



*The Greek Tragedy*  
*of*  
***The Trojans***

by Christian Lanciai (2006)

*Dramatis Personae:*

Agamemnon, king of Mycenae and Argo  
Clytaemnestra, his queen  
Menelaos, his brother, king of Sparta  
Helena, his queen, Clytaemnestra's sister  
King Priam of Troy  
Hector, his eldest son  
Paris, his younger son  
Troilus, his youngest son  
Helenos, another son, priest  
Cassandra, a daughter, priestess  
Hecuba, Priam's queen  
Polyxena, another daughter  
a herald  
Diomedes, king of Daunia  
Ulysses, king of Ithaca  
Nestor of Pylus  
Aias of Megara  
Achilles  
His myrmidons  
Patroclus, his cousin  
Thersites  
Chryseis, priest of Apollo  
Kalkhas, priest of Apollo  
Andromakhe, Hector's wife  
Astyanax, their son  
Deiphobus, another brother of Hector's  
King Idomeneus of Crete  
Aeneas  
Creusa, Aeneas' wife  
Aschanius, their son  
Anchises, Aeneas' father  
Pyrrhus, Achilles' son  
Dido, queen of Carthage  
Belinda, her sister  
A hermit  
Aegisthos, Agamemnon's cousin and Clytaemnestra's lover  
Electra and Orestes, Agamemnon's children  
three guards  
servants  
messengers

Greeks and Trojans  
Chorus of Trojan women  
Chorus of old men of Argo  
Chorus of women of Argo  
Chorus of women of Carthage

The action is in and outside Troy, in Argo on the Peloponnese, and in Carthage,  
during the twenty years of the Trojan war and its aftermath.

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*The Trojans*

Act I scene 1. A banquet in Mycenae.

*Menelaos* Noble Hector, it's a great pleasure for us to see you here by our table as a close friend and brother although you come from the other side.

*Hector* I am overwhelmed by your Hellenic hospitality, king Menelaos. My father king Priam himself would have been impressed by the cordial warmth and friendship we have received here.

*Menelaos* Anything else would have been unthinkable. Our prime political concern is to have only friendly relationships with all people and countries. We only desire trade and exchange that favours all, not war and conflicts that only causes harm to all.

*Hector* That's the only sound policy, and my father Priam embraces the same. That's why he sent me here to learn what intentions you have after Thessaly.

*Menelaos* I understand the concern of king Priam, and he did right in sending you here with your equally noble brother. Agamemnon, would you mind explaining about Thessaly to prince Hector?

*Agamemnon* That will be my pleasure. We bought peace with Thessaly. That is all.

*Hector* At the price of the submission of Thessaly.

*Agamemnon* Thessaly is a free country. We only bought her friendship and alliance.

*Hector* But the king of Thessaly kneels to you and pays you tribute after your subduing warfare.

*Agamemnon* Thessaly threatened our interests in the north. We removed the threat. That is all.

*Hector* Will you do the same with Macedon, Crete and Troy?

*Agamemnon* That is not necessary. Crete is our brother and closest friend, Macedon is so distant that we never had any problems there, and we also respect Troy as a friend and trading partner. Troy and your father king Priam has nothing to fear from us.

*Hector* I was hoping for something like that, and it will be my sincere pleasure to forward it to my aging father.

*Helena (to Paris)* Could there be anything more boring than politics?

*Paris* The politicians not only filled the world with boredom but also always made a hell out of it.

*Helena* Come, Paris, let's leave the politicians at their morbid boredom.

*Paris* You could indeed have greater fun than that. *(Helena brings Paris along with her outside.)*

*Agamemnon* We never had a single word of dispute with Troy and king Priam. We hope and take for granted that it will always remain like that.

*Hector* So do we all.

*Menelaos* Cheers, noble Hector! We are proud to have you here as our friend and allied brother! Let's drink to the eternal friendship between Hellas and Troy!

*Hector* With pleasure!

*Agamemnon* But where is your brother, Hector?

*Hector* He loathes long sittings and easily gets tired of great company and banquets. He always walked away on his own.

*Clytaemnestra* My sister Helena is also gone.

*Menelaos* We only discussed politics all the time. What could be more certain to scare off guests? Here are several who have fallen asleep or just left.

*Agamemnon* Let us confirm our pact of friendship, brother Hector, now and forever!

*Hector* Our toast of brotherhood will please my old man in Troy.

*(They cordially toast in sincere friendship and intimate confidence.)*

## Scene 2.

*Paris* How did such a man as Menelaos succeed in getting such a beautiful wife as you?

*Helena* There is nothing wrong with Menelaos. You must admit it. He is an honest man.

*Paris* But a milksop.

*Helena* He always had his brother Agamemnon over him.

*Paris* My father thinks Agamemnon is the most dangerous man in the world for his ambitions.

*Helena* He could very well be. He always plays his cards under the table.

*Paris* And Menelaos just follows him whatever he does. Alas, these foolishly vain and silly politicians, they all need to learn some healthy lesson.

*Helena* If they act foolishly they usually get murdered, and then it's too late.

*Paris* Shall we pull a real trick on them, Helena?

*Helena* How?

*Paris* By eloping together.

*Helena* Where to?

*Paris* To Troy!

*Helena* What would your father say about that?

*Paris* He always forgives me. He would consider it his duty to take as well care of you in Troy as we have been taken care of here.

*Helena* And your brother Hector?

*Paris* What about him?

*Helena* What would he say? Wouldn't that be a knife in his back and to his diplomatic mission of peace here?

*Paris* He is my brother. I am his younger brother. He can't do anything.

*Helena* And Agamemnon and Menelaos, my husband?

*Paris* Yes, wouldn't that just serve them right, Agamemnon with his ambitions and Menelaos with his naïvety!

*Helena* They could start a war against Troy.

*Paris* What could the world's greatest fleet do against the walls of Troy, that never have fallen?

*Helena* They could lay siege to Troy and keep it under siege for no end of time while all the best sons of Hellas and Troy would be lost.

*Paris* Yes, wouldn't that be a fair price for our love?

*Helena* A price for others to pay for us. Would that be fair?

*Paris* Helena, you only make the challenge appear more and more irresistible.

*Helena* But would you really be prepared to take such risks, to risk the future of both Hellas and Troy, your own home city, for the sake of owning me?

*Paris* Absolutely.

*Helena* Then you really love me.

*Paris* Hopelessly.

*Helena* Menelaos doesn't. Agamemnon gave me to him as he had already taken my sister Clytaemnestra.

*Paris* But you have a daughter.

*Helena* Yes, that girl would be all that I would miss in Hellas.

*Paris* Bring her along!

*Helena* You are joking. She is Menelaos' daughter. No, I couldn't do that to him. Take me, but let him keep his daughter. I can't take it all away from him.

*Paris* Does that mean you will follow me?

*Helena* Of course. What future do I have here to look forward to except aging in boredom? If Agamemnon would force Menelaos out to war for my sake, we would at least have a great spectacle for the rest of our lives, and we would become immortal because of our reckless adventure.

*Paris* Yes, if it would mean war, and there would probably be a war indeed.

*Helena* Take me along, Paris. Let's challenge the fates. As you say, the possibilities of the consequences of such a development would appear irresistible indeed in the long run.

*Paris* Let's go at once.

*Helena* Yes, before we change our minds.

*Paris* Do you need to bring anything with you?

*Helena* No.

Paris            Neither do I. My ship is ready. Come!

Scene 3. The banquet (like scene 1)

*Clytaemnestra* What do you really fear of my husband, prince Hector?

*Hector*            Nothing, if he plays with his cards open.

*Clytemenestra* I mean, what did your father fear?

*Hector*            He just wanted some reassurance that he had nothing to fear.

*Agamemnon* Good Hector, I assure you that I play with perfectly open hands. King Priam has a sensitive course of balance to pursue between east and west. Your city has the most strategic position in the world at the entrance to the Hellespont, through which trade with the Euxinian sea is increasing every day, and he has every reason to fear envy for his position from both Hellas and all the realms of Asia. Everyone has reasons to wish to get his hands on Troy.

*Hector*            My father is politically oversensitive and very careful about keeping informed of everything that happens in the world.

*Agamemnon* And he has every reason to do so.

*Menelaos*        But where is your handsome younger brother and my wife Helena?

*Agamemnon* Don't worry, brother. They have probably just gone to bed.

*Clytaemnestra* You ought to have quite a number of brothers and sisters, prince Hector?

*Hector*            Yes, in very different capacities. My sister Cassandra for example is a priestess of Apollo, and also my brother Helenos is a priest.

*Clytaemnestra* Is she the one who is famous for her second sight?

*Hector*            Yes. She tried to stop me and Paris from going here.

*Clytaemnestra* Why?

*Hector*            She prophesied that it would lead to war.

*Clytaemnestra* Did anyone believe her?

*Hector*            That made my father only the more eager to send us out to make the opposite certain.

*Clytaemnestra* I can assure you, noble Hector, that I will never let my husband go out to war against Troy.

*(Enter a servant who whispers something in Agamemnon's ear, which makes him concerned.)*

*Hector*            I trust that your promise as a true wife is binding, my lady.

