

EURIPIDES'
"TROJAN WOMEN"
Produced in 415BCE
At the City Dionysia

(This is the 3rd of a Trilogy. The preceding plays, Alexandros and Palamedes are lost)

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Dramatis Personae:

Poseidon

(A God)

Athena

(A Goddess)

Hekabe aka Hecuba

(Queen of Troy)

Talthybius

(A Greek Herald)

Cassandra

(Hekabe's daughter)

Andromache

(Hektor's wife)

Menelaos

(Helen's husband)

Helen

(Menelaos' wife)

Astyanax

(Young son of Hektor and Andromache: Silent)

Chorus

(of captive Trojan women)

Just before Dawn.

Before the collapsing walls of defeated Troy.

Three or four hastily improvised huts, one larger than all the others.

Behind the walls we see smoke rising and the occasional flare of flames.

Intermittent sounds of buildings crashing and of screams of horror.

Around the stage are scattered ruins of statues and building materials.

For a few moments shadows of frightened people run in front of the walls and between the huts.

A small, blood-spattered altar lies toppled at SR.

In front of the larger hut we can just make out the shape of a woman's body lying on the ground, sleeping. It is that of Hekabe.

A dim moonlight reveals Poseidon at centre stage.

Poseidon:

I am Poseidon and I have left behind me the deep and salty waters of the Aegean to come here, to this city, to Troy. The beautiful daughters of Nereus dance their delightful, swirling steps with their splendid feet in that ocean.

I have come here because Phoebus Apollo and I have built this city's towers and because my love for the Trojan folk has never died.

Apollo and I did a great job with these towers. We've built them well, sturdy, strong. Out of stone.

We've built them right around the city.

My love for this city and for its people has never left my heart.

Not for a minute.

But look at her now! The Greek spear has destroyed her. Set fire to her. Scorched her! Looted her! And look there, the smoke now chokes her!

10

And all this destruction happened because Palas Athena had advised Epeius, a builder from Phockis, - that's a place in the Parnassos- to build a wooden horse, to stuff it full of armed men and then to secretly slide it through the city's lofty towers.

A wooden idol of ruin it was, an idol, which the later generations will call, "The Wooden Horse."

All the sacred groves and precincts of the city are now deserted. Every god's altar is now drenched in blood.

The city's king, Priam, is himself lying slaughtered at the steps of Zeus' altar, inside his very own palace. The altar of Zeus, the protector of his palace!

Mountains of plundered Trojan gold and spoils have been loaded onto the Greek ships.

20

They're waiting now, those Greeks who have brought war to this place; they're waiting for a favorable wind to help them sail back home, their hearts gladdened by the hope they'll see their wives and their children. They've been away from home for ten long years.

And as for me, now that Hera, the goddess of Argos as well as Athena, the goddess of Athens, now that these two goddess have fought me and have beaten me, I must leave this glorious city and all of my temples here and be on my way.

These two goddesses have conspired to destroy Troy and all her people. They have conspired and they have won.

You see, when a city suffers, so do her gods. The people no longer have the time nor the mood for holly devotion. We, the gods, suffer.

The river Scamandros echoes violently with the sounds of the crying women who must wait for Fate to tell them whose slave they are going to be.

30

Fate has declared that some of them will serve the men of Arcadia while others will be slaves to the men from Thessaly. Others still, will be slaves to the sons of Theseus, the king of Athens.

Then there are those who haven't been told their lot yet. These are the choicest of all the Trojan women. They are those picked for the army's top soldiers. That lot of women is waiting here, in these huts. Among them is Helen, daughter of Tyndareus, king of Sparta. Now, that woman is no greater than any of the other slaves. One of a great many captives. Quite right, too.

(Indicating Hekabe) And, if anyone cares at all about that one there, the queen of this city, well, there she is, Hekabe! The poor wretch is lying there, by her city's gates, shedding floods of tears. Her grief is great. The disasters that befell her many. Her daughter, Polyxene, was gruesomely slaughtered, upon Achilles' grave. Slaughtered as a sacrificial offering to Achilles.

40

Hekabe's husband, her king, the king of Troy, Priam, as well as all of their sons -all of them- are slaughtered.

Her other daughter, Cassandra, whom Apollo had made a prophet and left her a virgin, was taken by that arrogant king of the Greeks, Agamemnon, to sleep with him in his bed. A dire violation of all the laws of his religion.

Well now, Troy! I bid you farewell. You were glorious once! And you, too, fabulous towers. You would still be standing there, proudly, had not Zeus' daughter, Athena, destroyed you all.

He turns to exit but Athena enters and stops him on his tracks.

Athena:

Poseidon!

You are a great god, Poseidon, honoured among all the other gods and you're the closest relative I have, on my father's side, so... could we now put behind us our old grudge and, perhaps, exchange a few friendly words?

51

Poseidon:

Of course we can, my Lady, Athena. The friendly exchange of words between relatives has a mighty magic effect upon the heart.

Athena:

I applaud your calm disposition, my Lord, Poseidon and I bring to you words that are of equal concern to both of us.

Poseidon:

You have news from the other gods? Zeus, perhaps, or some other divinity?

Athena:

No, no. I need us to talk about Troy. The very land we're standing on right now.

I have come to ask for your assistance.

Poseidon:

Ah! You're feeling remorse, now, Athena! Is that right?

Now that you see Troy in flames and smoke, you want to forget about the hatred you had for her.

Now, you're feeling sorry for her! Is that it?

60

Athena:

Give me the answer first, Poseidon.

Will you help me? Will you work with me on my plan?

Poseidon:

Of course, of course I will but tell me first though, who is it you want to help, the Greeks or the Trojans?

Athena:

I want to give joy to the Trojans. I know, I know, I hated earlier but now I want to make the homecoming of the Greek soldiers a bitter experience for them.

Poseidon:

How can you do that, Athena? I mean, how can you just jump from excessive love to excessive hate... at the slightest whim of Fate?

Athena:

Aren't you aware of how these Greeks have treated me and my temples? Total and absolute disrespect!

70

Poseidon:

I know, I know... Ajax dragged Cassandra by force...

Athena:

Not a word from the rest of Greeks! Not a single reprimand! No one reproached him for it!

Poseidon:

But it was you who have helped the Greeks beat the Trojans.

They did it with your own powers, Athena!

Athena:

In any case, it is them I want you to help me punish!

Poseidon:

Ready to help, Athena. What have you got in mind?

Athena:

I want them to suffer a terrible journey home.

Poseidon:

What, you mean now while they're still on land or afterwards, when they're in the middle of the ocean?

Athena:

Once they leave Troy and set sail for their country. Zeus will let loose a deluge of frenzied rain and hail and all the turbulent black winds he can muster upon them.

80

He said he'll give me his lightning bolt to strike at all the Greek ships.

Set them all on fire.

As for you, I want you to stir the Aegean waters into huge cyclones and typhoons, fill the Euboean gulf with floating corpses.

Let them learn a lesson about honouring sacred temples!

89

Poseidon:

All this shall be done. No need to waste more words upon it.

I shall make turbulent all the waters of the Aegean Sea and hurl many corpses upon the cape of Mykonos and upon the wild crags of Delos and Lemnos and all those jagged points of Kafirea.

But now, Athena, leave! Go up to Mount Olympus, the gods' abode and get the lightning bolts from the hands of our father, Zeus. Then wait until the Greeks set sail. Off you go!

Exit Athena. Poseidon takes ne last look at the city

The mortal who sacks a city and then destroys its temples and its graves, the sacred homes of the dead, is a fool because his own destruction will certainly follow.

Exit Poseidon.

A short pause during which Dawn arrives

The sleeping figure of Hekabe moves.

Hekabe:

Come, come, you poor wretch! Come on, lift your head from the ground.

Stretch out your neck!

She sees the smoke raising behind the walls

Look! Look!

Troy is no more! You are no longer her Queen, Hekabe!

100

Hold tight, Hekabe. Stay strong while Fate changes her way.

Accept her new path, follow it, sail with it.

Don't turn your prow against your life's tide. Sail on.

Fate will steer your life's ship.

O! The grief!

How can I not groan with pain when I have lost it all?

Everything. My country, my children, my husband!

Mountains of glorious wealth, passed down to us over many generations, all of it, vanished. Now it is nothing.

110

What words am I forbidden to utter? What words am I forced say?

What should I mourn?

How heavy is my Fate!

She tries to get up

O, my back! My joints! Lying on this hard mattress, all my limbs are aching.

The aches and pains in the temples of my head, on my shoulders! O, my ribs!

O, I wish I could turn a bit this way... no, no, this way...

Ouch!

She finally manages to get up

Endless tears, endless groans, endless grief!

120

A lullaby for the unfortunate!

A dirge without a dance to mourn misfortune.

She walks to SL and looks into the distance

Prows of swift ships!

The oars of men guided you through the purple waters of the ocean, sailing from the quiet harbours of Greece all the way here, to the sacred city of Troy.

O, I still hear it!

The screeching of your dire trumpets mingled with the sweet tones of our gentle flutes!

130

You came and hooped your Egyptian plaited ropes onto Troy's harbours. What for?

To do what? To take back that hateful wife of Menelaos! What a blight upon her brother Castor's name she is and a stain upon that of Eurotas, her father.

That woman who slaughtered Priam, the father of fifty sons!

That woman who hurled so much black misery upon me!

Me, Hekabe! Queen of fabulous Troy!

Queen no more!

Now, here I am, sitting by Agamemnon's huts! A slave!

140

Torn from my palace, my hair shorn in utter grief, I am now an old woman, an old slave! Part of the conquerors' miserable plunder.

She turns towards the two smaller huts and calls out

Come out, you women of Troy! Come out and weep with me!

Come, you wives of soldiers! Trojan soldiers, experts in the ways of the bronze spear.

Come out and weep, you poor women of Troy! Unfortunate in marriage!

The first part of the chorus slowly begins to enter from one of the huts.

