problem.

Let us say, your daughter fulfilled her wish. She has killed me. Fine.
What then? She will have to deal with the pollution of murder. Of spilling
blood. And then, most people will also hold you condemned as an
accomplice to this murder. You are sharing in the deed so you won't be
able to escape the accusation.

340

And then, let us say the other: I escape my death. Will you really kill my
son? What do you think his father will think of that? Of you having
murdered his only son?

His response is already known. In all his time in Troy he has acted
dutifully. He was never called a coward. He has shown himself to be a
truly worthy son of Achilles and the grandson of Peleas.

He will throw your daughter out of this house. What will you say then to
men when you try to find her another husband? Will you lie and say that
she left a man who was unworthy of her virtue? No, you can't say such
lies. Who'll have then? You? Will you take her to live in your halls?

Keep her there until she grows old and grey and unmarried?

Poor man! Can't you see what a storm of troubles awaits you?

350

Is that what you want? Would you rather the future I am describing for
you or would you let your daughter suffer, even countless such little love
troubles?

Menelaos, you shouldn't repay little troubles with big ones! And if we
women, are such a curse on humanity then men shouldn't imitate us!

If it is true, as your daughter says, that I have used magic to make her
barren, then I'll willingly leave this shrine and present myself to her
husband for him to judge me and punish me as he pleases, since, if I was

responsible for his wife's infertility then I would also be responsible for rendering him childless.

360

So, that's where I stand.

But, as for you, I fear one thing about your soul: You have destroyed Troy simply because of a quarrel you had about a woman!

Chorus:

Andromache, for a woman, you said too much to man!

Good sense has shot itself out of your mind!

Menelaos:

Woman, these matters, as you say are petty. Yes, it's even unworthy of the sceptre I hold and of Greece herself but what must not be forgotten is that whatever a man holds dear is far more valuable than the conquest of Troy.

370

And that's why I have come to my daughter's assistance. To help her regain her rights as a married woman because whatever else a woman may suffer she can endure but when she loses the love of her husband, then she loses her whole life.

My brother-in-law must rule over my slaves and my daughter and I should rule over his. It is the way with true friends who keep nothing for themselves but share everything.

That's why I won't behave like a fool and wait until he returns, before I can go about managing my affairs as I see fit.

380

So come on! Get up and out of that shrine!

Your death will save the life of your son. It's either you or he. One of you must die!

Andromache:

Lots! Choices!

If I win the one I am doomed. If I win the other I am destroyed!

Listen to me, Menelaos! You have made too much of a tiny thing! You want to kill me! Why?

390

What have I done? What city have I betrayed? Which of your sons have I slaughtered? Which of your houses have I burnt?

It was not of my own will to enter my master's bed. Why kill me and not him who committed the offense? You walk right past the source of the evil and jump upon its consequence!

Ah, what a miserable fate!

Ah, my poor country, what horrible suffering I must endure!

Why have I become a mother? Why add yet another load of suffering?

400

But why mourn all this?

I have seen my Hektor, slaughtered and dragged behind a chariot and I have seen Troy in flames! And I have been dragged by my hair to the Greek ships to be a slave! And then, when I arrived here, in Phthia, I was made to share the bed of my Hektor's murderer!

What joy is there left for me in life? Where can I turn now? My whole life is misery!

I have only one son. My only light! My only source of joy yet him too, they have decided to kill!

But no! I won't let them kill him! If this wretched life of mine can save him, then so be it! I would not commit the shameful act of saving my miserable life at the expense of my son's life!

411

Here! I am walking away from the shrine!

I am in your hands, ready for the slaughter, for the prison, for the hanging!

My son, I am going to Hades so that you may live. If you escape death, then remember your mother. Remember what torment she has suffered before she died. And when you throw your loving arms about your father and when you kiss him, tell him, with tears in your eyes, how they have treated me!

Children are the lifeblood of humanity. Those who have none and scorn the idea, might be enjoying a smaller burden in life but the price for it will be bitterness.

421

Chorus:

I hear your tale, Andromache and I feel sad for you. Such misfortunes move every mortal.

Chorus:

Menelaos, you should have tried to speak with your daughter, to get her to come to some agreement with this woman, so she may avert disaster.

Menelaos: *To his men*

Men, seize this woman! Seize her and tie her hands up well because what she's about to hear will not please her at all!

The men obey.

To Andromache

Ha! Now I've got you! I have told you about your son so that I could get you away from that shrine and make you surrender to me and to your death!

430

So that's where you stand!

Now as to your son! His fate rests with my daughter. It is she who will decide whether he will live or die!

No off you go! Inside!

That will teach you to curb your arrogance when speaking to a free man when you are but a slave!

Andromache:

Ah! Treachery! I have been deceived!

Menelaos:

Let the world hear you! I won't be denying any of it!

Andromache:

Is this what you Spartans call "being wise?"

Menelaos:

Just as they do in Troy! Victims must retaliate!

Andromache:

Do you think that there are no gods? Do the gods not mete out justice?

440

Menelaos:

I'll deal with their justice when it comes. In the meantime, you will die!

Andromache:

And what about this little child that you have torn away from under my wing? Will you kill him also?

Menelaos:

No, not I. I will give him to my daughter to do that, if that's what she wants.

Andromache:

Oh, my darling!

I am mourning your death now!

Menelaos:

Ha! I can't see much hope for him escaping death!

Andromache:

O, hateful, hateful Spartans!

Most hateful of all mortals on earth!

Schemers, all of you! Conspirators! Plotters of the most evil deeds!

Master liars!

Minds so crooked that not one single, honest thought occurs to them!

Crooked, twisted and devious minds!

You prosper in Hellas unjustly!

450

What's missing in your list of evil?

You are masters of murder! Masters, too of dishonest profit! Masters of deceit! There is one word on your lips and yet its opposite word in your heart!

Be cursed all of you!