*Clytaemnestra* Let's drink to that in confidential agreement. *(She and Hector toast each other.)*

*Menelaos*        What's the matter, Agamemnon?

*Agamemnon* My friends, some worrying news has reached me which regrettably seems to be true.

*Menelaos*        What has happened? What bad news has the bad taste and audacity to disturb our pleasant party?

*Agamemnon* You can ask that again. Helena and Paris had disappeared. Do you know anything about this, Hector?

*Hector* I know nothing. What should I know?

*Clytaemnestra* Haven't they just gone for a walk?

*Agamemnon* Paris' ship has just been seen to leave the harbour in haste. Besides Paris himself, Helena was on board.

*Hector (rises infuriated)* That damned scoundrel!

*Agamemnon (to Menelaos)* He knows nothing. This must be something completely improvised.

*Menelaos* I fear, Agamemnon, that we have been cheated most ignominiously.

*Clytaemnestra* What is my sister up to?

*Agamemnon* She has escaped with Paris.

*Clytaemnestra* And you suspected nothing, Menelaos?

*Menelaos* What could I have suspected? Should I have suspected my wife of infidelity before she showed any such inclination?

*Agamemnon* We are all innocent. What is your view of the matter, Hector?

*Hector (still standing)* There is only one thing to do. We must immediately catch up with Paris and force Helena back to Sparta.

*Agamemnon* Don't you think they have sailed for Troy?

*Hector* Most probably.

*Agamemnon* Do you think you could catch up with them before they reach Troy?

*Hector (looks down)* No.

*Agamemnon* And what do you think king Priam will say when your brother presents his game to him?

*Hector* He will be devastated. That's when I must be there to intervene.

*Agamemnon* Then it's just for us to immediately help you on your way and hope that you will succeed. But I fear your mission at home will be more difficult than your mission here, for women (*with a glance at Clytaemnestra*) are harder nuts to crack than all diplomatic knots in the world.

*Clytaemnestra* God save us all if you don't succeed!

*Menelaos* Hector, we trust you. You will be our ally in this. You have to succeed.

*Hector* Yes, I must succeed.

*Agamemnon* Cheers, good Hector! Our happy banquet here was brutally interrupted by the most unexpected and unfortunate foul play in the world, but I sincerely hope we will be able to resume it in the future.

*Hector* We all hope so. Paris, you cursed fool! What kind of a havoc is this that you have created, you incorrigible scumbag!

*Clytaemnestra* Scold him at home, prince Hector. Save your wrath until you meet him.

*Hector* My queen, I will do anything to please you. (*bows and leaves*)

*Menelaos (to Agamemnon)* Do you think he can make it?

*Agamemnon* It's a simple matter. If Helena comes to her mind and returns, no harm is done. But the risk is that she chooses not to come back, and in that case nothing

will be able to get her back except war. We all want to avoid that, but the question is if we will be able to.

*Clytaemnestra* I swore to Hector that I would never let you war against Troy, Agamemnon.

*Agamemnon* That was before Helena ran off. Her betrayal nullifies your promise.

*Clytaemnestra* Not to me. You already seem bent on war.

*Agamemnon* A politician must always be prepared for the worst. The problem is that Helena now holds the destinies of Troy and Hellas in her hands and that she perhaps isn't even aware of her responsibility.

*Clytaemnestra* Who is guilty? Helena or Paris or both?

*Agamemnon* We don't know that either.

*Menelaos* Alas, Helena, what have you done! Was I such a bad husband?

*Agamemnon* What she and Paris have done is not your fault, Menelaos.

*Menelaos* I hope so indeed.

*Agamemnon* We must at once send a public message all over Hellas of information of what has happened in case the crisis would lead to war, so that a general state of emergency could prompt preparations.

*Clytaemnestra* I will go and make sure that Hector gets on his way as quickly as possible. (*leaves*)

*Menelaos* Who could imagine such a thing? Everything was peace in joy and comfort, and then this happens, a blow below the waterline without warning and without reason.

*Agamemnon* Everything can be taken advantage of, Menelaos.

*Menelaos* What do you mean?

*Agamemnon* We are faced with a very interesting situation in which we have every right as we have been wronged for nothing. If we can't get Helena back, no one can turn us down, and in that case a war against Troy could never fail in the long run.

*Menelaos* We must give peace all chances, Agamemnon.

*Agamemnon* Of course, Menelaos. War will just be the ultimate necessity when all other possibilities have failed. (*toasts him in intimate confidence.*)

#### Scene 4. Troy

*Priam* Why is Paris coming alone?

*Troilus* Perhaps Paris left in advance. Perhaps Hector was detained by bad weather in Mycenae?

*Priam* I sent them out together. Then they should also return together. If they don't, something must be wrong.

*Hecuba* Don't worry, husband. Paris will surely have some explanation.

*Priam* I just hope he hasn't caused some mischief again with his appearance of innocence which could hide and commit any crimes and outrages without being ashamed of it and only look the more innocent for his guilt.



*Troilus* Here he comes.

*Priam (rising from his throne)* My most incorrigible son, why do you return alone?

*Paris (allows his father to embrace him)* But I am not alone.

*Priam* What do you mean?

*Paris* I have a refugee with me. *(gives a sign, and enter Helena)*

*Priam* What is this? Who have you abducted?

*Helena (humbly, kneels)* King Priam, I humbly ask for your protection here in Troy since my husband is pursuing me.

*Priam* Paris, explain yourself! Where is Hector? Whose wife is this?

*Helenos* It is Menelaos' own queen, father.

*Priam* Helena, queen of Sparta?

*Paris* She is a refugee and asks for protection here with us, father.

*Priam* Is she your mistress? Yes or no?

*Helena (still humbly on her knees)* I chose myself to run away from my husband.

*Priam* Hector! Where is Hector!

*Cassandra* Father, don't get upset. Hector is the one who has been deceived the most, and his anger will be the greatest.

*Priam (to Paris)* Will he come? Or has he been taken hostage by Menelaos for your having stolen his wife?

*Paris* We saw his sail behind us on the horizon. He should be here in no time.

*Hecuba (to Helena)* My daughter, this is no position for a queen. You have come here as a refugee, and then we have no right to refuse you.

*Priam (to Paris)* Did you seduce her, or did she really elope by her own accord?

*Helena (rising)* I eloped wholly by my own accord.

*Priam* And that is nothing you just claim for being left in peace as Paris' concubine?

*Hecuba* She is a queen, Priam. You cannot speak to her thus.

*Priam* How else should I speak to her? That she possibly eloped by her own accord does not diminish the risk that we will have her husband and Agamemnon and all the forces of Hellas on a manhunt for her with all the murderers of Hellas on board! If she let herself be seduced we could at least try to send her back unmolested, as a dangerous liaison that we refuse to accept!

*Troilus* I see a rider coming hard towards the walls of Troy. It could only be Hector.

*Cassandra* He has landed!

*Priam* I hope my only capable son will be able to sort this out.

*Hecuba* I am sure he will, Priam. He can manage anything.

*Helenos* Hector is on his way up the stairs.

*Priam* Let him come.

*Cassandra (to herself)* I knew it! Not even Hector can clear this mess, which can only lead to war and the fall of Troy, but no Trojan wants to hear that.

*Priam* They are here, Hector. It pleases me that you also are here.

*Hector* Paris, Helena must immediately be returned to Sparta!

*Hecuba* She has come here as a refugee. We can't turn away a refugee.

*Hector* Helena, are you or Paris responsible for this?

*Helena* I am alone responsible and entrusted myself in the hands of Paris.

*Hector* Do you know what you have done?

*Priam* No, she does not know what she has done.

*Helena* I escaped from my husband to find protection with you. That is what I have done.

*Hector* Queen Helena, with all due respect, but what reason did you have to leave your husband?

*Helena* He did not love me.

*Hector* Didn't he give you a daughter?

*Helena* How do you know it is his daughter?

*Hector* Whose daughter would it be if not his?

*Helena* You don't put a question like that to a regal refugee.

*Hecuba* Don't torment her, Hector. She went into exile by her own will.

*Hector* So out of respect of her we should accept getting a war on our hands in which we would have all Hellas for our enemies led by the mighty Agamemnon? That's the only alternative to sending her back!

*Priam* Hector is right.

*Paris* We can't send her back. Menelaos would murder her. It would be sending her as a sacrifice to our submission under the will of Hellas.

*Troilus* The walls of Troy can resist all armies in the world.

*Priam* For how long?

*Troilus* Until any assailant would get tired and drop off.

*Paris* Troilus is right.

*Priam* We run a terrible risk by retaining her.

*Paris* She is here, and here she has to stay. That's how simple it is. We have nothing else to consider.

*Hecuba* We can't surrender her, Priam, whatever happens. A refugee cannot be refused protection.

*Priam* Formally she is a refugee, and as such we must give her all the protection we can. That's a sacred and inviolable law. But I fear, Paris, that you and Helena agreed on this strategy to be able to keep each other. In that case, Paris, if there will be war, it will be entirely your fault, who should have refused to take Helena along with you. More precisely I fear that you were the one who seduced her. In any case, Helena, you may feel completely safe here until the Hellenes break through the city gate, which it will be our responsibility to make sure they never will. Hector, you are worn out. Your wife is expecting you. Paris and Helena, go away. I want to be alone with my queen, Helenos and Cassandra.