Come! Let us all wail at the sad Fate of our Troy.

Look at her! She's choking in smoke and ashes.

Let me begin the dirge, my friends!

Let me be like a mother bird who teaches her fledglings how to chirp.

Let me begin the song.

150

But it won't be a song like those I sang when Priam held his sceptre and when the proud feet of a chorus stamped a beat in praise of our city's gods.

Chorus:

Hekabe, what is it? What are you saying?

Chorus:

Why are you crying? What do your words mean?

Chorus:

I could hear your sad speech in the hut.

Chorus:

Panic spins in the hearts of the Trojan women inside that hut, Hekabe.

They grieve over their slavery.

160

Hekabe:

The hands of the Greeks are at the oars of their ships right now, my darlings!

Chorus:

What? Why? What do they want?

Chorus:

Will they take us away from our home?

Hekabe:

I don't know, darlings but I sense the worst!

Chorus: *Calling out to the chorus in the third hut*

Come out, come out, friends!

Chorus:

Come out you poor, Trojan women, come out and hear what's in store for you!

Chorus:

The Greeks are getting ready to sail home!

The rest of the chorus enters from their hut

Hekabe:

But, no, please, don't! Don't bring out my daughter, Cassandra!

Don't bring my daughter out here! She will be seized by one of her frenzied attacks again and she will embarrass me in front of all the Greek soldiers.

Don't bring Cassandra out here!

Add no more to my calamity.

Poor, unfortunate Troy! You are lost! And lost, too are those who leave you, whether they're alive or dead.

Chorus:

I'm trembling with fear!

Chorus:

We heard your crying from inside Agamemnon's huts, Hekabe.

Tell us, have the Greeks decided to kill us?

Chorus:

What news from the Greeks? All the Trojan Women in the huts are terrified.

Chorus:

Have the Greeks taken their oars down from the sterns of their ships?

182

Hekabe:

Child, I was out here at the crack of dawn, out of my wits with fear.

Chorus:

Have the Greeks sent a herald for us? Whose slave will I be, poor wretch?

Hekabe:

Your lot will be drawn any minute now.

Chorus:

Will it be a soldier from Argos, or from Phthia or from some other island country?

Chorus:

Who'll be my master, I wonder?

Chorus:

I am sick with fear.

190

Hekabe:

Miserable soul! Old and withered soul! Useless, like a drone and at death's door!
A ghost in the underworld! Who will be my master? And where? What will I be doing?
Will I be waiting at the guests or will I be a nurse for the master's children?
I, Hekabe, the honoured queen of Troy!

Chorus:

What lament would do justice to your pain, Hekabe?

Chorus:

Or to mine?

Chorus:

I will no longer send the shuttle up and down a Trojan loom!

200

Chorus:

Look! There! This is the last time I can look upon the corpses of my sons!

Chorus:

Worse! Worse still will come!

Chorus:

Dragged to the bed of a Greek!

Chorus:

A curse upon such a night!

Chorus:

A curse upon such a Fate!

Chorus:

Or else to carry water like a miserable slave, from the sacred springs of Peirene!

Chorus:

O, Gods, at least take me to that blessed and welcoming land of Theseus!

210

Chorus:

But never, Gods, never make me a slave to that murderous Helen and to Menelaos, the destroyer of Troy!

Chorus:

I couldn't bare to look at them again!

Chorus:

Never take me to their hateful home by the torrents of the river Eurotas.

Chorus:

I've been told about a land nearby that one, by the graceful foot of Mount Olympus.

Chorus:

Peneus' blessed land...

Chorus:

Wealthy and fertile...

Chorus:

There, I'd like to go, if go I must...

Chorus:

...but not before I go to Theseus' sacred country.

220

Chorus:

And I've also been told about Hephaistus' fiery land, Aetna.

Chorus:

Across from Carthage, mother of Sicily's mountain range.

Chorus:

Heralds have spread news around the world of how they crown their victorious athletes with glory.

Chorus:

And, across from that place, as the sailor cuts through the Ionian Sea, he'll come, face-to-face with another land...

Chorus:

Yes, a land where the famous waters of Krathis flow.

Chorus:

I've heard these waters give your hair a golden glow.

Chorus:
They nourish the whole country those waters...

Chorus:
...and raise splendid men!

230

Chorus: *Notices Talthybius approaching*

Ah, look! I can see a herald, hurrying here from the Greek camp.

Chorus:
I wonder what message he'll be delivering to us.

Chorus:
He'll tell us that we are now the slaves of the Greeks!

Enter Talthybius with two guards.

Talthybius:
Hekabe, I've made many trips to Troy to deliver messages to you from the Greeks, so you know me.
That's why I came in person to deliver to you this new message.

Hekabe:
Ah! It is here, dear friends, it is here!
The fearful news we've been expecting all this time is here!

240

Talthybius:
The news is that the draw has now been completed. You have all been allocated to your Greek masters.
Was that what you were afraid of?

Hekabe:
Oh! What city then are we off to? Some place in Thessaly, or Phthia or one of Cadmus' countries?

Talthybius:
You're all each drawn to a different man. You were not drawn as a lot.

Hekabe:
Then who is allotted to whom? Which among us, Trojan women are the lucky ones?

Talthybius:
I know who goes with whom but ask me about individuals, not groups.

Hekabe:
Tell me, then, Talthybius, who has drawn my unfortunate daughter, Cassandra?

Talthybius:
She was Agamemnon's special prize.

250

Hekabe:
So she will be the Spartan woman's slave?

Oh, what misery!

Talthybius:
No, not a slave to her but a secret bed-partner to him.

Hekabe:
Is this true? Cassandra? The very priestess of the god with the golden hair, Apollo?
But the god himself had granted her the gift of a virgin's life!

Talthybius:
Eros has pierced the king's heart with his arrow and now he's in love with the godly woman.

Hekabe:
Oh, dear child! Throw away the sacred keys to the shrine and take down the holy garlands that adorn your head!

Talthybius:
What are you saying, woman? Is she not blessed to have won the king's bed?

260

Hekabe:
And the other one? The last daughter you took from me? What has become of her?

Talthybius:
Who do you mean, Polyxene or some other one?

Hekabe:
Yes, Polyxene, that one. Who has drawn her name?

Talthybius:
Her draw is to serve Achilles' tomb.

Hekabe:

My daughter? To serve a tomb? Is this a Greek custom or some sort of law?
Tell me, friend!

270

Talthybius:

Just be happy for your daughter. Her Fate is good. That's all you need to know.

Hekabe:

"Her Fate is good?" What do you mean by that? Is she still alive? Can she still look upon the light?

Talthybius:

She's in the hands of Fate, so she is released from pain.

Hekabe:

And what of the wife of that glorious soldier, Hektor? What will happen to Andromache? What is her Fate?

Talthybius:

Achilles' son took her as his special prize.

Hekabe:

And me? What will become of me? An old woman, with an old head, who needs a stick to add to her two feet to walk on three. Whose slave will I be?

Talthybius:

You'll be serving Odysseus, king of Ithaca.

278

Hekabe:

Ah, poor Hekabe! What Fate rules you!

Beat you're your shorn head, Hekabe!

Tear at your cheeks with your nails, Hekabe!

Ah, poor Hekabe! What Fate rules you!

You must now be the slave of that loathsome reptile of a man, an enemy of the just, a lawless and poisonous snake!

His double tongue shuffles things about this way and that, turns love into hate and hate into love. It topples everything! Turns everything upside-down!

Come, my Trojan Women! Mourn for my loss, wail for my destruction.

Now I am destroyed. Now I am gone!

Ah, poor Hekabe! What Fate rules you! You have drawn the most unfortunate lot!

292

Chorus:

You know your Fate, Hekabe but what about mine?

Chorus:

Who's got my lot in his hand, An Achaian?

Chorus:

A Greek?

Talthybius:

Come, come, slaves! It's time for you to bring out Cassandra!

Hurry! I must take her to our Commander before I take the rest of those whose lot has been drawn to your masters.

A torch is lit inside the fourth hut which attracts Talthybius' attention.

What? What's this? Torch light? Fire?

300

Are the women setting fire to their homes because they'll be taken to Greece or are they setting themselves on fire? Do they prefer death to life?

It's a hard thing for the free to put their heads into the yoke of slavery in times of such misfortune, I know but...

Open up! Open the door! I'd hate to be blamed for something that's good for those women but bad for the Greeks!

Cassandra emerges from her hut carrying a lighted torch in either hand.

She wears ribbons on her head, symbols of her profession.

She is in a state of frenzy, running this way and that, as if searching for something.

Hekabe:

No, no Talthybius! No one is setting anything on fire.

It's my daughter, Cassandra, rushing about.

She is possessed by a divine madness.

Cassandra:

Lord, god of marriage, Hymenaeus! Lord Hymenaeus!

Hands a torch to Chorus.

Here, lift it up! Up, high! Come with me. *She walks towards the small altar.* Here, bring the light here.

Chorus places the torch into the altar's torch holder.

Cassandra stands in front of the altar, praying.

310

Lord, god of the wedding bed, Hymenaeus, I bring you light with the fire of the torch!

I bring light to this holy temple!

Blessed is the bridegroom, my god and blessed am I, for you have given me a king's bed, in Greece.

Blessed am I, the bride!

Hymen, Hymen, Hymenaeus!

Turns to Hekabe

But mother, why cry? Why lament the loss of my dead father and our destroyed city?

See? I have lit the torches to give light and dignity to my marriage!

320

Here, Hymen! I bring you bright light!

Come, Hekabe! You, too! Carry the wedding torch to my bed. It is the bed of a virgin. Our customs decree it.

To the chorus:

Come, friends, dance! Roll your feet this way and that, kick them high!

Dance as you have danced back in my father's happiest days!

O, what a divine dance!

Come Apollo! Lead our dance. I am getting married!

I am the priestess who serves you in your shrine. Your laurel-covered shrine.

330

God, Hymenaeus, Lord of the wedding bed!