My death, Menelaos, is not as heavy a punishment as you have hoped it would be!

Not this death Menelaos because my real death came the day Troy fell
and the day my glorious Lord, Hektor, fell! Hektor, whose spear had
often showed you for what you really are a coward! Coward on land
rushed off to be a coward on his ship!

And now, look at you! Here you are, dressed in all the armour of a wild
warrior, ready to kill a woman!

Well, here I am! Kill me!

460

I shall utter not a single word of flattery for you or your daughter!

It is right that you are great in Sparta and we in Troy!

And, no, don't boast about my misfortune. It could be yours one day!

Menelaos' men drag Andromache into the palace.

Menelaos and the boy follow

Chorus:

I do not approve at all of beds shared by two wives or of children sharing
two mothers! They are nothing but bitter trouble for a house.

470

Chorus:

A husband should be satisfied with one wife. One only!

Chorus:

And a city should not be ruled by two kings! Two kings double the
problems of the city and cause divisions among its citizens.

Chorus:

And when two poets try to write the same song, the Muses will turn them
into enemies.

479

Chorus:

And when a ship is in the grips of a winter tempest, tossing sailors all
about, two pilots and a whole host of wise men around the radar, are less
effective than a single, even less knowledgeable, man with absolute right
to govern.

Chorus:

A house or a city must be ruled by a single man, if the people in them
want to see progress. This is what gives both their strength.

Chorus:

And proof of this is this Spartan girl, Hermione, daughter of military
Commander, Menelaos. She has stoked a blazing fire of hatred against
her rival, the poor Trojan woman and wants to kill her and her son as
well!

491

Chorus:

A murder condemned by the laws of all the gods and mortals alike!

Chorus:

But you will pay dearly for these deeds, dear lady!

From the house come Menelaos and his men dragging the bound Andromache and her son, who is clinging tightly to her. Blood is seen on her hands.

Menelaos has his sword raised threateningly.

Chorus:

Ah, look!

The two poor souls are bound together with the same rope and heading for the same fate.

Chorus:

Death!

Chorus:

Poor child!

Chorus:

Innocent child!

You have done nothing to these masters!

Chorus:

Yet you will be killed because of your mother's marriage!

500

Andromache:

Look at me, ladies!

Hands tied, hands bleeding, I am taken to the world below this earth!

Molossos:

Mummy, mummy, I too, am coming with you.

Here I am beneath your wings!

Andromache:

What a cruel sacrifice!

Come, rulers of Phthia!

Molossos:

Father come and help us! Come and help your loved ones, daddy!

510

Andromache:

You will rest with me, my darling. Beneath this earth, next to me, next to my breast!

Molossos:

Mummy, what will happen to me?

O, mummy we are both so unfortunate!

Menelaos:

Enough!

Go now! Go to the underworld, both of you!

Both of you have come here from enemy towers! You are condemned by two separate judgments: You, woman, by my own whereas you, boy from

my daughter's.

It would be stupid to let enemies or their sons live when you can kill them so easily and remove all fear from your house!

522

Andromache!

Husband! Husband! My Hektor! Priam's son!

If only I had your hand and your spear to help me!

Molossos:

What bitter Fate, mother!

What hymn must I sing to ward off this black Fate, mother?

Andromache:

There, my son! Him! Our master. Plead with him for your life, my son.

Touch his knees!

530

Molossos:

Kind Master, our Master, spare us! Come, please, don't kill us!

Andromache:

A trickle of tears runs from my eyes and washes my cheeks, like a spring, hidden deep away from the sun, a spring whose waters wash over a rock.

Molossos: *Rushes to Menelaos' knees*

Ah, Master! How can I escape this miserable Fate?

Menelaos: *To Molossos*

Why bother begging at my knees, boy? You might as well beg to a sea-hardened rock and to the deaf waves!

I will look after my people but have no sympathy for the likes of you!

540

It has cost me a great deal of my life to capture your mother's city and her with it, so now you will pay for that cost: You will die! You will descend to the halls of Hades!

Enter Peleas. An old man, supported by his king's sceptre and a servant.

Chorus:

Ah, I see old man Peleas! Old feet rushing this way!

Peleas: *Angry, at Menelaos*

What is all this? I'm asking you, Menelaos! You and you, the executioner! What is going on here? What's causing all this fuss and uproar at the palace?

Tell me!

What secret, lawless schemes are you devising now?

Menelaos, you'd better stop this murder! Don't overrun Justice!

550

To the servant

Help me move faster, servant! I can see now that I must not be slow in this. This is the time when my strength must be reborn!

Indicating Andromache

But first, let my words fall upon this woman, like a favouring breeze upon the sails.

To Andromache

Tell me, woman. What reason have they given you for tying your hands up like this and dragging you and your son away, like a lamb and its mother? All this while your master and I have been away.

559

Andromache:

Old Prince, you can see what's going on. They have tied me and my son and they are taking us away to kill us. No need to say any more. The moment I knew about it, I have sent a thousand messengers to let you know also.

Surely you have heard the rumours by now. How this man's daughter started off this dreadful quarrel which has divided the palace and which has brought about my death.

Now, they've just dragged me off that shrine there of the goddess Thetis, the goddess who has given birth to your glorious son, Achilles and whom you hold dear. And they have done this with no proper trial nor waited for my master to return.

They have found us alone and defenceless and now, along with his unfortunate mother, they are going to kill the boy even though he has done no harm to anyone!

571

Old sir, I fall at your knees! My hands are bound and I cannot stretch them to touch your friendly beard but I beg you, kind sir: Save me, please, sir! Save me, or else we will be both destroyed. Your family will be dealt with shame and I with misery!

Peleas:

Release them!

Untie them immediately before someone pays dearly for this!

Menelaos:

And I say no!

Not only am I your equal in status, I also have a greater right to her!

581

Peleas:

How so?