*Hector* Father, ask me anything, and I will do it. Our mission in Mycenae had been a total success if those two hadn't ruined everything. (*leaves, still angry*)

*Paris* Father, forgive us.

*Priam* For what? So far Troy hasn't fallen because of you. Go away now and take care of your Helena.

*Helena* Your liberal goodness, king Priam, binds me in perpetual loyalty towards you forever. I fear that Agamemnon and Menelaos would have made war against you sooner or later anyway.

*Priam* Your warning is too late, and without you we would have been able to postpone the conflict much longer.

*Helena* My sister will do anything to prevent Agamemnon from making war on Troy. We understand each other.

*Priam* Then we'll have to place our ultimate hopes with your sister, Helena. Go now. (*Paris takes care of Helena. They leave together.*)

Well, my foreseeing children, what do you think?

*Helenos* What else can we do than make the best of it?

*Priam* And what is the best of it?

*Helenos* To do anything to avoid war, and if there still will be war, to defend the city to the utmost of our capacity and hope that it will do.

*Priam* And you, Cassandra?

*Cassandra* I had better not say anything.

*Priamos* You wanted to prevent Hector and Paris from going. You meant that it would result in war. The war has still not begun.

*Cassandra* No one wants a war that will come nonetheless.

*Priam* Not even Agamemnon?

*Cassandra* He least of all, because if there will be a war, he will be the greatest loser of all.

*Priam* So we'll just have to take one day at a time and try any means to avoid the war to begin with, but it will be difficult as long as Helena is here, and we won't get rid of her, or will we, Hecuba?

*Hecuba* We can't reject her.

*Priam* No, we can't, because you don't turn out a lady to those from whom she needs protection. It's against human nature and the holy laws of decency. Thereby I also can't see any possibility to avoid the war. We have to get into contact with our allies in Asia.

*Helenos* It could be a long war.

*Priam* It could be so long and so great that it immediately runs the risk of never being forgotten. Even if we perish in the end, we must make our resistance determined and unflinching enough to withstand even all eternity.

*Alternative scene:*

The court of king Priam in Troy.

*Priam* It is with great joy that we greet our sons back to Troy. Did they succeed on their mission?

*Helenos* It's too early to say, father. At least all the ships we sent out appear to have returned, and that's the main thing, I suppose.

*Hecuba* We didn't expect anything else. We live after all in peace with the whole world.

*Helenos* Yes, on which our welfare depends. That's why our diplomatic activity with constant missions abroad almost are our most important activity.

*Priam* Except the trade. It's our position and trade that made Troy the richest city in the world.

*Helenos* And may it always remain so.

*Priam* Of course, as long as we retain our good connections with the world around us. That is why it is so important that the mission of Hector and Paris has succeeded.

*Polyxena* It couldn't have failed. If their ships are back, what could have gone wrong?

*Cassandra (aside)* Everything could have gone wrong.

*Polyxena (overhears her)* Don't start croaking already, miserable raven. You could at least wait until you have some reason.

*Cassandra* Ravens always croak without reason, or do always have reasons enough.

*Priam (to Helenos)* Cassandra has opened her mouth.

*Helenos* Cassandra, do you see anything?

*Cassandra* Don't ask me until Hector and Paris have been able to explain themselves.

*Priam* Does that mean they are coming empty-handed?

*Cassandra* Unfortunately they are not coming empty-handed.

*Priam* As usual, beloved daughter, you speak as obscurely and ambiguously as Apollo himself, which you are entitled to as his chosen priestess. Sometimes I even wish that your ambiguities would remain unfathomable forever.

*Cassandra* I also wish that sometimes, father.

*Hecuba* There now, I hear gates being opened like to one of our sons.

*(The gates are opened, and Paris enters with following and Helena, veiled.)*

*Priam (rises and stretches out his arms)* Welcome home, my beloved son! But where is Hector?

*Paris* We raced for reaching home first, and I won.

*Priamos* Why this competition? To get here first for delivering good news, or to anticipate the other one's version of the matter?

*Paris* You see us through, father.

*Priam* I notice that the woman you have brought with you is not Hesione. Where is Hesione?

*Paris* She is still in Sparta, father. Instead I brought home a more expensive treasure for Troy to guard.

*Priam* So you couldn't ransom my sister. Who is this woman?

*Hecuba* I fear some complication in your diplomatic game of intrigues, my dear husband.

*Polyxena* This woman gives me the creeps.

*Cassandra* If it only were just the creeps, Polyxena. Unfortunately it will become much worse than that.

*Polyxena* What do you mean?

*Cassandra* Argo abducted aunt Hesione without any right. Instead of getting her back, Troy has now abducted Argo's wife without any right. What else could then be the outcome except war and destruction of Troy?

*Hector (comes breaking in the gate in a brutal mood)* Paris, you damned crazy scoundrel, so you got ahead of me after all!

*Priam* What does this mean, Hector? What have you done?

*Hector* That idiot Paris, whom I am ashamed of having to call my brother, has in the middle of our most promising and successful negotiations ruined everything by abducting Menelaos' wife! *(All are terrified.)*

*Paris (at once)* Hector, it's not as you think.

*Hector* Is it not you standing there? Haven't you left Sparta ahead of me just to get away and get before me to Troy to be able to establish the result of your coup here as some kind of an honourable feat? Is this then not Helena, *(rips off her veil,)* the queen of Sparta?

*(All are even more terrified. Very mixed spontaneous reactions.)*

*Hecuba (dryly)* Send her home at once.

*Priam (nullified)* Paris, what have you done!

*Polyxena (almost pleased)* No one was ever better at creating scandals than Paris.

*Helenos* This is the end to all our diplomacy.

*Priam (severely)* Paris, explain yourself!

*Paris* My explanation is simple. She wanted it herself.

*Priamos* In that case the queen of Sparta should provide an explanation herself.

*Helena* I will be glad to. As Paris said, it is not as you think. You are probably all familiar with my story since I am unhappily endowed with a beauty which never stopped driving men out of their minds. All the kings of Hellas proposed to me, which made me famous against my will for the sake of my looks. If the gods made me beautiful, am I then to blame for it, and is it fair to hold me responsible for the consequences? All people adore beauty, that is natural, to us in Hellas the power of the goddess of beauty Aphrodite is superior to all the powers of all other gods, and to you in Asia Apollo is sovereign by his protection of all spiritual beauty. I wanted to get away from the role-play forced upon me as some kind of a sex symbol. I wanted to get down from my unnatural position of some elevated goddess as I am just mortal and human. I actually never wanted any man, for the intimate life of copulation was disgusting and abhorrent to me, but the more persistently all the royal suitors of Hellas kept on pestering me. This is perhaps the curse of every woman: the more she resists, the more she incites the men, while the woman who gladly accepts any man gets abused and despised or ignored as uninteresting. I

wanted some detachment from my marriage and the sucking drivelling sheep who thought they were men, who in my presence just made fools of themselves as gaping idiots. Paris offered me an alternative, and I decided on my own to try the experiment. That is why I come here as a refugee by my own will, and as such no one in the world has any right to throw me out of here.

*(More mumblings and mixed feelings.)*

*Hecuba* We are stuck with her.

*Priam* Daughter, as a refugee at our mercy you are more sacred than a priestess and our most honoured guest as long as it pleases you to remain detached from your marriage. That's all I can say as the king of Troy and the highest administrator of the law.

*Hector* Father, all Hellas will take this as a compelling reason for justified war against us. When Helena was married to Menelaos, all the jilted suitors vowed to give Helena and her husband full support if there ever was a crisis. This will unite all the kings of Hellas against us!

*Priam* What is your answer to this, Helena of Sparta? Were you aware of what political consequences your adultery could result in?

*Helena* Only fools and madmen make war. If Hellas goes to war for my sake, it will only be the ruin of all Hellas and most of her kings. War is the supreme madness, and I am aware of that an ambitious fool like Agamemnon and an aggressive cock like Achilles would gladly drive all their nations and peoples into war and disaster for a petty personal matter. Let them do it then, and let them perish therein with all the fools that would follow them! Aren't the walls of Troy considered the strongest and most impregnable in the world? Of what good is the largest fleet in the world against its highest walls of stone?

*Paris* She is right, father. Hellas stands no chance against Troy.

*Helenos* Still we had good reports and connections with all Hellas until this happened. We counted all the kings of Hellas our friends and allies, which now Hector reckons all without exceptions to have turned into our enemies.

*Priam* This bond between them for the sake of Helena is interesting. How did it really happen, Helena?

*Helena* It was Ulysses who found the conclusion. I refused to settle for anyone of my twenty royal suitors and more. Then Ulysses came up with the idea that they would draw lots about me, and for whoever won me, all the others would stand up whatever crisis would occur. The lot fell to Menelaos, Agamemnon's younger brother, and there was no cheating, although Agamemnon was already married to my elder sister Clytaemnestra and although my dowry was the throne of Sparta, which suited Agamemnon just perfectly. Destiny wanted it that way. The only one among them all whom I respected myself and could consider my equal was Ulysses.

*Priam* He is also our friend perhaps more than all the others. If I know him right he will do anything to avert the crisis and the war. I gather he will be our next visitor from Hellas.