Come, mother! Come join our dance! Lift your feet, mother.

Look! Whirl them round like this, and like this! Come, dance with me.

Join my happy dance!

Come, daughters of Troy! Women with the splendid robes!

Sing out loudly the happy songs of Hymenaeus! Sing out with joy.

Celebrate my happiness!

Come, sing about the man whom Fate delivered to my bed! Sing about my husband!

341

Chorus: To Hekabe

My queen, control your frenzied daughter before she dances her way to the camp of the Greek soldiers.

Hekabe:

O god! God of the torches, Hephaistos!

You're the god who holds the torches at the weddings of mortals but here... here, this wedding torch is a bitter one! This torch does not shed any light upon our great hopes! It is too dismal a light.

My poor child, Cassandra! It was never my wish to see you married this way, at the point of a Greek spear!

Give me the torch, darling. You're not holding it straight. This divine madness won't let you stand still.

She takes the torch from Cassandra's reluctant hand.

350

Your dreadful fate has not made matters any easier for you and your mind is still disturbed.

To the chorus

Come, friends, take the torches inside. Answer her wedding songs with tears!

Two women take the torches inside and come back out again.

Cassandra:

Mother, come! Wrap my head with wreaths of victory.

Dress me up like a bride. Be happy for me, be happy for my royal wedding!

Come, send me off to the bridegroom.

A sinister change of mood

And, mother, if I give you any resistance in this, if I hold back at all, then drag me there by force! Use force on me, mother use force on me because I swear by Apollo that my marriage to Agamemnon, to that...*sarcastically* ... glorious king of the Greeks, will come to an end more bitter than that of Menelaos and Helen!

I will kill him, mother!

I will destroy his city, mother and I will avenge the murders of my father and my brothers!

360

But enough of this lament for now.

I will not tell now of the axe that will fall upon my neck and upon the neck of others. Nor will I tell about the matricide that my marriage will cause or the destruction of the house of Atreus.

I will show them that our city is more blessed than any city in Greece, mother!

I know, I know! I am in the grips of the divine madness! I know that!

But I will now move out of this madness for a short while so that I can tell the story.

These Greeks have killed thousands of people! Why?

Because of one woman and her unbridled lust! Because they wanted Helen back!

370

And their leader –what a wise man their leader is!

In his efforts to destroy what he hated, he destroyed what he loved!

He killed his own daughter, mother! He sacrificed his little Iphigeneia, mother!

That... leader of theirs has destroyed the joy of his very own house!

He has abandoned his love for his children so as to get the love of his brother!

And all for the sake of one woman, a woman who had left her husband, not because she was forced to but because she wanted to.

And so they came here, camped by the banks of our river Scamander, not as exiles from their own fortresses but because of their own free will.

And soon after they've arrived here they began dying.

The god of war, Ares, saw to that.

Ares deprived them of ever seeing their children again and of being dressed and prepared for the underworld by the hands of their wives.

Those Greek men lie here, beneath a foreign soil.

380

And back in Greece, things were just as bad, mother.

Women were made widows!

They had lost their brave husbands! Many mothers lost their children.

Others, still, died without any children because they saw that raising them would be all in vain.

Houses emptied.

Tombs were neglected. There was no one there to make blood offerings to the gods.

This is the real prize the Greek army has won!

This is the real prize they have truly earned!

But now let my Muse stay silent about the Greeks, lest it be said that I sing only of disasters.

But the Trojans, mother!

Ah! The greatest glory goes to them, my mother!

It is they who have died for their own country!

Those who died on the battlefield, died on their own land and their corpses were carried to their tomb by friendly hands. They were buried beneath their own earth, mother, with all due honours given to them by their own folk. The proper folk.

390

And those Trojan men who had survived the battle would be living with their families, their wives and children, in their own homes.

These are all joys that the Greeks have never felt.

And Hektor!

You might all think his Fate was a bitter one but listen!

This is how things actually are:

He has died gloriously and with the reputation of a very brave man, a reputation that he owes to the Greeks because had they not turned up, no one would have known about his bravery.

And Paris!

Paris took as wife, Zeus' very own daughter! Had he not done that, had he married some other woman, who would have heard about him and about his house?

400

But of course! People with any sense at all would avoid war but if war does come, then glorious deaths are no garlands of shame for a city, though, to die shamefully would be a disgrace for it.

So, mother, don't feel sorry for our city and for my marriage. Because through my marriage I shall destroy all those who we both hate.

Chorus:

How you laugh in the face of misfortune, Cassandra!

Chorus:

In the face of a misfortune that will destroy your whole house!

Chorus:

And how you love to prophesy things that just cannot happen!

Talthybius:

I swear, woman! Had not Apollo maddened your mind, I'd have you punished severely for sending my generals off on their journey home with such ominous prophesies!

410

Still, it seems that those with intelligence and fame are no better off than those with none because, here we have the great general of all the Greeks, the beloved son of Atreus, falling in love with this mad woman, here!

Our great Agamemnon has chosen her above all the other Trojan women!

Now, I might not be as rich as he is but I would have never chosen her as my mistress! That's for sure!

And you, Cassandra, since your mind is not well, I decided to cast all your praises for the Trojans and all your curses for the Greeks, to the winds.

Let the winds carry them where they may!

But now, pretty bride, follow me to the ships. My Commander's bed awaits.

421

You, too, Hekabe. When Laertes' son, Odysseus, calls for you, follow him.

Those who have come to Troy say that you'll be the servant to a very wise woman.

Cassandra:

And what a great servant you are!

A truly excellent servant!

Why do they call them "heralds," I wonder!

All these men that hover about in the service of kings and cities?

Criers of death! The whole world hates them!

You say that my mother will be Penelope's servant?

Well, what of Apollo's prophesies, then? He has revealed to me that my mother will die here, in Troy!

430

I won't go on reproaching you about the rest of what you said.

Poor Odysseus!

He has no idea what's in store for him. The suffering he'll go through will make mine and that of Troy look like pure gold! Luxury!

After the ten years he has spent here, he will spend another ten full years before he sees his home and he will arrive there all alone, to a welcome that will be a very painful one, one that will be worthy of many tears.

And his journey home will be much delayed by Charybdis, that gruesome beast that dwells in the rocks of a gorge that he must pass through-

and by the mountain dweller and eater of human flesh, Cyclops-

and by the Ligourian Circe who turns men into pigs-

and by his ships getting wrecked on the vast and salty sea-

and by his lust after the lotus fruit-

440

and by the frightening human voices that the slaughtered cows of Helios will make—a bitter sound for Odysseus' ears!

To shorten the narrative, folks, Odysseus will enter Hades and after he escapes the waters of the wide ocean he'll arrive home where a million evils will welcome him!

But why do I bother singing the catalogue of Odysseus' pains?

To Talthybius

Come! Hurry up, then! Take me as quickly as possible!

I shall marry my husband in Hades!

O, Agamemnon! Chief of all the Greeks! How glorious your fame!

But your burial will be the burial of evil men, Agamemnon!

Evil, since you are evil yourself.

A grave dug by night, it will be, not one that sees the daylight!

And me? What of me? Apollo's prophetess!

I shall be a corpse, tossed about by the winter waves as they thrash violently about past my groom's grave. A naked corpse ready for the wild beasts to feed on.

Me, the priestess of Apollo!

451

She takes the ribbons off.

And you, my sacred ribbons?

Ribbons that adorn the god I love the most, what of you?

She throws them up in the air

Farewell! I'm finished with the festivals, with all the celebrations I once loved so much!

Go! Fly, my ribbons! Leave me! Leave my body now.

I tremble at the thought of giving you up. You leave a body that is pure still.

Go! Fly through the spinning winds and go to my prophetic Lord, Apollo!

Turning to Talthibius

So, where's your general's ship? Which way do I go to climb aboard?

Come, come, herald! Do not waste any time searching for a favourable wind to swell your sails! Hurry because you're taking me with you.

Me! One of the three Spirits of Vengeance!

To Hekabe

Farewell, mother! O, no, don't cry!

O dear land! Land of my brothers and of my father!

All of you now are beneath your own soil!

460

Soon you will receive me, too!

You will receive a victorious Trojan woman because I will have destroyed those who have destroyed us: The house of Atreidae!

Exit Cassandra, Talthibius and his men. Hekabe collapses to the ground.

Chorus:

Ah!

Chorus:

Where are this old woman's guardians?

Chorus:

Who is looking after Hekabe?

Chorus:

You! Can you not see that the poor woman has fallen on the ground?

Chorus:

And not a word from her!

Chorus:

Quickly, pick her up!

Chorus:

Come on!

Some women try to pick Hekabe up but she refuses their help

Chorus:

What? Will you leave her there, on the ground, you terrible women!

Chorus:

Come on, pick the poor old woman up!

Hekabe: *Still on the ground*

No, let me stay here. Let me lie here.

Unsolicited kindness is not kindness at all, my girls. Leave me be.

The body knows its proper place. It is here, on the ground.

Because of what I have suffered, because of what I am suffering and because of what I am about to suffer, this is its rightful place.

O, Gods!

I am calling you! I am calling for your help!

O, Gods, what terrible allies you are to me!

470

Still, it is a proper thing to pray to them when we suffer such pain!

Let me tell you just how blissful my life was back then so you may see just how dreadful my present fortune is.

I was a princess and was married to a king.

We had children and these were special in the Trojan world.

Exceptional, not the average run of the mill children but exceptional in every respect. No other woman, no Trojan, no Greek, no barbarian woman can boast to having children like mine. Yet, I, alone, saw

every one of them fall and die by the Greek spear and I, alone, have shorn my hair at their tombs.

481

It wasn't by a herald that I had received the news of the death of their father, Priam.

No, I saw that myself, with my own eyes. I was a witness to his slaughter.

They've murdered him at the altar of our own house!

I've witnessed the destruction of our whole city, as well.