This is my house! Do you have a greater right to rule it than I do?

Is Sparta not enough for you?

Menelaos:

It was I who had captured her in Troy!

Peleas:

Yes but she was handed to my grandson as a prize.

Menelaos:

But are not all his possessions also mine?

Peleas:

Yes, to protect, not to destroy! Not to cut down with your sword!

Menelaos: *Rushes over and roughly grabs Andromache's hand.*

You'll never take her from my hands!

Peleas: *Raises his sceptre threateningly*

Let her go or I'll smash your head with this sceptre!

Menelaos:

Go on, try it!

Come closer, if you dare! Come on, just try and put a hand on me!

590

Peleas:

Ha! You? You a man? A real man among men?

You're a coward! The chief of them!

You left your house unlocked and unguarded as if the woman inside it was the paragon of goodness! She is the worst kind of woman and that's why she ran off with a barbarian! A Trojan!

But who can be surprised at this? Even if a Spartan woman wanted to be good how could she, when you allow them all to go about with their breasts bare to the world, their tunics loosened to reveal all and to exercise naked along with men, at the race tracks and the wrestling yards?

601

What unbearable customs!

How, then can anyone wonder at their lack of virtue?

Ask your Helen this question: Ask her why she had left your house behind and with it her reverence to Zeus the Hospitable and gone off to some foreign land with a young man! Was it for such a woman that you dragged such an enormous Greek army all the way to Troy? You should have let her rot there. In fact, pay her to stay there, not start of a war for her!

610

But no! Not your type of thinking! Instead, you have ended the lives of many brave soldiers, you have left many mothers and many fathers, aging at home without their noble sons! And I am one of those aging fathers!

You! To my eyes you are the most despicable murderer of my son, Achilles! You are the only one who has returned without a scratch on his body! Even your beautiful shields and spears and swords have come back untouched, still in their splendour, still in their sheaths!

620

I warned my grandson Neoptolemos before he married! I told him to start no relationship with you, to bring no evil mother's child into our house!

A mother's shameful deeds are a bad dowry for her daughter!

Listen to me all you men who are looking for a wife! Look first for an honest mother!

And that's not all, Menelaos! That's not all! What you've done to your brother, Agamemnon was outrageous! You were so afraid you were going to lose this... this wonderful wife of yours, you've made him slaughter his own young daughter, Iphigeneia! Outrageous! Stupid! And then, all right, let us agree on this, and then, after you've captured Troy, did you kill her? Did you kill that horrible woman of yours?

630

No!

The moment you saw her naked breasts, you dropped your sword to the ground and ran into her arms! You kissed that evil, traitorous slut and uttered sweet, fawning words to her! That's how much of a match you are to the calls of lust! There, too, you are found to be nothing but a coward, a slave to Aphrodite!

And now, you have come here, to my grandson's palace and, in his absence, you turn it upside down and want to commit a shameful murder! To murder a poor, innocent woman and her son!

But this young boy, though he might be a bastard thrice over, one day he will make you and your daughter pay for this deed dearly!

Because just like barren land can often yield a greater harvest than the deep, fertile soil, so can bastards be better men than the legitimate ones.

Now, take your daughter and leave this place! Go!

Better for mortals to be related to poor but honest folk than to the rich and dishonest.

And you, Menelaos, you are a nobody!

642

Chorus:

The tongue can turn trivial things into furious quarrels.

Chorus:

Wise mortals are careful not to quarrel with their friends.

Menelaos:

How on earth can we say that old men are wise or those men who had once earned that reputation throughout Greece, if you, Peleas –you, the grandson of Zeus and the son of the famous Aeacus, who was renowned for his sense of Justice and who had become one of the judges of the world below- how can we think of them as wise, if you utter words that bring shame upon you and insult upon me, all for the sake of a foreign woman, a woman whom you should have driven away to places beyond the Nile or even the Phasis?

650

You should have, in fact, asked for my help to do that!

This is a woman who comes from Asia, the graveyard of a great many

Greek men. This is the woman who has a share in your son's death. Was Paris, who had killed Achilles, not Hektor's brother? And was this woman not Hektor's wife?

Yet here you are, sharing your roof and your table with her and letting her have children who will become your worst enemies!

660

And when I, thinking of your own welfare and mine, try to kill her, you come and take her away from me!

Let's tell the truth here. If this woman has children but my daughter doesn't, will it not be her children whom you will place upon Phthia's throne? Will it not be these barbarians that you'll make rulers of all the Greeks?

Is it because I find this unfair and you do that makes me so stupid and you so clever?

670

And then, what if you had a daughter and married her to someone who had treated her as badly, would you have sat in silence? Done nothing about it?

I doubt it! Not by the way you're talking about this foreigner to your own relatives!

Man or woman, when it comes to being treated badly or unfaithfully by a partner, the pain is the same.

For a man, his strength is in his own hands, whereas a woman relies on her family, her parents and her relatives, so, of course, I have every right to come to the assistance of my own daughter.

You are an old man Peleas and so, by talking about my years as a general you have done me more good than if you had stayed silent about it.

680

What Helen went through was not because she had asked for it. Her fate was sent to her by the gods and, in the end, Greece gained from it! Greeks before that, were ignorant about battles and war. They depended upon their bravery but the best teacher is experience!

I have shown self discipline by not killing her the moment I saw her, whereas you, you had killed Phokos, your own brother!

I say all this to you not in anger but for your own good!

And if you keep shouting like this, it will be to the detriment of your own tongue rather than to my views, which are sensible.

691

Chorus:

Best you should stop all this worthless talk, or else, I think both of you will be proven wrong!

Peleas:

What terrible customs we must endure these days in Greece!

It's not the soldiers who did all the hard work on the battle field but the General who gets all the credit whenever the army raises a victory trophy. One man, who, among ten thousand men raised his spear, one man who did the work of only one man, gets all the praise!