*Helenos* Cassandra, my prophetic twin sister, has Helena told the whole truth?

*Cassandra* Helena is completely honest and has nothing to hide. Still she will be the destruction of Troy if we don't return her to Hellas.

*Helenos (upset)* What are you saying?

*Paris* That witch can only bring forth evil speculations! That's what I always said! If anyone ever will be the bane of Troy, it will be she with her sick penchant for destructive sensationalism in everything she says!

*Cassandra* What you say, Paris, is only true about yourself, for you were never more than just an incorrigible and irresponsible good-for-nothing who would sacrifice anything for your own egoistic interests and pleasures. If you just may have your fun with Helena, you will not mind if all Troy perishes.

*Paris* Then shut her up for god's sake before someone else does by force!

*Priam (wise and forbearing)* Cassandra, your statements are always equally inopportune, unpleasant and painful. According to all expertise, Troy is impregnable, and Helena is untouchable in her capacity of refugee. These are the facts we have to face and accept, and so must you.

*Cassandra* My brother asked for my opinion. I regret that I had to express it.

*Helena* Helenos, your sister expressed herself more empathically and constructively about me than anyone else by calling me honest. I beg to return the compliment and to embrace Cassandra as a friend and sister of equal standing.

*Cassandra (humbly, curtseys and bows)* I am at your service and disposal, my queen.

*Priam (pleased)* A beautiful and noble gesture has introduced a beautiful sisterly relationship. I commended this as something that perhaps could bring something good into the great controversy that we are faced with.

*Hector* Only I seem to remain displeased in this absolutely horrendously insane affair. Cassandra, who always proved right and is in direct contact with Apollo, has prophesied the destruction of Troy if Helena remains, and you allow her to remain.

*Priam* The law, Hector! We can't spite the universal law of protecting refugees!

*Hector* It is nevertheless absolutely irrational, mad and wrong, and I leave you to your celebration of your perdition in protest! (*leaves and bangs the door behind him.*)

*Priam* When Hector is angry, nothing can soothe him. He will never forgive you, Paris.

*Paris* He is still my brother, we will never get away from the fact that we are brothers, and he will never fail us or Troy whatever happens. I trust him.

*Polyxena* He never trusted you.

*Paris* I know.

*Helenos* A single ship has been sighted from Hellas. It could be our ambassador from Sparta.

*Priam* If we are lucky, it's Ulysses.

*Cassandra* It is Ulysses, but we are still unlucky.

*Paris* Shut up, sister. If it is Ulysses we can speak with him.

*Cassandra* You can try talking him out of it but never Agamemnon.

*Priam* As long as a dialogue works at all, any happy solution will be possible.

*Helenos* If Ulysses now is coming here as the best negotiator we could have had from Hellas, we must not miss the chance of reconstructing the diplomatic relationships that are vital to our existence.

*Priam* Helenos has spoken, and we all agree.

*Hecuba* Still I fear Ulysses more than any other Hellene for the sake of his slyness and sagacity, since his real motives always are concealed.

*Priam* Now you talk like Cassandra.

*Hecuba* I am her mother.

*Herald* Ulysses from Ithaca asks for permission to present himself on behalf of Nestor, Agamemnon and Menelaos from the Peloponnese.

*Priam* He is welcome.

*(Enter Ulysses in worthy simplicity, in civil simple dress and making a very unpretentious impression, bowing respectfully to Priam.)*

*Ulysses* My lord, I insisted myself on trying to mediate in this matter.

*Priam* We are pleased that you were chosen and even more pleased that you wanted it yourself. What does Sparta and Argo say?

*Ulysses* Quite briefly, Helena's immediate return is requested. Or else all Hellas will join Agamemnon's war against Troy.

*Priamos* So what you bring is an ultimatum.

*Ulysses* Did you expect anything else?

*Priam* No.

*Ulysses* Do you have an answer?

*Priam* Ulysses, you must understand me even if no one else in Hellas will. You must share my view that a war between us would be supreme folly and madness. Hector has left us in anger over the inconsiderate action of Paris and condemns our decision not to surrender Helena as unreasonable and destructive. I am the first to admit that this whole affair is just conceited folly all the way from beginning to the end and to regret it. But according to her own statement, Helena has left Sparta voluntarily since she actually never wanted to marry and now wants to detach herself from her marriage. Who has any right to forbid a woman to make use of her own free will? She chose to come to us for protection. That Paris made this possible for her is of secondary importance. Paris is not part of the problem. The problem is the law of the untouchability of a refugee, a law respected by all Hellenes since ages past. Helena has the right of a sanctuary. She has chosen Troy for her sanctuary. Thereby Troy has no right to surrender her. That's the simple way things are.

*Ulysses* Helena, since you are present yourself, what do you say? Did you really go here for protection by your own free will?

*Helena* Yes.

*Ulysses* And you don't care about the consequences, even if they will lead to a world war?

*Helena* All wars were always started by men to prove their miserable insufficiency. If Hector considered Paris' bringing me to Troy a reckless folly, wars will still remain supreme as a reckless folly, especially if they are started for the sake



of a woman. No woman could ever prevent any man from abandoning himself to death by war, and neither can I.

*Ulysses* Yes, you could actually by returning to Sparta.

*Helena* Men's wars are wholly on their own responsibility. I renounce all responsibility for any man's war.

*Paris* Unfortunately there is nothing more for you to do here, Ulysses.

*Ulysses* Unfortunately, Helena, men can still be right sometimes, and when they sometimes claim that you can never reason with a woman, they usually speak by experience. Unfortunately, good king Priam, Helena is partly right in her condemnation of the leaders of Hellas. Agamemnon took for granted that my mediation would fail and is already busy gathering all the ships of Hellas against Troy. There could be more than a thousand.

*Priam* Do you mean that they would have started the war even if Helena had returned?

*Ulysses* We never shall know for sure, but it could probably have been averted in the last moment if Menelaos had been indemnified. At least Nestor would have insisted on it.

*Priam* You speak of indemnity. Hector and Paris went to Argo in an effort to improve our relationship and redeem Hesione, who was abducted from Troy without right.

*Ulysses* Unfortunately, Priam, as queen of Sparta Helena was of higher rank than your sister, who only was a king's sister. Agamemnon thereby considers himself having the right to overrun your sister's case for the sake of Helena. In the same way, they could say about her, that she chose herself to remain in Argo.

*Priam (after a pause, resigned, to everyone)* I am afraid, Trojans, that the war will be unavoidable.

*Paris* Let the Hellenes pay for having their way.

*Ulysses* I regret that Hector was not here. I would have liked to hear his views on the matter.

*Paris* He will fight for all of us against all of you until most of you have licked the dust and Troy ultimately has been saved from the invasions of alien war maniacs.

*Polyxena* Hector would not have said so, and you have no right to speak in his place.

*Paris* He is not here. So he keeps quiet and agrees.

*Cassandra* A thousand ships can not vanquish Troy. The only one who can is Ulysses.

*Paris* Here she goes again, nattering her nonsense. Is there no one sensible enough to shut her in and lock her up for good?

*Ulysses* Why would I wish to vanquish Troy, priestess?

*Cassandra* You would be the last one to wish to vanquish Troy, and you would only be able to do it against your own will.

*Priam* A weird prophesy. If I then know Ulysses well enough, there will be no conquest of Troy on the part of any Hellene.

*Paris* The more reason for Helena to remain with us.

*Ulysses* I fear that you still are committing a mistake. The question is whose mistake will be the worst, yours or Agamemnon's.

*Paris* No one could commit a greater mistake than Agamemnon if he comes here to make war.

*Ulysses* It's possible that you are right, Paris.

*Cassandra* Paris is never right, but unfortunately Agamemnon will be right no matter how wrong he is.

*Paris* Shut your worm's tongue then at last, you devilish bitch and witch, or shall I personally cut it out of your poisonous mouth?

*Helenos* Shut yourself up, Paris, and try to control yourself. You are only making the worst possible impression. My sacred sister has a right to speak, and no one has any right to silence her, and even if she is silenced her thoughts will speak none the less and come true with time as always, for she is the chosen daughter of Apollo.

*Paris* You are obsessed with your absurd superstitions and idols! Misguided by your own fantasies, you prattle like children and babble like inane fools! Listening to you will only force anyone to vomit.

*Cassandra* Go out and vomit then, but do it alone, and clean it up afterwards.

*Paris* Cursed slut of shit and vomit! (*leaves in fury*)

*Priam* I hope you will excuse our son's lack of decency and manners, Ulysses. He is just ignorant.

*Ulysses* It's such characters that start wars.

*Priam* Yes, I am afraid so. Tell Agamemnon that I regret that he has chosen war as the only solution of our problem. If he had returned my sister Hesione, all this could have been avoided.

*Ulysses* I will tell him so.

*Priamos* I hope to see you again, Ulysses.

*Ulysses* I hope so too. (*makes a short and correct bow in due respect and departs as inconspicuously as he arrived.*)

*Priam* At least we have some important friends in the enemy camp.

*Hecuba* Who else except possibly Ulysses?

*Priam* Both Ulysses and Nestor of Pylus have made efforts to avert the war, and none of them give up very easily.