And my daughters, women whom I raised to be their husband's pride and joy, all beautiful virgins, they were all taken from me, from my hands, to be made the wives of foreigners. Will I ever see them again? Will they ever see me again?

I have no such hopes.

And to top it all up, the worst of all the disasters that I have to endure, I must now be the slave!

490

I, an old, grey woman, must go to Greece and do things that least suit my age.

What will I be doing? What will Hector's mother be doing?

Will I be watching their gates, holding the keys, or work in their kitchens, baking their bread?

My shredded body dressed in shameful, shredded clothes will have the hard ground as its bed. This body! A body that was used to a royal bed and to the clothes of a wealthy queen!

How much must I suffer because of the marriage of one woman?

How much have I suffered and how much more must I suffer?

500

And you, my child, Cassandra! Cassandra, partner of the gods in their frenzy!

What dreadful Fate will accompany your pure love to the gods?

And you, poor darling Polyxene? Where are you now?

Ah, so many sons, so many daughters! All my children! All in vain!

None can help now.

The servants try again to lift her up

So why bother lifting me up from this ground?

What do you think I could do? What hope is there for me?

Let me be! My poor feet once wandered softly on Troy's earth but now!

Now those days are gone and now I am a slave. Now, drag me to a pile of stones that I may crash myself upon and, with tears battering my heart, I die there.

Think no man happy until his hour of death.

511

Chorus:

Come Muse! Come help me sing this dirge!

Chorus:

Help me tell this new story of ill-fated Troy! This story that is full of tears!

Chorus:

The Greeks rolled a huge structure, built on four wheels into the city and it was that structure which brought about my destruction and my miserable enslavement.

Chorus:

An enormous horse, made out of mountain pine, chiselled by the sharp adze...

520

Chorus:

A construction whose noise reached the heavens...

Chorus:

Whose cheeks were plated with gold...

Chorus:

Whose belly was clogged with spears.

Chorus:

They left that horse by the gates of our city and the folk saw it from above the walls and shouted with glee:

Chorus:

"Come, people! Come and see! Our troubles are no longer!

Come, roll this holy statue to the temple of Athena, the child of Zeus!"

Chorus:

So all the folk came out of their homes. Young girls and old men alike!

529

Chorus:

And with joy and song they pulled the devious destroyer of Dardanus' land inside the walls. All of

them! All the Trojans rushed out to the gates to make this evil offering to the virgin goddess who rides the immortal horse.

Chorus:

They ran out to the ambushing statue, spun plaited ropes around it, as if it were the black hull of a ship and brought it to rest at the stony temple on the holy ground of the goddess.

541

Chorus:

That gift was fatal to Troy.

Chorus:

And so the dancing and the singing went on all day until the day ended and the black night began but the sounds of a Lybian flute and Trojan voices continued, still in happy song...

Chorus:

...and the feet of the Trojan virgins still dancing with joy...

550

Chorus:

The bright moonlight flickered wide across the city and inside every home, it made the happy eyes heavy enough for sleep.

Chorus:

And it was then, the very moment when I was singing and dancing in the temple of Zeus' daughter, Artemis, the goddess of the hills, when the sound of murderous terror spun wildly through all the Trojan homes.

Chorus:

Babies threw their frightened little arms around their loving mother's skirts...

560

Chorus:

Ares, the god of war emerged from his ambush...

Chorus:

From Athena's dire work. At every altar, in every Trojan home the blood splashed.

Chorus:

Young girls in their deserted beds shaved their heads in grief!

Chorus:

Victory wreaths for the Greeks...

Chorus:

An offering of misery for Troy.

She suddenly sees Andromache in the distance

Chorus:

Hekabe, look! Look there! Andromache is coming.

Chorus:

She's riding on a foreign wagon.

570

Chorus:

At her sighing breast hangs her beloved child, Astyanax!

Chorus:

Hector's baby boy.

Enter Andromache with Astyanax on a wagon.

Hector's bronze shield and armour, as well as other Trojan spoils, are hanging from the sides of the wagon.

They are followed by Greek guards.

Chorus:

Andromache, you poor woman!

Chorus:

Where are they taking you on this wagon?

Chorus:

Look! Hector's bronze armour!

Chorus:

And all the Trojan spoils taken by the Greek spear.

Chorus:

Achilles' son will adorn his Phthian Temples with them.

Andromache:

My Greek masters are taking me away!

Hekabe:

O, my darling girl!

Andromache:

Why groan for me, Hekabe?

Hekabe:

O, my girl!

580

Andromache:

Such suffering I must endure, Hekabe!

Hekabe:

O, Lord, Zeus!

Andromache:

Disaster!

Hekabe:

O, my children!

Andromache:

All gone, now!

Hekabe:

All our joy is gone! Our Troy is gone!

Andromache:

Miserable Fate!

Hekabe:

Gone are all my noble sons!

Andromache:

O, Hekabe!

Hekabe:

One evil Fate after another!

Andromache:

Evil Fates, indeed!

Hekabe:

Miserable Fate!

Andromache:

Our own Fate and the Fate of our city!

Hekabe:

The smoke is choking our Troy!

Andromache:

Come back, come back, my husband, Hector!

Hekabe:

He is dead, my poor child, he is dead!

590

Andromache:

Come back Hector! Come back, my protector, my shield!

Hekabe:

Hector! Once you destroyed so many Greeks!

Once you were the leader of all the children I bore for Priam.

Come now and take me down to the halls of Hades!

Andromache:

We both desire the very same thing, my child.

Both of us unfortunate, both of us beaten by one disaster after another.

Our city was destroyed, Hekabe because the gods were angry with your son, Paris, a man who should have been killed at birth, a man who, to satisfy his lust for a shameful bed, destroyed our Trojan fortress.

The bloodied corpses of our heroes are strewn about all round Athena's temple, a naked plunder for the vultures and a yoke of slavery for Troy.

601

Hekabe:

O, my poor land!

Andromache:

The tears gush forth bitterly for you, my country.

Hekabe: *Indicating the smoke behind Troy's walls*

And now, look now upon our awful end!

Look at the palace where I gave birth to all my children!

O, my darlings. Your mother abandons you and leaves you behind, in a deserted city.

How painful the grief! How unbearable the loss!

Tears chase tears in our palace.

Only the dead can forget such grief!

Chorus:

The unfortunate find sweet solace in tears, in wailing and in the singing of dirges.

610

Andromache: *Indicating her plight*

Hekabe! Hector's mother! The mother of a man who has killed many Greeks!

Do you see all this?

Hekabe:

I see, my child! I see that this is the work of the gods who want to show us that they can exalt things that mortals think are nothing and that they can tear down things that the mortals praise.

Andromache:

Look, here, Hekabe! Look at me and look at my son!

My son and I are carried away like nothing more than spoils of war.

The nobly born are turned into slaves. Fate has changed everything so much.

Hekabe:

Fate is a mighty force, Andromache!

Only a few minutes ago the Greeks have taken my Cassandra away!

Andromache:

Poor soul! It seems another Ajax has suddenly appeared to rob you of your daughter. And then you have more troubles to deal with...

620

Hekabe:

Troubles, indeed! Endless troubles. No way to measure them, no way to count them!

Troubles competing with other...

Andromache:

Hekabe, your daughter... your daughter, Polyxene is dead.

The Greeks have slaughtered her on Achilles' tomb.

Offered her life as a gift to his lifeless corpse.

Hekabe:

Oh, my darling girl! O my poor daughter! My Polyxene!

Talthybius told me this earlier. His words were mysteriously phrased but true!

Andromache:

I saw her there, on Achilles' tomb, with my own eyes.

I got down off this cart and put a cloak over her corpse.

Then I stayed there and lamented her loss with my tears.

Hekabe:

Unholy, sinful death! O, my darling daughter! How despicable your slaughter!

630

Andromache:

Despicable or not, Polyxene died but she is still luckier than me.

Hekabe:

Don't say that, my child. Being dead is not the same as being alive.

Being dead is to have nothing. Being alive is to have hope.

Andromache:

Come, mother! Mother of many children!

Listen to some wise words. Listen and they will cheer your heart.

To be dead and to be unborn it is the same thing. But if the choice is between a miserable life, mother, if it is between a miserable life and death, death is preferable.

Because the dead feel no misery and they know nothing of grief, whereas for the living mortals, if a happy woman falls into misery she must deal with the memory of the joy she previously enjoyed.

Her soul seeks the joys of the past.

641

And so, it is the same with Polyxene now.

She has died and, so, it is just the same with her as if she were never born.

As if she had never seen the light of day. She knows nothing now of her misfortune.
I, on the other hand, mother, I have seen and known joy!
I have always dreamt of achieving a good name and there I hit the mark. I had tasted joy!
But now, mother, now my Fate has turned and I have fallen into misfortune.
In Hector's house, I have been a good example of a virtuous woman, behaving in every way like a
modest, virtuous woman should behave.
Whatever it is that people would expect from a married woman, I did.
I stayed inside the house because I know that the gossiping tongues chatter idly against a woman who
ventures outside her home.
I had put aside all such desire.

651

Nor did I let those women with the subtle gossip enter my home to tell me about the world outside. I
simply listened to my own mind.
It's a good mind, it's a good enough teacher for me.
As for my own tongue, I kept it quiet. And I've kept a lowered eye before my husband because I knew
well when I should win an argument and when I should give him the victory of it.
And it was the fame of this virtue that spread throughout the Greek camp and which destroyed me
because, the moment the captured me, Achilles' son wanted to make me his wife!

660

And so I'll be the servant in a murderer's house.
If, then, I were to put Hector out of my mind and put my new husband in my heart, I would be disloyal
to the man who died, yet if I show my revulsion towards my new husband, my master, I will be hated
by him.
They say that one night in a man's bed erases all revulsion towards him.
No! I think no woman is worse than the woman who, having lost her husband, puts all memory of him
aside and turns to love the bed of another.