700

Then they get into these high offices of the city and bloat their egos with thoughts that they are better or worthier than the common folk! They are nothing! The common folk are far better, far wiser, than these generals, but they simply lack the will or the courage.

You and your brother have done this. You have bloated your egos over the leadership at Troy. Others did all the hard work, others crossed spears and swords, yet it is you two who do all the boasting!

And if you and her don't get out of this house you'll find that I, Peleas am as great an enemy to you was Paris the Trojan! You and your barren daughter! Because my own grandson, Neoptolemos, will drag her out of here by the hair if she can't tolerate women who can have children when she can't!

Sterile cow!

712

Should her bad luck deprive us of having any children of our own? Give me space, slaves! Let me see if there's anyone who'd dare stop me from untying this woman's hands!

To Andromache

Come now, Andromache, get up!

Let these aged hands untie these knots around yours.

720

He finds the task frustrating. To Menelaos:

You horrible man! You have mutilated her hands! Did you think you were tying up a bull or a lion with all these knots? Or were you afraid she would take a sword and fight you?

To Molossos

Come child, come here and help me untie your mother's arms.

Have no fear, my boy, I'll make a great man out of you in Phthia and when you grow up you can be their bitterest enemy!

To Menelaos and his men

You would be nothing, you Spartans, you would be better than no one, if you were not known for your talent in battles and war.

Chorus:

Old men show no restraint...

Chorus:

...unrestrainable when they lose their temper!

729

Menelaos:

Peleas, you fly into abuse and insults far too readily!

Personally, I have not come to Phthia to either cause harm by violence nor to suffer it!

And now I must leave because I am pressed for time. There's a city near Sparta, one that once friendly to us but has suddenly turned against us. I must march now with my army against that city and take it in hand. Then, the moment I have that under control, I shall be back here and speak with my son-in-law, Neoptolemos, openly and fairly, face to face. I shall speak and I shall hear.

740

And *indicating Andromache* if he decides to punish her and if he is respectful towards us from now on, then he will receive respect for us in return. If, however, it is anger he wants to deliver, then anger he will receive in return. His deeds will be met with like deeds from me.

Your own words don't bother me at all! After all, what are you? Nothing but a noisy shadow and noise is the only thing you can make.

Exit Menelaos and his men.

Peleas: *To Molossos*

Come, my son, help me. Come into my arms. That's it. Come, let us go.

To Andromache

You, too, poor girl. Come. Come now into the calm waters of a haven.

The stormy weather is over for you.

750

Andromache:

May all the gods grant you their blessings, old sir, for saving this child's life and the life his unfortunate mother! But be on the look out now, though, in case they rush upon us on some deserted road and take me away from you by force, when they see that you're an old man, I, a weak woman and this child, a mere baby!

We have escaped once, let us not become captives twice!

Peleas:

Come, enough of the frightened womanish words. Let us go on. Who is there to lay a finger on you? Whoever tries will shed heavy tears for it! The gods be thanked, I rule over a great army in Phthia, both, cavalry and infantry.

760

And I, I can still stand upright and am not as old as you think I am! And, old or not, men like that, men like Menelaos, I only have to look at them and they run away!

It is bravery, not age that matters. A brave old man is worth a thousand young men in their prime if they are cowards. What's the use of a strong body if the spirit is weak?

Exit all

Chorus:

Either be born to wealth or to nobility or be not born at all!

770

Chorus:

When hard times descend upon the nobles, they have abundant help. Those whose fame declares that they are nobly born are given honour and glory. The legacy of their good deeds is not erased by time but lives on, even beyond their death.

Chorus:

Best to win a victory honourably rather than win it by the use of loathsome violence against justice.

Chorus:

Mortals will discover that the sweetness of such victories is very short-lived.

Chorus:

It dries up and all that is left is the shame of the guilty. A stain upon their house.

Chorus:

The life I far prefer is that which gives me no power over justice, neither in my house nor in my city.

790

Chorus:

Peleas, son of Aeacus, lover of Justice!

Old man!

I have no doubt that you and your glorious spear sided with the Lapiths against the Centaurs!

Chorus:

That on the ship Argo, you have made that most famous journey through the rough waters past the Clashing Rocks...

Chorus:

And that when Heracles, Zeus' glorious son, many, many years ago, had surrounded the famous city of Troy with destruction, you came back to Europe with your well-earned share of praise!

Enter the Nurse.

802

Nurse: *To the chorus*

Disaster, my friends, disaster! One upon the other! Today is a day of disasters!

My mistress, ladies! My mistress Hermione! Her father has gone and left her alone in there, in the palace and now her heart is full of the awful deed she wanted to commit against Andromache, to murder her and her son and she's all broken up with guilt and wants to kill herself! And she's also afraid that her husband will punish her for plotting to kill the

innocent and will banish her from his house in disgrace – or even kill her!

811

The woman almost managed to hang herself and then her guards took away the sword from her right hand just in time! That's how miserably remorseful she is!

She certainly understands now that what she has done was not good. I'm exhausted from trying to keep her away from the hanging ropes, my friends. You go in now and try to save her. Perhaps new friends are more persuasive than the old ones whom she sees all day long.

Shouts and noises of turmoil are heard from within the palace

820

Chorus:

Ah! The poor woman! I hear the screams and shouts of the servants. Yes, you are right about the turmoil in the house.

Chorus:

Poor woman!

Enter Hermione from the palace, followed by anxious servants.

She is wearing a veil and she is tearing at her clothes, in deeply felt remorse and grief.

Chorus:

Here she is!

Chorus:

I think she's going to reveal here just how remorseful she is about the horrible things she has done.

Chorus:

Her grief is deep!

Chorus:

She is trying to free herself from the hands of her servants.

Chorus:

She wants to die!

Hermione:

Ah! The pain! The misery!

I'll tear my hair out! I'll tear to shreds the flesh on my cheeks, with my nails!