*Hecuba* I hope you are right. May they never tire in their efforts.

#### Scene 5.

*Aias* You never should have let that unreliable Ulysses go. Imagine if he will succeed in getting Helena sent back?

*Menelaos* That's all we want.

*Agamemnon* He has no chance of success, Aias. You can take it easy.

*Aias* I can never take it easy when Ulysses is active. He always fooled us all, and you never know how he will trick you until it's too late.

*Agamemnon* Aias, you are not the only war maniac in Hellas. Most of you are drivelling by greed facing the prospect of conquering the sea way to the Euxinian sea. Everyone has everything to gain by it. No one is against the war except Ulysses and possibly Nestor.

*Aias* And then you let Ulysses loose, the only opponent against the war, on a mediation mission which he has every interest to enforce to the advantage of Troy.

*Agamemnon* I wouldn't have let him go if I hadn't been certain that he would fail. A certain failure of his mission would also underscore the rightness of our cause and raise the fighting spirit.

*Aias* How can you be sure that he would fail? Did he ever fail in anything?

*Diomedes* No, but he also never succeeded in anything. He is the man who always gives in and lets the others win.

*Agamemnon* Welcome, Diomedes, to our war council.

*Menelaos* There is much in what Diomedes says. Ulysses is a man of self sacrifice.

*Diomedes* I came here primarily to report the return of Ulysses.

*Agamemnon* Is he here?

*Diomedes* Yes, he is here.

*Menelaos* With Helena or without?

*Diomedes* With drooping sails and a tired crew he came ashore alone.

*Agamemnon* I knew it. Here is your war, Aias.

*Menelaos* That must be him coming up now.

*Ulysses (hesitating at the entrance)* I had hoped to also find Nestor among you here.

*Agamemnon* Nestor is not here, Ulysses. If you come back without Helena, which you seem to do, neither you nor Nestor can prevent the war any longer.

*Menelaos* What did Helena say? Was she allowed to speak?

*Ulysses* Menelaos, I got the impression of her that she created this mess just to try her marriage and to challenge you. She does not approve of marriage and never wanted to be subject to it, and you can only prove yourself worthy of her by overcoming Troy.

*Agamemnon* Alas, these women, the proudest sisters in the world, the most beautiful and the most cunning! I was lucky enough to get the one that no one would ever dream about abducting.

*Diomedes* Don't be too sure, Agamemnon. No one is safe from infidelity.

*Agamemnon* To the point. Can Troy be taken?

*Aias* Some question! What city cannot be conquered, plundered and burned? It happens to all cities sooner or later.

*Agamemnon* Do you imagine then that I just sent Ulysses there to chat with hopeless stonefaced bureaucrats? No one knows the city better than Ulysses now, and we want to know everything about its gates and walls and weak spots.

*Ulysses* It is true what they say, that the walls are impregnable, the gates are unassailable, and there are no weak spots.

*Aias*           The greater the challenge.

*Diomedes*       We will need Achilles.

*Agamemnon*    Of course. He is notified. All you need to get him hooked on anything is an impossible challenge, and he will manage it.

*Menelaos*       What else did you hear, Ulysses? Was there no one in the family of Priam with any objection against that Helena's presence would lead to war?

*Ulysses*        Yes, several. Unfortunately I could not see Hector, the leading man of Troy and of the party against Helena. I don't know the stand of his brother Helenos, for he is only diplomatizing. He has a twin sister, though, who is clairvoyantly prophetic and a priestess of Apollo.

*Menelaos*       What did she say?

*Ulysses*        Nothing that pleased anyone.

*Agamemnon*    Did she foresee the outcome of the war?

*Ulysses*        Yes, but extremely ambiguously.

*Aias*            Would we or Troy prevail?

*Ulysses*        We, but with disastrous losses.

*Aias*            The case is clear. We have the war in a nutshell. We can't lose. What are we waiting for?

*Agamemnon*    Aias is right.

*Ulysses*        Let me just add this. I opposed the war and tried everything to avert it. Also Nestor shared my view, which we will stick firmly to until the end of the war, although we will have to join it. I don't know how you managed to trick Nestor into it, and I don't want to know about it, for your trick to get me hooked on it was quite enough.

*Menelaos*       You and Nestor were bound by your oath of faith to Helena and her husband.

*Ulysses*        I know, Menelaos, and that's why my protests were no wilder than they were when you tricked me into it by placing my tender son in the way of my plough. I had sworn to you to take as little part in your war as you at all could stop me from ploughing my field, but you succeeded in stopping me. You outwitted me, and I had to admit defeat, like all players must when they lose a game. Or else they cannot go on. You probably got Nestor into it in a similar way, and he was also bound by the oath. So we had no choice. We must help you win the war whatever the cost, no matter how long it will take and no matter how insane the whole enterprise is.

*Aias*            Ulysses in a nutshell. He condescends to help us although he hates it and is well aware that he can only get a hell out of it.

*Menelaos*       No, he sacrifices himself since we ask him to and since he as a Hellene is one of us.

*Aias*            To the point! Get your weapons! Get your ships! Get your horses! To arms and battles!

*Agamemnon*    Aias is right. We have no time to lose.

*Diomedes*       I will undertake the motivation of Achilles.

*Menelaos*       Nestor will join up with us any day.

*Aias* I will fix Crete and king Idomeneus.

*Agamemnon* It will be the greatest fleet the world has ever seen. We cannot lose.

*Ulysses* How long do you think it will take, Agamemnon?

*Agamemnon* A year at most.

*Ulysses* I say two years at least. Shall we bet?

*Agamemnon* Done. Twelve more ships from the loser to the winner?

*Ulysses* If it will be more than one year but less than two, no one has won.

*Agamemnon* That's fair.

*Diomedes* I suggest that we gather our fleet at Aulis for crossing over to Troy all together.

*Agamemnon* Good suggestion.

*Ulysses* I will go home to explain the situation to Penelope no matter how difficult it will be. That bit could be more difficult than the entire war.

*Agamemnon* Clytaemnestra will simply have to accept it. If women were allowed any word in the war, there would never be any war.

*Aias* That would be the dullest of all possible worlds.

*Diomedes* If only wars were managed correctly, even women would be able to tolerate them.

*Ulysses* No war was ever managed correctly.

*Diomedes* Yes, that's the problem about wars.

*Agamemnon* This war can only be managed in one way and that is to victory. Or what do you say, Menelaos?

*Menelaos* We simply have to.

*Diomedes* If only we get Achilles to join us, the thing will be settled. With him there can only be an instant victory.

*Aias* He and I will have to compete about the ultimate and fastest victory.

*Agamemnon* In brief, the case is clear: victory is obvious. We only have to go for it.

*alternative scene:*

Mycenae.

*Agamemnon* How is the recruiting going?

*Menelaos* We have managed at large. No one has declined.

*Agamemnon* What about Achilles? We have to have him with us.

*Menelaos* As the most accomplished warrior of Hellas he has his manners, and he is hopelessly of a mind of his own. His mother appears to have persuaded him to join us after that he first asked us all go to hell. All the honours and riches that Nestor promised him in Troy he discarded as mere dullish flattery while his mother appears to have succeeded in making Troy attractive to him as a taunting challenge.

*Agamemnon* How?

*Menelaos* If he rejected the Troy offer he would have a long life in peace and quiet with children and grandchildren but die without a reputation. If he joined the Troy enterprise he would succeed in acquiring an immortal reputation but perhaps at the cost of a longer life.

*Agamemnon* Achilles is young and a professional warrior. Then you are not attracted by the prospects of old age but would rather wage on some greater fun.

*Menelaos* Exactly. Anything is better than to get bored.

*Agamemnon* And what about Ulysses?

*Clytaemnestra (enters)* My lords, Diomedes is here with Ulysses.

*Agamemnon* Like by order.

*Menelaos (rises and cordially receives and greets Diomedes and Ulysses)* So you succeeded, Diomedes! How did you do it?

*Diomedes* Everyone knows that such a cunning knave as Ulysses can only be persuaded and secured by artifice.

*Agamemnon* Didn't you have a newborn son to think of, Ulysses?

*Ulysses* That's why I refused to accept your summons.

*Diomedes* He was working at his plough and swore to me that he as little could join our war as I could stop him from ploughing.

*Agamemnon* And how did you stop him from ploughing?

*Diomedes* I put his little boy in the furrow ahead of his plough.

*Ulysses* A dirty trick, Diomedes.

*Diomedes* But it was fair play, and you lost it with honour.

*Ulysses* Has Troy declined all peace proposals?

*Menelaos* They claim that Helena came to them as a refugee for an excuse. Therefore they have neither any right to surrender her nor we any right to claim her, is their formal argument.

*Agamemnon* Naturally it's just contrived excuses for not having to comply with our demands.

*Ulysses* It seems as if Helena doesn't want to come back. Why not let her stay there?

*Menelaos* You must understand that is impossible.

*Agamemnon* We would lose our face to all Hellas, and Menelaos would be mocked and ridiculed as a cuckold.

*Ulysses* Who else did you manage to muster?

*Agamemnon* King Idomeneus of Crete with his entire fleet, Aias the great and Aias minor, Palamedes and Nestor – and Achilles, of course.