670

Not even a little pony, a mare, an animal, with no speech or reason, a beast whose nature is much
inferior to ours; not even a young mare, would feel happy after losing her partner and she will find it
difficult to put her head through the yoke again.
O, Hector! My beloved Hector! You were enough for me! A strong mind, a strong heart, a wealthy
house!
I was an innocent girl when you took me from my father's house and you were the first to unite with
me in my maiden bed. But now, my Hector, now you are dead and I am now a captive and taken
aboard a ship to Greece, to work the yoke of slavery.

680

So, Hekabe, is Polyxene's death, a death for which you've spilled so many tears, a more miserable fate
than mine? Because, for me, mother, for me, even hope, that thing which every other human being has,
even that, even hope has escaped me.
Nor do I allow hope to deceive me. I know full well that I have no hope of ever seeing better days.
Though even such deceptions can be pleasant.

Chorus:

Your misfortune, Andromache is similar to mine and as you speak of your own fate, you speak of mine
at the same time.

Hekabe:

I know little of ships and sailors.

So far, I've only seen pictures of them and heard a bit about them but I've yet to step onto a ship's
deck.

691

But they say that when sailors are faced with some storm, one that's not too violent, they try to save
their lives by working quickly and eagerly. One of them works the tiller, others work the sails and yet
others, try to bale the water from the deck.
That's when the storm is not too violent.
But if it is violent, if the waves of the storm swell and clash and overpower them, they let Fate do her
work and abandon the ship to the waves.
And that's what I feel now.
The endless misery that the gods have crashed upon me, overpowered my tongue and I cannot speak.
The gods have sent too great a torrent of misery upon me.
So, stop, my darling girl, stop talking of Hector and his Fate now. Your tears cannot save him.

700

Now you must respect your present master and show him your wonderful nature.
Win his heart and if you can do this, you'll bring joy to many friends and raise this child, this child of my child, to be a man and the greatest supporter of Troy.
And then, in time, more sons from your lineage may raise our Troy to become a city again.

She notices Talthybius coming in the distance within.

Ah, but one concern leads to another. Who is this Greek herald coming towards us?

I wonder what new decisions he brings us?

Enter Talthybius and soldiers

Talthybius:

Andromache, wife of the bravest of all the Greeks, wife of the now dead Hector.

I have bad news for you, news that I will give you against my wishes, so don't hate me. These announcements are made by both, the Greeks and the sons of Pelops.

712

Andromache:

How ominous your words, Talthybius! Speak!

Talthybius:

It concerns this child, Andromache...

uncomfortably

What words must I use...

Andromache:

This child will be separated from me?

Will he be given to another master?

Talthybius:

No, no Greek will ever be his master.

Andromache:

What? Have you decided to leave him behind?

Here, as a relic to the Troy that was?

Talthybius:

Andromache, I don't know how to break these awful news to you. I don't know how to do this gently.

Andromache:

You show a good heart to try and soften the blow of bad news.

Talthybius:

The news are terrible and I must tell them, Andromache.

The Greeks will kill your son!

720

Andromache:

Ah! I have never heard news more painful than these!

Talthybius:

It was Odysseus' decisions. Voted in favour by the rest of the assembly.

Andromache:

Will my pains never end?

Will the disasters never stop?

One dreadful misfortune upon another!

Talthybius:

Odysseus had told the assembly that they should not let the son of a Trojan noble grow into a man.

Andromache:

Would any of them be just as convincing if it concerned their own son?

Talthybius:

He's convinced them to have the child thrown from the Trojan towers.

Let that happen, Andromache. You would be doing the wiser thing.

Bear this misfortune with the noble courage you have.

Don't insist on holding on to the boy.

You are weak, Andromache. Weak and powerless.

There's no one here to defend you.

730

Think carefully of this, woman.

Both your city and you husband are gone and your life is in the hands of others.

How can a single woman possible hope to fight against the Greek army?

Think of that, Andromache and don't fight against it.

Do nothing shameful or outrageous. Throw no curses at the Greeks.

I wouldn't tolerate that at all.

The moment you say anything against us, neither you nor your child will find any understanding from anyone.

Stay silent and receive your plight wisely and your son will not be left unburied.

And you, too, woman, will be received by the Greeks more favourably.

740

Andromache: *To Astyanax*

O, my sweet child! My darling son!

Our enemies will murder you and you will leave your mother all alone.

You will be killed because you are a noble and the son of a noble, a noble and brave man who has saved many but who cannot save you.

Disastrous marriage! Dreadful wedding! You've brought me here, to Hector's palace, not so that I'd bear a child that would become the sacrificial victim of the Greeks but one who would rule over all the people of Asia.

You're crying, my darling? You understand the awful Fate that awaits you.

750

Ah, your sweet little arms, hug me!

They hold tightly at my dress like a little bird, trying to bury itself in its mother's wings.

Hector, your glorious father, will not emerge from below the earth with his spear to come and save you; neither will any of his family, nor anyone from Troy's mighty army.

No, my darling! You will be thrown mercilessly from a high cliff. Your neck will break and there you will let out your last breath.

O, young, sweet child! The sweetest burden a mother can have. Dear child!

Oh, the sweet fragrance of your baby flesh!

It was all for nothing, then!

It was in vain that my breast suckled you while you were still in your baby clothes.

760

All my work, all my pain, all my concern about you, it was all for nothing!

Come, darling! Come now, hug your mother tightly, for the very last time!

Come, put your little arms around me!

Come, kiss your mother on the lips, darling!

To Talthibius and his men

You! You barbarians! You, Greeks! The evil things you do!

What has this child ever done to you? Why kill an innocent little boy?

O, Helen! Product of Tyndareus' lineage. Zeus was not your father!

No, I say you're the daughter of many men!

Your first father was Bloodshed and your next father was Hate!

Then came Murder and that lot was followed by every monstrous grief and pain that breeds upon this earth!

770

A child of Zeus? You? Never! A murderer of so many Greeks and Trojans alike?

Never!

May the gods destroy you! You and your sweet eyes that brought destruction to the beautiful land of the Trojans!

Well then, come! Come evil Greeks and take him!

Take my child and throw him over the wall, if that is what you want!

Come on, take him and kill him! Gorge yourselves upon his young flesh!

How can I save him when the gods have destroyed us?

Come, hide my miserable body, toss it in the bowels of some ship!

What a splendid wedding I am heading to, now that I've lost my child!

A member of the chorus hands Andromache a black scarf with which she covers her face.

780

Chorus:

Unfortunate Troy!

The deaths are endless and all for the sake of one woman and her hideous bed!

Talthibius: *To Astyanax, kindly.*

Come, my son, leave your poor mother's arms now and come with me.

We have to go to the crowning peak of your father's towers where you must leave your last breath. It is an order.

To his men

Take him.

The men take Astyanax's hand and lead him away from his mother.

Other guards surround Andromache and lead her out.

Such cruel messages ought to be delivered by harsher heralds.

I have not the heart for them.

As Talthybius and the soldiers are leading Andromache and Astyanax out, Hekabe cries out to Astyanax, rushes over to him to clutch him and address him for the last time

790

Hekabe:

No! No! O, my son! Son of my ill-fated son!

It's unfair! These evil men have torn away your life from me and from your mother, my little boy!

How can I endure this? How can I help you my poor boy, unfortunate boy?

An angry scuffle ensues and the soldiers separate Astyanax from Hekabe.

Our only help to you is to beat our breasts and our head.

That's the only power left in us.

Talthybius, his men, Astyanax and Andromache exit.

O, my poor city! My poor, Troy! Miserable luck to you and to us both!

What's left for us?

What misery is still to fall upon us to make the destruction complete?

799

Chorus:

O, Telamon!

Chorus:

King of Salamis, the island home of bees!

Chorus:

An island, washed endlessly by the crashing waves.

Chorus:

An island near the sacred rocks of Athena's temple...

Chorus:

...where she first revealed to the world the sacred sapling of the green olive.

Chorus:

A heavenly garland for her and a gem for her dazzling city, Athens.

Chorus:

It was you who came here, Telamon! Here in Troy!

Chorus:

A long time ago!

You had come here with Herakles, Alcmene's son...

Chorus:

...Herakles, the master of the bow and arrow!

Chorus:

He came all the way from Greece, to sack our city, to raze our Troy to the ground.

Chorus:

Cheated of his lovely steeds, Heracles, set off with the finest flower of Greek men...

Chorus:

...and when he reached the banks of Simois with its sparkling streams, he put down his seagoing oars, tied ropes to his sterns and stepped upon the land with his precise arrows, all ready to murder

Laomedon.

Chorus:

And so, Herakles blasted all of Apollo's work.

All the stone work, built well by Apollo's master builders, all of it, Herakles blasted with the roaring breath of fire and devastated the Trojan land.

Chorus:

And so, it happened twice. Twice the slaughtering spear of the Greeks has destroyed our Dardanian walls. Spear and fire.

Chorus:

It was all for nothing, then, Laomedon, all for nothing, that you ran gracefully about in Zeus' halls topping his golden wine cups -a most virtuous occupation, indeed- for the sake of your city.

Look about you, now Laomedon. What do you see?

The land of your birthplace is burning.

Chorus:

Listen! Hear that Laomedon? Hear that groan? It is the groan of the sea.
Her beaches groan with agony.

830

Chorus:

Like birds calling for their young...

Chorus:

Or for their partners...

Chorus:

...their children...

Chorus:

...their elderly mothers.

Chorus:

Gone are your splendid bath houses...

Chorus:

The race course you used to race your horses on...

Chorus:

And as you, Laomedon, carry that beautiful, young smile of tranquillity around the throne of Zeus,
here, the whole of Priam's land has been wiped out by the Greek spear.

840

Chorus:

O, Eros! Eros, son of Zeus! You came once to the halls of our King Dardanus, to accomplish the will
of the Heavens!

Chorus:

You've come and you've raised Troy's Towers, high, high into the heart of the Heavens. But no, no! I
won't talk of Zeus' shameful deed!

Chorus:

But, then, what of Dawn? Dawn with her white wings, the goddess whose splendid light is loved by all
mortals...