Nurse:

No, my child! Why do this to yourself?

830

Hermione: Tearing at her veil and at her clothes

Ah! This pain! This misery of mine!

Away! Away from my head! Leave my hair veil, you and your fine threads!

Nurse:

Child! Cover your breasts! Tighten up your robe, darling!

Hermione:

Cover up? What is the point of covering up?

All my horrible deeds are crystal clear for everyone to see! The things I've done against my husband! These deeds cannot be hidden!

Nurse:

You mean about your plans about killing Andromache, your bed's rival? Is that why you are hurting, child?

Hermione:

Plans? Yes. The impudent plans of murder I thought up! That's where the pain is!

Oh, what a cursed creature I am! Cursed by everyone!

840

Nurse:

But, child, your husband will certainly forgive this mistake of yours!

Hermione:

Why did you take my sword away, Nurse! Go, dear nurse, bring it back to me! Bring it back so that I can plunge it deep into my heart!

And why did you force me away from the noose?

Nurse:

What, should I have left you to kill yourself out of sheer madness?

Hermione:

What fate is this?

Where can I find a huge, blazing fire that I may jump into? Where can I find a huge cliff above the sea or on a high mountain above a forest? I want to hurl myself over it and die and go to meet the shadows in the world below! They would take care of me!

851

Nurse:

Why torture yourself like this, child? Misfortune is meted out by the gods and sooner or later it comes to all of us!

Hermione:

Father!

Father you have abandoned me! You have left me at the edge of the shore all alone! You have deserted me! Where is the raft that will take me over the waters?

Father, he will me! He will kill me!

Father!

This bridal home is no longer mine!

Ah!

Which god will receive me in his shrine as a suppliant? To which statue should I run?

860

Or should I fall on my knees, a slave, before another slave?

Ah, if only I could fly away from Phthia, like a blackbird through the sky!

Or like that ship that was built by pine wood and rushed through the Clashing Rocks!

Nurse:

Hermione, neither your excessive behaviour against the Trojan woman before, nor this excessive fear you're showing now, is worthy of praise.
870

Do you really think that your husband will end his marriage by heeding the worthless words of a barbarian more than yours?

He married not a captive of Troy but the daughter of glorious man, from a prosperous city and who gave her a rich dowry.

And do also think that your father has really abandoned you so that you can be thrown out of your own house? Are you really afraid of such a thing?

Come now, child! Come, let's go back indoors. People may see you outside your house and start their evil gossip. Come!

Nurse and Hermione are heading for the doors of the palace when the one of chorus women sees Orestes in the distance. Her words stop them from exiting the stage

Chorus:

Ha! A stranger!

Chorus:

The clothes of some foreign land.

880

Chorus:

He's rushing towards us.

Enter Orestes and his servants. He doesn't notice Hermione.

Orestes:

Women of this foreign land, is this the home, the palace of Neoptolemos, Achilles' son?

Chorus:

That's right but who are you to ask this?

Orestes:

I am Orestes. The son of Agamemnon and Klytemnestra and I'm heading for Dodona, the oracle of Zeus.

But I'm here, in Phthia now so I thought I'd look up a relative of mine.

Hermione is her name. Hermione, from Sparta. Is the woman alive? Is she well?

She lives far from my land but I still hold her dear to me.

Hermione rushes over to Orestes and falls at his knees, wrapping her arms around them.

891

Hermione:

Orestes!

You've appeared here like a true haven appears to a sailor caught in a tempest!

Let me fall at your knees, son of Agamemnon and beg you to help me!

Help this woman about whose fate you're concerned.

Let my arms be the suppliant's wreaths around your knees!

Orestes:

What?

Do my eyes deceive me or is this really Menelaos' daughter, the lady of this house?

Hermione:

Yes, yes, Orestes, it is, it is I, Helen's only daughter. Helen who was Tyndareus' daughter. I was the only child born in Menelaos' halls. You need not doubt that!

900

Orestes:

Oh, Phoebus Apollo! Healer! Rid us of our troubles!

What is it, Hermione? Who is tormenting you, gods or men?

Hermione:

Me, in part. My husband, in part. Gods, in part!

Orestes, wherever I look I see my ruin!

Orestes:

But what is it, Hermione? What problems could a woman have who is still without children? Unless it's a marital business!

Hermione:

Yes, that's it, Orestes! You've worked it out straight away!

Orestes:

He's turned to another woman?

Hermione:

Yes. Andromache. Hektor's wife. A captive of Troy.

Orestes:

It's a nasty thing, a man having two wives, Hermione.

910

Hermione:

That's right, that's right, Orestes, so I tried to fight it.

Orestes:

By doing the usual womanish plotting against her?

Hermione:

Yes, I plotted to kill her and her bastard child.

Orestes:

And did you actually kill them or did something stop you from doing it?

Hermione:

Yes, old Peleas! He felt sorry for these commoners.

Orestes:

Did you have an accomplice?

Hermione:

Yes, my father. He had come over from Sparta for this very reason.

Orestes:

And he got beaten by the old man, right?

Hermione:

Yes, old Peleas made him feel ashamed, so he went off and left me here, all alone.

Orestes:

And so now, you're afraid of your husband for what you've done.

920

Hermione:

I do, yes. He will have every right to kill me.

But there's no point talking about it. I beg you, Orestes, in the name of our mutual father, Zeus, take me away from here! Let's go far away.

Let's go to my father's house!

This house here seems to be able to speak and it's shouting at me to go away! The whole of Phthia hates me! Take me away before my master returns from the oracle of Apollo! He'll kill me when he sees me,

Orestes. Kill me under some shameful charge.

Or he could make me a slave to his mistress, who was my slave before all this!

Orestes:

But how did you manage to stray so badly?