*Ulysses* That trouble-maker. He will only cause problems.

*Agamemnon* But he is as indispensable for his skill and valour as Nestor for his experience and you for your slyness.

*Ulysses* How long do you think it will take?

*Agamemnon* A year at most.

*Ulysses* And if it takes longer?

*Agamemnon* Then it will take longer.

*Ulysses* For how long are you prepared to let it go on?

*Agamemnon* Any length of time. It must be carried through. We can't miss this opportunity of getting control of the trade route to the Euxinian sea.

*Ulysses* So that is what it is all about.

*Menelaos* No, it is all about my wife.

*Ulysses* And do you really want her back?

*Menelaos* Paris is a playboy who just wants to use her to have some fun. I gave her at least a family and position.

*Ulysses* Say that again. By her father you could acquire the throne of Sparta. Without her your position would feel more awkward and risky.

*Diomedes* You can argue about all that later. Shouldn't we discuss the strategy?

*Agamemnon* Diomedes is right. We have much planning to make. We have the greatest war enterprise in history to organize and direct.

*Menelaos* To the point!

*Agamemnon* You are welcome to contribute to our plans with your advice and suggestions, Ulysses.

*Ulysses* Yes, I should, because you don't always realize how stupid you are at times.

*Diomedes* And that is perhaps fortunate.

*Menelaos* To the point, gentlemen! (*starts unfolding immense maps and plans on the table in front of them.*)

#### Scene 6. Achilles exhorting his myrmidons.

*Achilles* This is the chance of our life for the greatest stakes and contributions in the greatest war the world has ever seen! My myrmidons, the world will sing about us forever about our feats at Troy! Not only will it be a simple thing to take the city, but it is the richest city in our world, so there are treasures enough to plunder to be sufficient for every family that takes part in it for generations to come!

*A myrmidon* But aren't the walls of Troy considered impregnable?

*Achilles* Nonsense! In Troy there are only women and crones and children and senile old people, and the king of Troy is himself the oldest and most senile! They can't do anything against us. If we just push against the wall, the house of cards will fall. In addition to that, they say that the women of Troy are unusually beautiful, and that their beds and couches are the most comfortable in the world, so there are many sumptuous beds to share with many sweet and soft ladies!

*Myrmidons* Hurrah!

*Achilles* So, my boys, let's join the storm, shan't we?

*Myrmidons* Hurrah!

*Yet another scene before the war starts.*

Troy. The court.

*Priam* What are these Greeks wailing for? Aren't all these Asians enough, who turn life into hell for us?

*Paris* They are just intriguing to further their own vicious imperialistic interests. They are evil all through, and they only mean harm to us.

*Hector* Pardon me, my brother, but wasn't your abduction of Menelaos' wife a rather stark provocation against all Hellas?

*Paris* All Hellas bored her, and she was most eager herself to get away from the dryness of Sparta.

*Hector* As your mistress?

*Priam* Don't argue again, my bellicose sons! We are facing a diplomatic predicament here of most precarious dimensions. We don't want war, and all you want is to quarrel between yourselves.

*Hector* Father, there is only one solution to the problem. Paris has to return his stolen concubine immediately.

*Paris* She is my wife!

*Hector* She was king Menelaos' wife and queen. You altered her status to that of a concubine.

*Priam* Stop it!

*Hector* I define a wife as only one man's wife, and the man whose wife she was has never approved of any separation.

*Paris* Hector, you will one day find yourself in deep trouble.

*Hector* As far as I know, neither did she.

*Priam* That's just the problem. Paris refuses to give up Helena. The Greeks take that as pretext to make war on us.

*Hector* Paris can not get out of that issue. If Troy thereby is in trouble, it is completely because of Paris.

*Priam* We must stop this war. No one can get any victory out of it. It could only lead to a dishonourable and disastrous deadlock for years. We must by diplomatic efforts, negotiations and a constructive good will stop this war before it has time to start. Has no one any good idea?

*Cassandra* My father, no further negotiations will do any good.

*Priam* My prophetic daughter, are you already such a fatalistic pessimist?

*Cassandra* A Greek fleet has already left for Troy, and it is not coming to bring any message of peace.

*Paris* What did I tell you? The Hellenes only want to make war, and they will not listen.

*Priam* Let's hear more of what Cassandra has to say.

*Cassandra* There will be a war for ten years, and then our city will be destroyed.

*Priam* My daughter, what kind of a cursed doomsday prophecy is that?



*Hector* Beloved Cassandra, with all due respect for your acknowledged gift of prophecy, but such a prophecy you simply must not let out of your mouth.

*Cassandra* It's already done.

*Paris* To arms! For Helena and Troy!

*Hector* Just go on shouting, mad adventurer, bringing all into your perdition of vanity and recklessness!

*Priam* Quiet, children! What kind of a prophecy is that you made yourself guilty of, Cassandra? Tell me you aren't serious.

*Cassandra* Tell the god that he isn't serious.

*Priam* But that's absolutely outrageous!

*Helenos* Don't bother about Cassandra. Just make peace at any cost.

*Hector* Yes. Give up Paris' abducted consort.

*Paris* I will never give her up! I will rather do without Troy than without my queen!

*Hector* Do you then actually think you will be king one day, you deluded fool of self-deceits?

*Priam* This bodes no good for Troy.

*Helenos* Here is prince Aeneas. I think he might have some message.

*Priam* Speak, noble Aeneas! Redeem us from our strife of uncertainty!

*Aeneas* I seem to have arrived at the worst possible moment, most inappropriately and awkwardly in the middle of some family feud...

*Priam* That makes you only the more welcome! Speak!

*Aeneas* Unfortunately I have to regret that I bring no good news...

*Priam* Stop making excuses for yourself! Nothing is your fault! Let's hear it!

*Aeneas* The Greeks are here. They have landed and are already building palisades, ditches and an impregnable camp. They are here with all the worst bandits and rabble of all Greece just to fight and destroy us.

*Helenos* We must negotiate at once.

*Paris* Prattling obstinacy of a donkey! Have you got stuck?

*Hector* Paris, who has something to fight for, go ahead and beat up Agamemnon, Menelaos whose wife you abducted, the hard Diomedes, the ever undefeated Aias and the most famous of all the heroes of Hellas, the terrible Achilles, besides many others, who have rightful claims on your concubine!

*Paris* Stop calling her a concubine!

*Hector* She was never the wife of anyone else than Menelaos, who is here only to bring her back home. They don't wish any harm to Troy.

*Helenos* That's why we have to negotiate at once!

*Paris* Do you really think they have come here bursting with arms with an endless host of the worst fighters of Hellas just for the sake of a weak and simple woman? In that case you are frightfully naïve! Don't you see that they only wish to colonise and enslave Asia? After Troy they will take Byzantium, Sardes, Cappadocia and Media!

*Priam* Why does this have to befall me, poor old king, for my old age? As Paris says, the western aggression is only coming for plunder and gains by

dishonesty. They only want to grab more lands to enslave more people and expand their empire. With my experience of western deceit and double standards, I have to give Paris right. Helena is only their excuse for eastern expansion at our expense.

– Have you no other news, Aeneas?

*Aeneas* They have already made it clear that they only want their Helena.

*Paris* But Helena does not want the greedy Menelaos. She is mine now, and she does not long for home. So the Greeks can go home.

*Aeneas* They will not go home without Helena.

*Paris* Then they will have to try to take her by force. I didn't even try that myself. And in that case they must first take Ilion by force. We will never let her go.

*Hector* There is female politics behind Paris' folly.

*Paris* Call it whatever you will. I call it natural instinct and logic.

*Helenos* Shouldn't we at least try to negotiate?

*(An arrow comes flying.)*

*Diomedes (outside)* You false cowards and Troyan thieves, come out and fight if you are men! Return what you have stolen or surrender!

*Priam* Who is that?

*Hector* It sounds like king Diomedes, foremost among the Greeks after Aias and Achilles.

*Paris* They negotiate handsomely with poisoned arrows sharpened for murder. Will you not defend Troy, this your wonderful home city, the lovely town of your mothers, children and wives, against such bloody hooligans?

*Priam* We shall fight and negotiate at the same time.

*Paris* With whom? With such imperialists, murderers and thieves like Achilles and the arrogant Diomedes? I will never negotiate with damned terrorists!  
*(collects the arrow and returns it with his own bow, crying:)*

Here is our answer! We will never give in, and we will never give up an innocent lady into your hands who wants to stay here! You have come here in vain for nothing, and we shall burn your ships and kill you to the last man in honest combat man against man, for you are wrong! Tell that, you blasted impertinent braggart, to that cuckold loser Menelaos!

*(silence)*

*Hector* Paris, you give us no choice.

*Paris* We have no choice.

*Hector* You are forcing all Troyans into a vain war just for the sake of your folly and vanity.

*Paris* Have I no right to consistently defend my wife's honour at any price?

*Hector* You are waging all Troy.

*Paris* Yes, I am, because I am in love.

*Helenos* This is a difficult situation. Shouldn't we at least negotiate?

*Priam* Hector, my sympathies are entirely on your side, and I fear that your brother Paris, blinded by his love, doesn't know what he is doing.

*Hector* He got the Hellenes here all by himself. He should then also get them as fast as possible away from here.