Chorus:

...she saw –she saw!- the devastation of our land...

Chorus:

She watched the ruin of our city, Pergamon's city...

Chorus:

She sat there and watched it being destroyed even though it was this city that has given her a husband
for her bridal chamber, a husband she once snatched from these parts and carried him away in a cart of
sparkling golden stars.

Chorus:

What joy! What a high hope was that for our city!

Chorus:

Alas! No more! Gone! The gods no longer love our Troy!

Enter Menelaos with guard

860

Menelaos:

What a glorious day, this is!

Today I shall be holding in these arms my wife, Helen!

I am Menelaos and I, as well as all the Greeks, have suffered a great deal.

I have come to Troy not, as many think, merely because of a woman but because I wanted to punish the
man who treated my hospitality with contempt, a man who has deceived me and stole my wife from
within my own palace halls!

That man now, that man and his country have been punished. The Greek spear saw to that.

So now I have come for her. I have come for... I get no pleasure in uttering her name... for that
Spartan woman, that woman who, I admit, once was my wife.

871

She's here, in these huts, among all the other Trojan women prisoners.

The soldiers who've suffered so much fighting on her account left it to me to either kill her here or, if I
want, to take her back to Greece, alive.

I've decided not to kill her here, in Troy but to take her back aboard our ship, to Greece and kill her
there. Let those Greeks in Greece, those who have lost loved ones in this war see and feel some justice.

880

Right! Guards, go inside the hut and drag the murderous bitch by the hair.
Bring her out here and when the winds are favourable, I'll take her back to Greece.
Some guards go into the larger hut.

Hekabe:

O Lord, Zeus! Pillar of the Earth upon which you have your throne!
Who you are and what you are is impossible for mortals to fathom.
Hear my prayer, Lord, whether you are a human thought or a natural law!
Your ways are silent, Zeus, yet you drive all human affairs towards justice!

Menelaos:

What? What do you mean by this silly prayer?

890

Hekabe:

I praise you, Menelaos for wanting to kill your wife.
But let not her eyes fall upon yours or she will tempt your passion again.
Her eyes! Her eyes enslave the eyes of all men, enslave their cities and set their houses on fire. Her magic spells are mighty!
You and I and everyone else who has suffered know her eyes very well.

Enter the guards forcing Helen out of the hut.

She is wearing expensive, glittering, ostentatious clothes, a stark contrast to the humble and dirty clothes worn by the Queen and the chorus.

Helen:

This is a dreadful start, Menelaos! A frightening start!
Your thugs have dragged me here, in front of these huts against my will!
Yes, yes, I know you hate me.
I have no doubt about that; but will you at least let me know if you or the rest of the Greeks have made any decisions about my future yet?

901

Menelaos:

No, no major discussion took place about you.
The army has decided that since it was me you've hurt, I should have the power to kill you.

Helen:

To kill me! Would I, by any chance, be allowed to make my case against this decision, to try at least and show that such a punishment would be unjust?

Menelaos:

No, I'm not here to argue with you, Helen but to kill you.

Hekabe:

Let her speak, Menelaos.
Let her not die without doing this but let me be the one who'll put to her the other side of the argument; because you, yourself, know nothing of the true measure of Troy's suffering.
Let me speak and I can assure you, my story will result in her death.
Fear not. She will not escape her punishment.

911

Menelaos:

A waste of time... but let her speak, if she wants.
I give her my permission, not because she has asked for it but because of you, Hekabe, because you have asked for it. Let that be made clear.

Helen: *To Menelaos*

Well, in any case, since you see me as your enemy, you won't be responding to my arguments, even if they are just. So, all I can do is argue against the accusations I think you'll be making against me.

Indicating Hekabe

First of all, you should direct your accusations at her.

It was she, Hekabe, who gave birth to Paris and it was then when our troubles began.

920

The destruction of Troy –and of my own- came about because of Priam, her husband, who should have killed Paris. He should have done that when Paris was a baby.

That baby visited her in her dream when she was pregnant with him, as a blazing torch.

But listen to what followed his birth, the birth of Paris.

It was this man who judged the three goddesses in a beauty contest.

Palas Athena bribed him by promising him that he would head the Trojan army against Greece and destroy her utterly.

Hera's promise, on the other hand, was that, if he gave her the prize, he would be made ruler of all Asia and Europe but Aphrodite, who knew and admired my beauty, told him that her prize to him, if he declared her the most beautiful of the three goddesses, would be me.

931

So, now listen to what happened after that.

Aphrodite, of course, won the contest and that victory brought about my relationship with Paris a relationship, Menelaos, that proved to be of benefit to Greece.

How? Because the Greeks are not ruled by barbarians which would have happened if Paris had chosen one of the other two goddesses.

You were neither beaten by a foreign army nor were you ruled by a foreign king.

Greece benefited from my misfortune. Greece has gained happiness whilst I gained misery. Because of my beauty, I was sold; and, instead of crowning my head with garlands, the Greeks now treat me with disdain.

Of course, I know, you'll now tell me that all this doesn't explain my sliding out of your house secretly.

The explanation is that Paris came to Sparta with an ally, an ally who is not at all insignificant. The goddess Aphrodite herself was with him and so – call him Paris or call him Alexandros – it was he who has destroyed this land.

942

And it was you, you despicable man, you who let Paris come into our palace and then left him there while you went off to Crete!

Never mind!

As for what happened afterwards, it's not to you I'll direct my questions my to me!

What got over me?

What on earth made me leave my country and my home to follow him here?

If you must punish anyone, Menelaos, then punish Zeus!

Come, are you strong enough to do that?

Punish that god because even though he rules all the other gods, he is Aphrodite's little slave!

Go on! Punish him and pardon me!

951

This is where you could make some wise comments: You could say that since Paris was killed and hurled into the underworld and my god-driven marriage dissolved, I should have left my marriage home and come to the Greek ships.

But that's exactly what I wanted to do!

Ask the guards of the walls and the watchmen at the towers. They will be my witness. They will tell you that they've caught me often enough using ropes, trying to sneak down from the battlements of the city but my second husband, Deiphobus would always catch me and drag me back into his house, even against the will of the rest of the Trojans.

961

Well then, my husband? After all my efforts to come to you, should you not be giving me an award for bravery instead of killing me? Another man has taken me into his home and made me his slave. Would not the award rather than the death be more just?

Who can argue against the will of the gods? And if that's what you want to do, then someone better tell you quickly how stupid that would be!

Chorus:

Come now, my Queen, defend your children and your country.

Chorus:

Her speech was strong, persuasive, forceful, eloquent.

Chorus:

You must destroy it because she is guilty of something dreadful.

969

Hekabe:

First, let me represent the goddesses and, at the same time, prove that this woman is a liar.

There's no way that Hera and the virgin Athena would have lost their minds to such an extent that the first one would sell Greece to the barbarians and the second would subjugate the Athenians to the Trojans. Nor have they ever gone to Ida to engage in some silly beauty contest. Why would they want to do a thing like that?

Why would Hera suddenly be overcome by such a silly desire to boast about her beauty? Was she after another husband? Someone stronger than Zeus, perhaps?

I wonder who that could be?

There is none, Helen! There's no one more powerful than Zeus!
And Athena? What was that goddess after? Marriage with one of the gods?

980

She has run away from the marriage bed by asking her father to grant her eternal virginity!

No, Helen, it won't work!

You're trying to make the goddesses look stupid by dressing them up with your own flaws! This will not persuade anyone with a bit of sense.

And then you say that Aphrodite went along with my son to Menelaos' house!

How ridiculous that is! Laughable! Why would she want to come down all the way from the Heavens to do that? Why would she bother? Why couldn't she just simply stay up there and from her throne, pick you up –you and everyone else in the city of Amyclae, for that matter- and just quietly, drop you here, in Troy?

The truth is, Helen, that my son, Paris, was a formidably handsome man.

You took one look at him and your head spun with Aphrodite's lust!

That's the reason why mortals call all their mindless acts "Aphrodite." She has the right name, that one. The first half of it means "Foam-head!"

991

You saw my Paris in his splendid, exotic, glittering, golden clothes and you went right off your head! You thought Greece was far too meagre in her wealth for you, so you decided to leave Sparta, come over here, where the gold is overflowing and then completely take over the place with your reckless love for luxury.

Menelaos' palace didn't quite meet the needs of your lavish debauchery, Helen.

All right.

Be that as it may but you also say that Paris took you away by force. Kidnapped you. Did you scream for help at all? Did any other woman hear you?

And this was before your brothers, Castor and Polydeuces went up to the heavens to be among the stars. They were still alive then. Why didn't they hear your cries?

1001

And so, then you came racing over here, the Greeks following right behind you.

And then the war started in all its deadly fury and whenever you got news that Menelaos was winning, you'd sing his praises everywhere!

What do you think that did to my son? He was tormented by those praises of yours! He felt that he had to fight some awesome rival for your bed. But then, when the news declared that the Trojans were winning, well then, it was as if Menelaos didn't exist!

Your morals, Helen, followed the wind rather than virtue.

You also claim to have tried escaping Troy by lowering yourself over the walls with ropes because, you said, you were kept here against your will.

1010

Well, tell me, then, Helen: Has anyone ever caught you tying a noose around your neck, or sharpening a knife? Now that's what a brave woman would have done, if she really loved her first husband!

And not only that but how many times have I, personally, advised you to leave? "Come, daughter," I'd say to you, "Come, leave this place. My son will find another wife. Let me take you secretly to the Greek ships! That will put an end to the war; a war that's killing both, Greeks and Trojans alike."

But, of course, you didn't like that advice and never followed it.

1020

No, because while you were in Paris' home you could do as you pleased.

As well, you loved all the attention that our barbarian servants lavished upon you.

That was a big thing, in your eyes, all those servants milling about you!

And now look at you! Look at your rich clothes! You've dressed yourself up in this exquisite finery to come out here and to share with your husband the same sky!