930

Hermione:

I listened to the words of evil women, Orestes. They came to me and filled my head up with nonsense. They asked me questions like, "what, are you going to put up with this miserable captive living with you, in this house and sharing your marriage bed? By, Hera! There's no way she could come into my house, made love to my husband and not die for it!"

It's these horrible, cunning sirens, whispering gossipers, who have fed my ears full with such stupid thoughts.

I had everything I wanted. What was the point of worrying so much about my husband's loyalty to me?

940

I was rich. I was the mistress of my house. I could have given birth to legitimate children, masters over her bastards.

This needs to be told and told often: The wise husband should never, but never allow his wife to have women visit her at his house! It is these women who instruct their wives about how to do terrible things! It is they who destroy marriages, some for personal gain, others because they were

failures themselves and they are looking for company and others are just sluts!

950

And that's why men's houses get corrupted!

Men should lock their doors, bolt them up, put bars across them and guard them well because it is the visits of these women that cause the damage in the marriage!

Chorus:

Hermione, you've freed your tongue too much to lash out against your own sex!

This might be excusable, given your situation but still, women should try and cover up each other's weakness.

Orestes:

He who said that we must listen carefully at the words of our enemies, was a wise man.

960

In fact, when I heard about the turmoil in this house, how you and Andromache had an argument, did not rush to come over here but waited to see whether you'd stay here or if, after your murderous plotting, you were afraid enough of the Trojan slave to leave the place.

I did not wait for a message from you to come here. I came to ask you if you want to come with me and now I can see that you do.

Because, in fact, you were rightfully mine, from a long time ago. Your father has promised you to me before he left for Troy but then, the liar that he is, when he got to Troy, he offered you to Neoptolemos, your present husband, if he, in return captured the city.

970

Now, when Neoptolemos returned home, I didn't go back to your father but, instead, I approached him and begged him not to marry you because you were promised to me but my situation at the time was bad. I had explained everything to him. I told him that since I was exiled, I could only marry someone from within the family; not any woman from outside our household.

But, Neoptolemos refused and insulted me for having killed my mother and then mentioned the blood-eyed goddesses, the Erinyes.

980

I was mightily hurt. Hurt and humiliated by the disasters that had fallen upon my house and grieved bitterly for having lost you, having been robbed of you, my promised wife; but I took the insult and the loss patiently and went away without you.

But now, now that your fortunes have changed and that you find yourself in such dire circumstances and powerless, I'll take you from here and hand you back to your father.

The household is a mighty thing and whenever we are in trouble, it is the first and foremost support.

Hermione:

My marriage, Orestes is my father's business. He will arrange it as best he sees fit. It is not up to me to decide who I am to marry but, yes, take me away from here as soon as you can, before my husband returns or before Peleas hears that I am leaving this house and rushes over with his fast horses.

993

Orestes:

Don't worry about the power of an old man's hand!

And don't worry about Achilles' son, Neoptolemos who has insulted me so terribly, either! With this hand I have weaved a death trap with so many knots that no one could possibly loosen!

I shall say nothing about this trap for now but the moment this trap is snapped, the rock of Delphi will be its witness and, if the accomplices at the Pythian land do not break their oath to me, then he will learn from this mother killer that he has no right to take a woman who belongs to me.

1002

He request for satisfaction from Apollo for the death of Achilles, his father, will end up being a bitter thing for him because even if he has now changed his mind and repented, the god will still administer his punishment.

He will be crushed painfully by the god's hand and by my accusations.

He will taste the hatred that I have for him!

Gods punish their enemies. They don't let them get away with arrogance!

Exit Orestes and Hermione

1010

Chorus:

Phoebus Apollo!

Chorus:

You have built the tall towers on Troy's hill!

Chorus:

And you, Poseidon, god of the ocean!

Chorus:

Your wine-dark horses drive your chariot over the briny waters!

Chorus:

Why did you two gods, whose hands are faultless at their craft, hand over your work to Ares, master of the war spear?

Chorus:

You have abandoned Troy!

Chorus

It was the death of Troy!

Chorus:

You have set up so many tournaments on the banks of the river Simois!

1020

Chorus:

Tournaments of blood!

Chorus:

With brilliant chariots yoked to gorgeous horses!

Chorus:

Yet not a prize was won! Not a garland was worn!

Chorus:

All the kings, all the princes, all of Ilus' descendants are gone for ever!

Chorus:

All the flames, all the fires, all the incense in the sacrificial smoke on the altars of Troy have gone!

Chorus:

Agamemnon, the son of Atreus is dead. Killed by his wife who had paid for that killing with her own life, taken by her own children. Blood for blood!

1030

Chorus:

Killed by the god's order, the god of prophesy himself, given to Agamemnon's son, Orestes.

Chorus:

He went straight to Argos, after his visit at the shrine and put his mother to the sword.

Chorus:

A mother killer!

Chorus:

Lord Apollo!

How could I believe such a thing?

1040

Chorus:

And so the sighs and the groans of women echo at the gathering places!

Chorus:

Dirges that tell about the poor men whose bed their wives had betrayed for the bed of another!

Chorus:

Destroyers of families!

Chorus:

This bitter fate ladies, has not fallen on you alone. Not only on you and your friends but the whole of Greece is suffering from this plague!

Chorus:

A plague that spread over the fertile fields of Phrygia, soaking them with blood!

Chorus:

The drink most beloved by Hades, the god of death!

Enter Peleas with his men

Peleas:

Ladies of Phthia, I have heard a rumour, an odd story that Hermione, Menelaos' daughter has gone and left these halls here. I'm anxious to know if this is this true.

1050

When our folk are away, we must try and take care of their concerns.

Chorus:

It is true, old man. It would be wrong for me to hide the truth of this disaster in which we now find ourselves.

Chorus:

Our queen, has run away!

Peleas:

But why what was she afraid of, tell me!

Chorus:

Of her husband, old man. Afraid he would throw her out of the house!