*Priam* For that we will need all Troy to help us, for it will be a tough undertaking for a long duration of time, which Paris never will be able to undertake alone.

*Hector* What do you think, father? Do you think the Hellenes will be chased off within a year or two?

*Priam* At best. But they have Aias, Diomedes and Achilles. Only you stand up against them. On the other hand, we have impregnable walls, and most peoples and kings to the east will support us. I fear a long and worrisome deadlock. Luck is what we will need most of all.

*Hector* So you don't believe in any favours and help from the gods?

*Priam* Who could believe in any gods in a petty quarrel like this one about a wanton and lewd woman, who just by her venal vanity brings about an unsurveyable world war?

*Hector* The Medes and Persians will help us.

*Priam* But Crete, Ithaca and Epirus will help Menelaos. It's tough hardness on both sides in the conflict, and no hardness will help against a hard conflict. All we can do is to endure in suffering until some solution will turn up from nowhere. For that's the only way for impossible conflicts to be resolved – unexpectedly to everyone's great surprise.

Let's all piously retire to consider this godless conflict in the protection of some gods in holy service at the temple. For a monarch, situations like this one will only be an inspiration to sad resignation.

*(Cassandra appears)*

*Helenos* Here is Cassandra.

*Paris* The one who least of all is capable of any negotiation.

*Priam* What do you say, Cassandra? Have you come back to give us evil prophecies again? In that case I beg you to desist, for we have quite enough troubles and worries already.

*Cassandra* I know all too well that I am not welcome, since I am the only one to clearly see the reality of the fix Troy had landed in only because of the tragic offence by Paris and Helena.

*Helenos* Say, Cassandra, what you came here to say.

*Cassandra* You have asked me to speak. My sense will speak, which is the sense of the gods themselves. There is only one thing for you to do if you wish to avoid war. Give over both Paris and Helena to the Hellenes, and then they will have nothing to complain of, for then Menelaos will have his revenge for the bride abduction of Troy by Paris.

*Paris* Never! Father, you can't turn over your own son!

*Priam* Cassandra, you have spoken, and your word carries heavy weight, especially since you claim to speak by the god's own mouth, whose holy priestess everyone respects you for being. We can't turn over Paris and Helena until all other possibilities have turned impossible. Your solution to the problem, poor radical girl,

so unfortunate in your fanaticism, can only be adjourned as long as possible, until some extreme situation of dire need would demand the extreme emergency solution that you recommend. We can't do anything more than that, which even *your* human nature must accept and understand.

*Cassandra* I have stated what the god asked me to propose for a solution, but my father the king rules over me as a human being.

*Priam* That ends our negotiations for today. Let us now resign, consider the situation, desperately cudgel our brains, grieve and try our utmost to avoid the conflict that threatens us all, which, if it breaks out, could mount to a tragedy of constantly growing proportions both for the Hellenes and for us. Only Cassandra has the gift to foresee the full extent of the misfortune threatening us. May she forgive and excuse us for as long as possible refusing to deal with it and even trying not to face it.

*(exeunt all, leaving after him, immersed in serious but intensive discussions.)*

#### Act II scene 1. A dungeon.

*Cassandra (chained to the wall)* Has the world forgotten me? That's possible. Has Apollo forgotten me? Impossible. The world may be cursed for its voluntary forgetfulness and criminal negligence of obvious matters of importance, but Apollo is the avenger of truth and never forgets an offence committed against a servant of truth.

*Polyxena (enters)* At last I found you, sister! So this is the secret store room of Paris for the holiest priestess of Troy.

*Cassandra* It's not his fault, sister. He is like that.

*Polyxena* That is no excuse. You are our sister, and not even against your sister you can behave without decency.

*Cassandra* It's my own fault. I provoked him to madness, why he considered me criminally insane and insanely criminal. It will pass, Polyxena. You have found me at last, so now the worst is over.

*Polyxena* Hector has torn down heaven and earth for your sake, and Paris has only pretended to be innocently ignorant.

*Cassandra* What about the others?

*Polyxena* Father and mother have been discussing your case but never reached an end to their discussion. All the others have suspected Paris, but no one could accuse him of anything. Troilus and Deiphobus have shed tears for your sake and believed you were lost.

*Cassandra* And Helenos?

*Polyxena* As always, Helenos has just been resting his case and waited.

*Cassandra* What else can he do? He knows perfectly nothing. He never had the same visionary capacities as I.

*Polyxena* And that's not his fault, because he is like that, eh, sister? Can you then forgive all men just any crimes because they just are like that?

*Cassandra* All men have their superiors, and men are not more stupid than that they can judge each other.

*Polyxena* I mentioned to Hector that I intended to visit these parts to make investigations. When I haven't returned, he can sound the alarm.

*Cassandra* Our brother is too good for this world. I hope he doesn't sound the alarm. I am tired of only causing scandals.

*Polyxena* But this is not acceptable, Cassandra, that a king's own son imprisons his sister, the daughter of a king, in a dungeon in chains for the sake of his personal opinion that she is out of her mind.

*Cassandra* Tell that to Paris.

*Hector (entering suddenly)* Polyxena! Cassandra!

*Cassandra* Hector!

*Hector (reaches them)* Who has done this to you? Is it Paris?

*Polyxena* Who else?

*Hector* What luck that I followed you, Polyxena. Paris has learned that you are nosing around in his underworld. You could both have been buried alive here.

*Polyxena* I fear that was Paris' wish and intention.

*Hector* Out of the way, Polyxena. Stand quite still, Cassandra. *(pulls his sword and strikes off Cassandra's chains in two perfect hits)* Never again shall anyone of our royal house be treated as a prisoner.

*Cassandra* At least you, Hector, will never be.

*Hector* What does that mean?

*Cassandra* Don't ask me. How is the war going?

*Hector (with a sigh)* To hell, in brief, to hell, like all wars. Every day the Hellenes slaughter a number of indispensable Trojans, and every day the Trojans slaughter a number of indispensable Hellenes. Both Hellas and Troy are slowly but inevitably bleeding to death. The deadlock is hopelessly absolute. The Hellenes have no chance of getting any further than up to the walls of Troy, and we have no chance of reaching their ships to be able to burn them. Achilles, Diomedes and Aias are invincible, no one can get at them, and they plough their lanes through the lines of warriors like slaughter machines that only leave bodies behind in shreds and brooks of pouring blood. If I didn't fight for the Trojans, we would just be sitting at home in town huddled up and moping.

*Cassandra* Aren't Paris fighting? And Aeneas?

*Hector* Both have narrowly escaped with their lives, Paris against Menelaos and Aeneas against Aias. The Hellenes have in brutal scorn called them cowards for escaping and claim that the war should have been settled by Paris having run away from Menelaos. They are actually right.

*Cassandra* So only Hector is capable of defending Troy.

*Hector* It's my destiny, sister. It's my duty.

*Cassandra* What has Helena said?

*Hector* She scorns all men for their fighting madness and plays around with Paris, who accepts his role as a toy of hers. It is as if she had chosen Paris just to be able to express her scorn of all men by him.

*Cassandra* The power of her beauty is inexplicable but all too magic. Never again will a woman be able to mobilize a thousand ships just for the sake of her beauty.

*Hector* I sincerely hope it's the first and the last time.

*Polyxena* But we must not loiter here now when Cassandra has been released. Paris could start doing something stupid.

*Hector* That's all he ever could do. Don't worry, sister. I am still his elder brother for whom he lives in awe.

*Cassandra* Have then all peace negotiations just stranded in the sand?

*Hector* Yes, I am afraid so, unfortunately. Father has given up. Helenos does nothing and just waits, and among the Hellenes Nestor and Ulysses never have appeared again with white flags.

*Cassandra* They lack authority, for Agamemnon keeps them restricted and refuses to relax the war. As long as politics is power and as long as power is violence, there will never be peace.

*Hector* That's about the way things are. But let's rejoin the light, Cassandra. Father and mother must see you alive, and people must know that Apollo still has his priestess posted in Troy.

*Cassandra* Thank you, brother.

*(Hector follows his sisters out.)*

## Scene 2. Priam's court.

*Priam (rising)* I must insist, during this harrowing crisis enforced on our entire people for outrageous ordeal, that we cannot accept any division within the family. Hector and Paris, I forbid you to nourish your enmity, which if it is allowed to go on will just continue raging to spread and infect the entire family, city and army. This cannot be tolerated.

*Paris* Father, the division is not between me and Hector. We have a traitress in our midst who is continuously spreading bad morals by poisonous speech and destructive prophecies taken out of thin air for only defatistic purposes. This is, father, what we can't afford.

*Priam* Are you accusing Cassandra, our daughter and holiest priestess, of treason?

*Paris* In an effort to end her evil spread of rumours, I tried to isolate her, but unfortunately Hector released her in a fit of bad judgement.

*Hector* I released her from an inhuman treatment unworthy of a priestess of Apollo and a daughter of Priam and most unworthy of you, Paris, who alone was responsible.

*Priam* What is this?

*Hecuba* Cassandra was lost for three days.

*Polyxena* It was I who found her chained to a wall in the dungeons which Paris keeps for torturing his prisoners.