Vulgar woman! You should be spat upon!

You should have come out here dressed in humble, old clothes, shaking with dread and with your head shorn, humiliated because of the evil deeds you've perpetrated. You should be behaving with some modesty and not with such crass haughtiness.

1029

Turning to Menelaos

And so, Menelaos, listen to the last words of my speech.

They are directed at you.

Kill her!

It will be a crown of glory for Greece. She deserves death. And her death will also be a precedent for

all those other women who betray their husband.

Make it law: Death to all the disloyal women!

Chorus:

Menelaos do justice to your ancestors and to your house.

Chorus:

Punish Helen in a way that will show your nobility in the eyes of your enemies.

Chorus:

It will also scotch the rumour, a rumour that's running rampant among the Greeks, that you are too much like a woman.

Menelaos: *To Hekabe and the chorus*

Now then. Our words concur.

Helen has fled my house of her own volition to jump into the bed of a stranger.

Aphrodite had nothing to do it. Helen introduced the goddess into her tale merely to boast.

Go now, Helen! Go to the men who will stone you to death.

It will be a swift death.

A swift recompense for the drawn out evils you've committed to the Greeks.

That will teach you to defile my name.

1041

Helen: *Falls before Menelaos and puts her arms around his knees*

No, Menelaos! I beg you, by your knees, I beg you!

Don't kill me for something that was caused by the gods!

Forgive me!

Hekabe:

Don't listen to her, Menelaos. Don't betray all those battle mates of yours who were killed for her sake.

I beg you, on their behalf and on behalf of my sons!

Menelaos:

That's enough, old woman. I don't care at all about what happens to her.

To his soldiers

Men, take her to the ships. We'll send her off to Sparta.

Hekabe:

In that case, Menelaos, don't let her get aboard the same ship as yours.

1050

Menelaos: *Laughing*

O, why is that? Has she gained that much weight?

Hekabe:

No, but there's no lover who doesn't love his lover for ever.

Menelaos:

Perhaps but it depends upon the heart of the loved one.

In any case, I shall do as you say.

We won't put her on board the same ship with me.

You're quite right about that.

Once we get to Greece, one way or another, she will serve justice and she will die. Her death will teach all the other women to be sensible. Now, that will certainly be a difficult thing to achieve but, nevertheless, her execution will frighten the foolish women and the worst of the shameless sluts.

Exit Menelaos, Helen and the soldiers.

1060

Chorus:

Well, then, Zeus! This is your work: You have surrendered your Trojan temple to the Greeks.

Chorus:

And its altar and the lush fragrance of all the burnt offerings upon it.

Chorus:

And the sacred ethereal flame of the burning myrrh.

Chorus:

And the holy citadel of Pergamon.

Chorus:

And the ivy-growing valleys of Ida, nourished by the rolling waters of the melting snow, rushing down from her peaks!

1070

Chorus:

Ida's peaks, the first to catch the light of the Sun-god.
Earth's most sacred boundary.

Chorus:

Well, then Zeus!

Your sacrifices are gone!

Chorus:

And the joyful songs of your dancers!

Chorus:

And all the night-long vigils for all the gods!

Chorus:

And all the statues, wrought in gold.

Chorus:

And the twelve sacred Trojan cakes of the full moon.

Chorus:

Well, then, Zeus! I want to know if you thought about all this, Lord!

Chorus:

Sitting as you are on your heavenly throne, in the sky...

Chorus:

Can you see my city now...

1080

Chorus:

It's a city destroyed by the spear and by the blazing fire!

Hekabe:

O, my dear husband!

Your soul is wandering all about,

Your corpse is left unburied,

Deprived of the burial bath.

The ship will carry me over the sea

And rush me to the horse-loving land of Greece,

There, where the stone walls, built by the Cyclopes, reach the sky;

And where the children are gathered about the gates their eyes filled with tears

As they groan and weep and sadly mumble,

1090

"Mother! Mother!

The Greeks are taking me –me, all alone!

They are taking me down to their black ships

And, with oars that cut the water, they will deliver me either to holy Salamis

Or to the high peak of the Isthmus with its twin path,

Where the gates lead to the land of Pelops."

1100

Chorus:

Oh, may the gods burn that ship!

Chorus:

Oh, Zeus! Burn Menelaos' ship with a dreadful holy lightning bolt!

Burn it just as it sails through the Aegean.

Hekabe:

Burn it, Zeus, as it takes me from my Trojan home

With my eyes flooded with tears!

They are taking me into exile as a slave, in Greece!

Chorus:

Your daughter, Zeus! Helen will hold a golden mirror!

Chorus:

A golden mirror! What a delightful toy that is for the little girls!

1110

Chorus:

I hope she never reaches her father's home in Sparta!

Chorus:

Or Menelaos! I hope he never gets to the city of Pitana

Nor return to the temple of Athena of the golden gates.

Chorus:

Menelaos, husband of the most shameful woman, in Greece.

Chorus:

Helen, who brought great grief and destruction to the streams of Simois!

Enter Talthibijs with four soldiers, two of whom are carrying the body of Astyanax on a huge, bronze shield.

Hekabe and the chorus immediately rush in horror to look at the body.

Hekabe:

Oh! Oh!

Chorus:

Despicable sight!

Chorus:

Despicable fortune!

Chorus:

One disaster falling upon another!

1120

Chorus:

Oh, look! Look here, you poor Trojan wives! Look upon the corpse of Astyanax!

Chorus:

Murdered by the Greeks!

Chorus:

They've hurled him down from the tower!

Hekabe:

So much hatred!

Talthibijs:

Hekabe, there's only one ship with its oars left in the harbour now.

It's heading for Phthia, in Thessaly. On it are the rest of the spoils that belong to Achilles' son, Neoptolemos. The boy, himself had to rush off because he had received some bad news about his grandfather, Peleas. Acastus, the son of Pelias, the king of Iolchus, has banished the boy's grandfather from the country and so the boy didn't want to waste any time here and so, quickly set sail taking Andromache with him.

1130

Her departure filled my eyes with tears. She wailed a heart-renting lament about her country and cried as she farewelled her Hector's tomb. She begged Neoptolemos to permit her to have this child here, Hector's son and hers, buried.

This child breathed his last after he was hurled down from the towers.

She also begged Neoptolemos not to have this shield brought back to Peleus' home.

That bronze shield there, had terrified us, Greeks, on the battlefield!

Hector used to hold it up to protect the side of his body.

She didn't want it hanging in the same house or in the same chamber where she would become Neoptolemos' wife. It would be too distressing for Andromache, the mother of this dead boy. She begged him, instead, to bury the boy in the shield, instead of building a cedar coffin and then erecting a stone tomb.

1141

She asked that the boy's corpse be handed to you, personally, so that you may look after it appropriately. Wrap it up with a shroud and put garlands over it.

She couldn't bury the poor child herself since her master had to leave in such a hurry.

Once you have adorned of the corpse, we'll come over and cover it with the soil and plant a spear on the grave.

Hurry now and obey these orders.

1150

Oh, I've taken care of one little task for you.

As I was crossing the Scamander river, I stopped and washed the child's corpse and cleaned its wounds.

Now I'll go and dig a grave for him. We should work together to make the task easier for us both. The sooner we finish, the sooner we'll sail for home.

Exit Talthibijs and two of his soldiers

Hekabe: *To the soldiers carrying the body.*

Here! Put this bronze shield down here!

The soldiers do so and then move back.

Oh, what a dreadful sight! Oh, child! My eyes can't bear what they see!
Such a bitter sight!
Greeks! Your spears weigh more than your brains!
So frightened of this little boy!
So frightened that you had to murder him!
So frightened of this little boy that you had to invent a new method of murder!

1160

Why? What were you afraid of? That he would rebuild his devastated city?
That he would resurrect Troy?
Well, let me tell you why you are afraid, Greeks!
You are afraid of a little boy because you are nothing!
You have killed Hector who fought gloriously with thousands of other Trojans and you have burnt our city. You have killed thousands of brave men and yet –and yet you were afraid of this little boy!
Fear! Fear without a reason is not what the brave feel!
She kneels by Astyanax's corpse. The soldiers move back.
Oh, darling boy! How harsh was your death, my darling!
Had you been killed in a battle defending your country, my boy, had you grown up and married and become a king, equal to the gods, you would have been blessed.

1170

They say that such things are blessings.
But no, my darling. You have witnessed all these blessings, you saw them all around you in your royal house, you felt them in your soul but you, yourself have missed out on them!
Oh, my poor baby!
The beautiful locks on your head! Locks that your mother fondled so often, so lovingly! How she kissed those locks! And now! What they have done to your poor, beautiful head! Dreadful!
The towers of your father's city, my child, the walls that Apollo himself has built, they were the cause of this despicable deed.
Ah! Ah! Look! Look here!
Here where your mother planted all her kisses, here now –oh, I can't utter the word! Here, through these crushed little bones, I see the vile smile of Murder!
Murder, this bloody gash on your face, screams out! Murder!
Oh, and these little arms! How sweet the memory these little arms bring me!
These are his father's hands! Ah, but look at them now.
Broken. Limp shreds of flesh and broken bones.

1180

Ah, and your lips! These darling lips! The things you used to say!
All those grand promises you used to make! How silent you are now!
You lied to me! You used to jump into my bed and say, "Grandmother, when you die, I'll cut lots of my curls off and come over to your grave with my friends and we'll all sing for your our good byes with words that you will love to hear!"
You lied because it isn't you who's burying me, my darling, it is I who must bury you, you, my sweet, you, a mere child and I? I am an old woman without a city and without any children.
What an unlucky corpse I must bury!
All those cuddles! All those fears about your food! All those worries about every little thing!
What will the poet write upon your tombstone, my sweet boy?
"Here lies a child killed by the Greeks because they were afraid of him!"