Peleas:

Is that because she was plotting to kill the young boy?

Chorus:

Yes, the captive woman, as well. His mother.

1060

Peleas:

Who did she run away with, her father?

Chorus:

Orestes, Agamemnon's son. He took her away.

Peleas:

Why did he do that? Did he want to marry the woman?

Chorus:

That's right!

Chorus:

And he also wants to kill your grandson, Neoptolemos!

Peleas:

How is he going to do that? Is going to fight him, out in the open or is he plotting some secret ambush?

Chorus:

Ambush. He has some accomplices at Apollo's shrine waiting for him.

Peleas:

No!

This is outrageous!

Quick! One of you men run to the temple and warn our friends. Tell them what has gone on here. Hurry, before Achilles' son is murdered!

One of his men starts to leave but a messenger rushes onto the stage.

He is puffed out from running.

1070

Messenger:

Ah! What awful news! What an awful message I must deliver to you, old sir! Awful for you and for all those who love my master!

Peleas:

Ah!

My soul speaks to me of a looming disaster!

Messenger:

My news, old Peleas!

So terrible were the wounds he has received at the hands of those at Delphi and of the foreigner from Mycenae, that you no longer have a grandson!

Peleas sways with shock

Chorus:

Oh, no! Old man, no, no! Be careful!

Chorus:

Steady old man, don't collapse!

Peleas:

I am finished! Dead!

I have lost my speech... my limbs... they have lost the strength to hold me up!

1079

Messenger:

No, have courage, old man! Be strong, don't fall down.

If you want to help your loved ones, listen to what has happened.

Peleas:

O, Fate! Fate! How heavily you fall upon this poor man, in these his final years!

The only son of my only son! Tell me, man, tell me how he died! It's news that I can't bear to hear but which I must.

Messenger:

When we reached the glorious shrine of Apollo, we stopped and feasted our eyes upon the magnificent sight of it, for three whole days! Three times the sun's brilliant light did its circle.

1088

This, however, seems to have made the people who live around those sacred precincts, suspicious of us so they began to gather around in groups and, all the while, Orestes himself was going about whispering

into everyone's ear, nasty things such as, "you see that man over there? The one who's going in and out of the god's gold-packed shrine? Do you see him, circling around all the treasures that was offered by all the people? This is the second time he's come here and he's done so, so he can steal it all! Steal all of Apollo's treasures!"

Not long after that, the hateful rumour spread across the city like a wild hurricane.

The magistrates rushed to the council halls to have their meetings and the supervisors of the shrine placed guards around its pillars.

1100

We still didn't know anything about all this so we took some sheep that were grazing around the pastures of Parnassus and made our way to the altars of the temple and stood there, next to all the officials and seers.

Then, one of them asked Neoptolemos, "young man, what would you like us to ask from the god for you? Why are you here?"

To that, he replied, "I want to repent, to make amends for the sin I have committed against the god because a while ago I demanded satisfaction from the god for the death of my father."

1110

Immediately, Orestes' rumour did its evil work. They all took my master to be a liar and that he had gone there with shameful intentions.

Neoptolemos, suspecting nothing, crosses the threshold of the temple to pray before Apollo's altar but the moment he began to burn his offerings, a group of men, swords drawn, came out of the ambush they had set up for him, behind some laurel trees and set upon him! Orestes, Klytaemnestra's son was one of them! He was the sole driver of this ambush!

Neoptolemos, alone and with no one to protect him, was just standing there, in full view of everyone, praying to the god, when all these men jumped from behind and plunged their sharp swords into him!

1120

The first blows weren't lethal so he stepped back, drew his own sword and took some of the armour that was hanging from the pegs on the temple's columns. He looked fierce! He jumped onto the altar and yelled out at the Delphians: "Why are you all trying to kill me? I'm here on a holy mission, to pray to this god. What do you find objectionable in this? Why must I die for it?"

1129

But none of that group of attackers answered him. They started throwing stones at him. Neoptolemos tried to protect himself from this overwhelming rain of rocks, swinging his shield this way and that but it was no use. The stones, then the arrows, the spears and the forked spits which the attackers have torn from the carcasses of the burning oxen, all

crowded around his feet.

What a terrible war dance your poor grandson had to dance in order to fight off the attacking weapons!

1138

Then, when they had completely surrounded the man and left him no room even to breathe, he jumped off the sacrificial altar and charged into the group, the way he did back in Troy; and they turned and ran off like doves do when they spot a hawk coming towards them. Many of them fell, both from the wounds that he had given them and the wounds they had received from each other in the great confusion of their flight through the narrow passageways.

And from within those holy precincts of the temple rose up a most unholy scream that echoed back from the rocky cliffs around it.

And then -there was my master! Calm and brilliant in his shining armour, he stood there for a moment, a moment which was suddenly smashed by the shrill shout of a man, from deep within the shrine. A horrible shout that stirred the Delphians up and made them turn back and face your grandson.

And that's when Achilles' son fell!

1150

The man received a fatal hit at his side by a Delphian sword. Then other Delphians added their swords to the victim and so he died.

And when your grandson fell, every Delphian sword was plunged into his corpse. Every Delphian threw a stone at it. Every Delphian ran to pound it until this once beautiful body was thoroughly disfigured. Then, when he fell dead by the altar, replete with the holy fragrance of the smoking offerings, when his body was nothing more than a mess of gore, they picked it up and threw it out of the temple.

1160

Immediately we run and gathered his sorry remains and now we are bringing it them here, for you, old sir, to mourn and give him an honourable burial.

So this is how Apollo has treated the son of glorious Achilles! They say that this god leads in prophesy and in judging the deeds of mortals. But this god viewed the man's past quarrel just like evil mortals would.

How could any god who acts like this be called wise?

Enter a procession of servants carrying the body of Neoptolemos on a bier.

Chorus:

Ah, look! Look there!