1190

To the Greek soldiers
What a shameful epitaph for the Greeks!
Back to the corpse
You've lost all of your father's inheritance, my darling.
Lost it all except this brilliant bronze shield of his. It will be yours forever, my sweet. You will be buried in it.
And you, shield! Once you protected my Hector's powerful arm. Where is your mighty guardian now?
Oh, look! Look at the lovely imprint his hand left upon your strap. Hector's hand!
And here! Here's the sweat of the man! Here, it has left its mark on your lovely rim.
It is the dear sweat of a man exhausted in battle. Here, where he rested his chin, the sweat poured down from his forehead.

She raises herself up and addresses the chorus

1200

Come now, Trojan women. Come, and adorn this poor boy's little corpse!
Bring whatever you have. Whatever our ill Fate allows us.

To the corpse

And from me, too, my son, I'll give you all I've got left.

Only foolish men rejoice in their prosperity, thinking it is everlasting.

Fortune behaves like a crazy man, jumping now this way and leaping now the other.

No fortunate man is fortunate for ever.

Various women come out of the huts and from behind the walls carrying flowers and other adornments which they offer to Hekabe. A white, royal cloak is among them.

Chorus:

Here they are, Hekabe. The women are bringing you some of Troy's spoils.

Chorus:

Here are the adornments for the boy's corpse.

Hekabe takes them all, kneels back down to the shield and lovingly arranges them around the body.

1209

Hekabe:

We've lost such a young little boy!

You had no time to enter the contests against your peers, my child.

These few adornments, my darling, are not the prizes they give for horse racing victories, nor are they trophies they award to the winners of archery contests, contests which the Trojan traditions hold in high esteem.

Those are trophies which the god-hated Helen has robbed from you. Robbed you of your life and destroyed your household.

No, my boy. It is I, your father's mother who's making these offerings to you, offerings that would have been your inheritance one day.

Chorus:

Oh, child! How you've touched my heart! How you've touched my heart dear baby!

Chorus:

Astyanax! Lord of the city!

Chorus:

Lord by name and Lord you once were in my eyes!

Hekabe: *Lifts up the white cloak*

Here, little Lord! This is the fine cloak you'd be wearing on your wedding day, marrying the most virtuous princess in Asia.

Here! I'm wrapping your dead little body with it now.

Picks up a garland.

1220

And you, noble shield, you, who my son, Hector, loved so much!

Once you were the glorious mother of a million victories. Accept now this garland from my hands. You will enter the underworld with my little boy but you will not die.

Oh, it's so much greater a deed to honour you than to honour the spears of that sly and murderous Odysseus!

Chorus:

Oh! Oh, my child!

Chorus:

What a bitter grief the dark earth will receive, sweet child!

Chorus:

Cry, mother, cry!

Hekabe:

Ah! My lost little boy!

1230

Chorus:

Cry, mother, cry the dirge of the dead!

Hekabe:

My boy! My poor little boy!

Chorus:

Poor old woman! Unbearable grief, grief that will stay with you for ever.

Hekabe: *Tears some strips of cloth from her dress and uses them as bandages*

Let me bandage your wounds with these strips, my boy!

A miserable doctor. A doctor in name but not in practice.
Your father will take care of you better, my boy, when you meet him in the underworld.

Chorus: *Beating her head and breast*

Beat your heads, Trojan women!

Chorus: *Beating her head and breast*

Beat your breasts, Trojan girls!

Chorus: *Beating her head and breast*

Beat your heads, Trojan women!

Chorus: *Beating her head and breast*

Beat your breasts, Trojan girls!

Hekabe lifts herself up.

Suddenly the loud lament stops.

A tense moment of quiet. Agitated, yet subdued by a warm thought, her moves are slightly reminiscent of Cassandra's earlier.

Hekabe: *almost whispering, stuttering a little.*

Dear friends... dear friends... my...

Chorus:

What is it, Hekabe? You are whispering...

Chorus:

What are you thinking, Hekabe?

Chorus:

Tell us, Hekabe, we are your dearest friends!

Chorus:

We are with you!

1239

Hekabe:

It's obvious now, my friends.

The gods, my friends! The gods had only one thing in mind when they caused all this:

To bring despair to me and hatred to my city!

To bring more hatred to Troy than to any other city on Earth!

All our sacrifices were of no use, my friends...

Still, there is some good in this because if the gods did not turn everything upside down, if they had not buried below the earth all that was above it, the world would not have heard of us. The world would not be singing about us. The Muses would have no cause to sing about us to the coming generations of mortals.

To the soldiers

Go on, you Greeks! Take this child and bury it in his poor grave!

He has been prepared as well as he can be.

What difference does it make for the dead if they have a rich funeral or a poor one?

Wealth for the dead is a hollow display for the sake of the living.

The soldiers approach, pick up the body and leave.

Other soldiers appear at the parapets of the wall. They are holding lighted torches.

1251

Chorus:

Ah, poor child! Your poor, unfortunate mother!

Chorus:

Poor Andromache! All her big dreams about you have been turned into ashes.

Chorus:

So blessed when you were born, my child!

Chorus:

A prince!

Chorus:

A blessed prince so horribly murdered!

Chorus: *Notices the soldiers on the parapet*

Look there! Who are these men up there? Up on the roofs of Troy's houses?

Chorus:

They are waving lighted torches about!

Chorus:

A new disaster is falling upon our Troy!

1260

Talthybius: *Shouts from within*

You, captains! You've been ordered to burn Priam's city, so don't just stand there with the torches idle in your hands. Throw them about! Burn the place!

Enter Talthybius with soldiers, still shouting at those on the parapet.

The quicker you burn this place the quicker we can set sail for our happy homes!

To the chorus

As for you, daughters of Troy, let me say two things for you:

Be ready, so that when the captains sound their trumpet you can rush over to the ships and leave this place.

And you, you poor old wretch, you follow me.

Odysseus has sent these men here to take you to him.

Luck of the draw, old woman. You'll be his slave in his country.

1272

Hekabe:

This then is the final pain! This is the crown of my misery.

They're burning my city and they're taking me far away from my land.

Come old feet! Move a little faster then.

To Talthybius

But hold on a little.

Let me say goodbye to Troy.

Troy, my Troy!

So glorious in your days!

So glorious among the barbarians!

Soon, the glory of your name will be forgotten!

They've made ashes out of you and slaves out of us, slaves who'll serve masters in other lands.

1280

Gods! Gods! Hear me, gods!

But why am I calling upon them now?

They didn't come when we had called upon them before. They didn't listen then.

Suddenly she grabs the hands of the two women nearest to her and tries to rush to the walls.

Come, let us rush into the pyre, women! It is far more noble for us to die together here, in our own burning land!

Talthybius and his men rush to stop her

Talthybius:

Stop! You poor old fool! Your misfortune has made you mad!

To his soldiers

Come on, men, come and take her away quickly.

Take her to Odysseus. She is his prize.

Hekabe:

Zeus! Son of Cronos, Lord of our Phrygian race, can you see this?

Can you see the our suffering? Suffering unworthy of the race of Dardanus?

Can you see it, Cronos?

Chorus:

Of course he can, Hekabe!

Of course he sees it all but our great city, our great Troy is gone!

Chorus:

Our Troy no longer exists!

Huge crashes followed by raising flames behind the walls.

Hekabe:

Ah, look there! Look there!

All the houses, all the houses and all the city's towers are ablaze!

Chorus:

Just like smoke, billowing upon the wind, our city falls apart...

Chorus:

Destroyed by enemy spear...

1300

Chorus:

...and by the fierce force of fire!

Chorus:

Land, palaces and men, all have fallen!

Hekabe:

My land, my land! Nurse of my children!

Chorus:

My land, my land! Nurse of my children!

Hekabe:

Oh, my children! My children!

This is your mother's voice. Do you not know it?

Chorus:

Your sad voice is calling the dead, Hekabe!

Hekabe: *Kneels down and beats the ground with her hands. The chorus does the same. Her calls and those of the chorus are directed at the underworld.*

The dead! The dead!

I bend my aged legs and fall upon my knees and I beat the earth with both my hands!

The dead! The dead!

Chorus:

And I, too, beat the earth with my hands and call out to my husband beneath the soil!

Chorus:

Husband!

Chorus:

Husband!

Chorus:

Husband!

1310

Hekabe:

They are taking us away!

Chorus:

These are the voices of grief!

Hekabe:

They are taking us to be slaves!

Chorus:

Slaves in another land!

Hekabe:

Priam! My Priam, my poor husband!

You are gone, my dear husband!

No grave for you Priam! No friend beside you either!

If only you knew of my misery!

Chorus:

A black death has covered his eyes.

Chorus:

A holy man, butchered by the unholy.

They get up. Hekabe looks around her for the last time

Hekabe:

All the temples of the gods, all my beloved city!

Chorus:

Ruined!

Hekabe:

Ruined by the murderous fire and the spear.

Chorus:

Beloved Troy!

Chorus:

Soon you will crash down upon our beloved earth and lose your glory.

1320

Hekabe: *Points at the smoke raising behind the walls*

Just like smoke, the dust will raise to the sky and I will lose sight of my home.

Chorus:

Our city's name will be gone!

Chorus:

Every single thing vanishes in its own way.

Chorus:
There will be no Troy for us any more.
A loud crash from behind the walls
Hekabe:
Oh! Did you hear that?
Chorus:
Yes, yes! All the towers are falling!
More loud crashing
Hekabe:
The whole earth is trembling!
The whole city!
Ah! Help me! I'm shaking. I cannot walk.
Help me, my friends! Help me walk!
Come, my friends, let us enter our days of slavery!
Chorus: *Runs to help her*
Ah! Our poor city!
Chorus:
Poor Troy!
Chorus:
Come then, let us all go to the ships of the Greeks!

All exit.

**THE END OF
EURIPIDES'
TROJAN WOMEN**

Note: The main theme in the 'Trojan Women' inspired Baudelaire to write 'The Swan' You may view Tony Kline's translation of it in English [here](#)

AND

Seneca's "Troades" Translated by F.J. Miller [here](#)