Chorus:

It's the king!

Chorus:

They are carrying the king's body!

Chorus:

Returning it home from the land of Delphi!

Chorus:

What bitter fortune has fallen upon the boy!

Chorus:

What bitter fortune has fallen upon you, too, old man!

1170

Chorus:

How horrible the homecoming of Achilles' son!

Chorus:

How differently you expected it to be, old man!

Chorus:

You, too, old King, now share his terrible fate!

Peleas:

Ah!

What sight is this!

What a sight to bring into my halls!

Oh, Thessaly! You have killed me! You have put an end to my name, to my race! There are no more children in my household!

What bitter horrors fate has delivered me!

1180

What friends are there now for me? Where now will I find any joy?

Ah! Beloved lips of my grandson! Beloved cheeks! Beloved hands!

Much better it would have been if your fate had killed you beneath the high walls of Troy, beside the river Simois!

Chorus:

His death then would have been honourable!

Chorus:

And your life, old man, would have been more joyful!

Peleas:

Marriage! Marriage has destroyed this house! Marriage has destroyed this city!

Ah! What misery must I endure!

Oh, my boy!

1190

This monstrous breed of Hermione! A breed that threw upon your marriage and our house this appalling disaster! This appalling death!

How I wish now that I had refused you this cursed marriage!

How I wish she was struck dead by a thunder bolt before your wedding day!

And how I wish you, a mere mortal, had never called Apollo to give you

recompense for shooting the lethal arrow that spilled the blood of your father, a god's son!

Chorus:

Ah! The loss! The loss! The loss!

Chorus:

I wail at the loss!

Chorus:

I mourn for the master! I mourn, I mourn for the dead master!

Chorus:

Set up the funeral rites! Let us set up the funeral rites for our dead master!

1200

Peleas:

Let me cry!

Let me wail for the loss of my grandson!

Poor, miserable man! Luckless man! Suffering old man!

Chorus:

Your suffering is the will of the gods, old man!

Peleas:

Oh, my darling boy!

You have gone and left my halls utterly empty!

You have gone and left an old man behind! Old and childless!

Oh! Such pain!

Chorus:

The old should die before their children, as you should have, old master!

1210

Peleas:

Shall I not tear my hair out?

Shall I not pound my head with mortal blows?

Phoebus Apollo! You have robbed me of both my children! Both of them!

Chorus:

You have suffered so much, you poor old man!

Chorus:

What now for you, old master?

Chorus:

What life awaits you now?

Peleas:

Endless misery for me now!

Childless and alone, I shall take all the bitter pains until I die!

Chorus:

What was the point of all the gods coming to your wedding?

Peleas:

All of those blessings of theirs, all my hopes and plans have flown away!

Rushed away, far beyond my vain boasts!

1221

Chorus:

Poor man! A lonely man, living in a lonely house!

Peleas: Throws his scepter to the ground in disgust

I have no land any more, so what is the use of this scepter?

And you! You, Thetis! You wife! You daughter of Nereas who lives in dark caves! There, you will see me in all my ruin!

Enter Thetis, a goddess, production permitting, through a deus ex machina.

1231

Thetis:

Peleas, I am Thetis!

In honour of our marriage, Peleas, I have left Nereas' palace and came here to give you some advice. Firstly, you shouldn't distress yourself so excessively about your present situation. Remember, I, too, a goddess and a god's daughter, have also lost a son. Our son, Peleas, Achilles of the swift foot, the noblest of all the sons of Greece.

Now listen well to the reason I've come here.

1240

Take our son Neoptolemos to the temple of Delphi and bury him there. Let his tomb be a reminder to the Delphians of the violent murder committed by Orestes.

Andromache, the Trojan captive must marry Helenus and live in the land of the Molossians. Her son, Molossos, who is the only descendant of Aeacus' race, should go with her and from him will come an unbroken succession of kings who will live happy lives.

1250

The race that springs from you and me, old man, must not be erased. Nor must the race of the Trojan because, even though Troy was razed to the ground by the will of Palas Athena, the gods still care for that city.

Now, since you once were my husband, let me tell you what I will do to please you.

Peleas, I shall free you from all that the mortals suffer and make you a god. Immortal. Free from the wear and tear of the flesh and as a god, you will live with me, a goddess, in that halls of Nereas.

1260

The waves of the sea will not wet your feet as you step out to watch our beloved son, Achilles, on the shores of the island of Leuke in the Euxine sea.

But now, Peleas, go to Delphi, that city built by a god and take with you this corpse and once you have buried it there, go to the deep cave which Time has hollowed out of the Sepian rock and wait there.

Wait until I emerge from the sea with a chorus of fifty nereids, who will be your escorts.

This is your fate and it is the will of Zeus that you carry it out.

1270

Now stop grieving over the dead. Death is the fate and the debt assigned by the gods to all the mortals.

Peleas:

Farewell now, most revered lady! My beloved wife and my partner in bed, Nereas' daughter!

Your deeds are worthy of your person and of your children, so yes, dear goddess, I shall obey you and I shall stop grieving! And, after I have buried our dead grandson, I shall go to the fair meadows of Pelion where I first held your beautiful body in my arms.

The wise man will take for a partner the daughter of a noble family and give his daughter to a noble husband, not to one who is foul and untrue, no matter how rich the dowry.

Then the gods will never bother them!

Exit Thetis

Chorus:

The deeds of the gods appear in many shapes...

Chorus:

And they often accomplish deeds beyond our hopes...

Chorus:

Our wishes might not be granted but the gods will find ways of achieving things we never thought were achievable.

Chorus:

Such was the path of our story.

Exit all

END OF
EURIPIDES'
"ANDROMACHE"

The French playwright, Racine was inspired to write his own version of this play, and the reader might wish to peruse Tony Kline's English translation [here](#)

AND

Seneca's "Troades" Translated by F.J. Miller:

[here](#)