*Priam* Paris, what do you mean?

*Paris* I mean that Cassandra is a distracted and crazy woman who can't open her mouth without spreading deadly poison killing the morals of every fighting man who hears her!

*Priam* She surely doesn't seem to have killed your morals, Paris, that rather have taken a serious introvert turning against the most sacred thing we have in the family, which is our communion of unity.

*Paris* I maintain that Cassandra in everything she says only serves the Hellenic cause of accomplishing the ruin of Troy!

*Hector* She doesn't at all. She only means that you should send Helena back home to them to save our city and our independence before it is too late!

*Priam* So there we are again.

*Paris* Yes, father, we are there again, and we will remain there again at a standstill and deadlock until someone finally shuts Cassandra up for good!

*Priam* Do you then wish to liquidate her?

*Paris* Yes, if there be no other cure for her mental disease.

*Priam* And with what right can you brand her as mentally diseased without being a qualified doctor?

*Paris* Ask anyone! They all put their index to their front when they see her. Anyone who just hears her must immediately realize that she is totally deranged, if you only have any sense left yourself.

*Cassandra* Has anyone any sense left who takes part in this war?

*Paris (terrified)* Now she starts again! Don't listen to her!

*Cassandra* Forgive me, brother. For the sake of your oversensitivity I will try to oblige your request for my being shut up.

*Paris* I wish you never had opened your abominable mouth. I wish you had been exposed as a child to the wolves of Ida, and Troy would never have had her worst troubles.

*Cassandra* Can't you see, brother, that you are all the time fighting and describing yourself? You feel and understand no one but yourself. You were yourself exposed to the wolves of Ida as a child because the oracle of Apollo predicted that you would become the ruin of Troy. You were saved by a shepherd feeling pity for you, and when you came of age you were recognized and exonerated for the sake of your beauty, a beauty as beguiling and destructive as Helena's.

*Paris* Don't listen to her! All she says is just slander! All she says is just aimed at breaking down all the moral strength and power of defense of Troy! We *can* endure the siege of the Hellenes. A priest of Poseidon has said that the Hellenes one day will abandon their war here and go home.

*Cassandra* Yes, after that Troy has been levelled to the ground.

*Priam* Quiet, Cassandra! – Do you have any further details of the statement of the priest of Poseidon?

*Paris* The Hellenes will leave Troy while the walls and city of Troy are still standing tall and intact. That has been promised by Poseidon.

*Hector* Can you trust a god?

*Cassandra* No, you can't, especially not in this case when Poseidon says something and means something else. What he really means I can't see, not even Apollo can search the secrets of Poseidon's depths of the ocean, but I definitely sense a wicked scheme, maybe to lull us into a delusion of security just to prepare our downfall.

*Paris* That's how she goes on all the time! Everything she says is only poison!

*Priam* Are then even the rare revelations of the gods to be considered as merely poison? Our Cassandra has the respect of all other priests for never speaking anything but the god himself inspires her with, and Apollo is the personal god of Troy.

*Paris* Against the gods even common sense struggles in vain. As soon as the gods are given any significance by their assumed words, all sense disappears and is hopelessly lost, and only superstition is left to rule imperiously alone. I give a damn about you and your gods! (*leaves in anger*)

*Priam* He is angry.

*Hecuba* No, he is sad. He can't stand that anyone begrudges him Helena.

*Hector* And meanwhile the war keeps raging on, and daily both we and the enemy are suffering meaningless losses while the war just keeps going on as long as Paris keeps Helena.

*Priam* We can't just throw her out.

*Hector* I know. (*leaves*)

*Priam* Cassandra, I beg you, prophesy as much as you want, but please try to do so with some judgement and consideration. Be as fanatically sacred as you want, but try not to provoke people by your holiness. And above all: evade Paris, so that he doesn't cause you any greater harm.

*Cassandra* Father, he is my brother. You can avoid feinds and enemies, but you will never be rid of your brothers.

*Helenos* Stick to your better brothers. We will protect you against Paris. What has happened must never happen again, Hector has sworn to you and our father, and father has given him right.

*Cassandra* Thanks you all for your support, my better brothers and father and mother and my sisters, in my difficult duty never to fail what Apollo shows me to be the only right way of truth. (*leaves*)

*Priam* She cannot compromise.

*Helenos* By every right. She is a priestess.

*Hecuba* Still I wish that she would only be a woman.

*Polyxena* You have to satisfy yourself with me, mother. And I will try to keep watch of her to make sure she doesn't get lost again by the weird schemes of Paris' abduction skills.



*Hecuba* Thank you, my daughter. What would a mother be without her daughters? A lone mother with only men around her, the most difficult position in the world.

*Polyxena* At least we don't have to make war.

*Hecuba* Thank heavens that's something we definitely can't manage. (*embraces her daughter and walks out with her.*)

*Priam* And we are left with our beard in the letter box up to our necks in a monstrous war that just keeps overgrowing our heads every day. Is there nothing we can do, Helenos?

*Helenos* No, father, there is nothing we can do except let them fight until all their forces are spent and they all lie butchered themselves by their own urge to self-destruction.

*Priam* You are as fatalistic as Cassandra but at least don't prophesy the destruction of Troy.

*Helenos* No, I prophesy nothing. She prophesies quite enough.

*Priam* Let's go then as usual to discuss the possibilities of support from Asia and of new peace negotiations.

*Helenos* Yes, father. (*They go out together.*)

(*beside the stage*)

*Chryses* Psst! Cassandra!

*Cassandra* (*with Polyxena*) What is it?

*Polyxena* Who is it?

*Cassandra* Chryses, a colleague, a servant of Apollo.

*Polyxena* What does he want?

*Cassandra* What do you want?

*Chryses* Achilles has taken my daughter.

*Cassandra* And what can I do about it?

*Chryses* You are the high priestess of Apollo.

*Cassandra* Do you want me to ask Apollo to avenge the deflowering of your daughter?

*Chryses* Why not?

*Cassandra* Why don't you do it yourself?

*Chryses* I wanted your approval first.

*Cassandra* There is no need of it. If Apollo wants to interfere, he will do so, or else he will not.

*Chryses* Then I will ask him to interfere.

*Cassandra* Do so. Perhaps it could restrict or decide or turn the war to the advantage of Paris.

*Chryses* That would be a consummation devoutly to be wished.

*Cassandra* Do it then. It won't do any harm.

*Chryses* Thanks, Cassandra. (*leaves*)

*Polyxena* Who was it?

*Cassandra* A dirty old man. He always pawed me and tried to persuade me to submission. It didn't work. He finally had a daughter, but I don't know with whom. She was called Chryseis, the golden one, for she really was very beautiful. It wouldn't surprise me if she became Achilles' mistress of her own accord just to get away from her dirty old man of an over-protective father.

*Polyxena* That seems to be an ever recurring problem complex in our war.

*Cassandra* All ladies who give in appear to exacerbate the war, and those who remain sacred virgins only seem to add to the irate madness of the war maniacs. Is there no middle way?

*Polyxena* No, sister, for us women there is no way in between.

*Cassandra* Unless it is the chaste faithfulness of Andromakhe as a housewife.

*Polyxena* Andromakhe's life is already that of a widow.

*Cassandra* But she is blessed with her son.

*Polyxena* She knows that Hector will fall.

*Cassandra* Then she knows more than I. Here she is now.

*Andromakhe* Cassandra! Welcome back!

*Cassandra* Thanks, it was just an ordinary resurrection after three days underground.

*Andromakhe* Then I suppose you met Orpheus and the others in departed blessedness?

*Cassandra* No, I didn't reach that depth, and I am not that clairvoyant.

*Andromakhe* I heard that Chryses had turned to you with his troubles.

*Cassandra* They are now the concerns of Apollo. He does what he can.

*Andromakhe* Are you helping?

*Cassandra* I don't have such powers. I submit all my will to Apollo, and his will is mine.

*Andromakhe* Have you seen anything about Hector?

*Cassandra* I don't want to.

*Polyxena* Leave her in peace, Andromakhe.

*Andromakhe* Pardon me, but I can't get rid of the feeling that I have seen him for the last time.

*Cassandra* You never see Hector for the last time. He always returns.

*Andromakhe* Thanks for that comfort, Cassandra. Let me know as soon as you feel that he is approaching.

*Cassandra* He is always close to us.

*Andromakhe* I always ascend the tower to search for him, but he is always too far away or concealed by the dust clouds of the fighting.

*Polyxena* That's good, Andromakhe. Go on looking for him. He will be back.

*Andromakhe* Thanks, Polyxena. The poorest comfort is better than none at all. (*leaves*)

*Polyxena* She is already the widow of widows in Troy.

*Cassandra* Don't say that. She may be immortal as such, but Hector isn't dead yet.

*Polyxena* May he never die.

*Cassandra* Be calm, Polyxena. He never dies.

*Polyxena* You should have said that to Polyxena.  
*Cassandra* She knows it already.  
*Polyxena* You always say more than you mean, and the meaning of your words always goes deeper than what you intend.  
*Cassandra* The god is to blame for that. I only mirror his thoughts like a mirror is innocent of the picture it shows.  
*Polyxena* Can you forgive Paris?  
*Cassandra* He is my brother. There is nothing to forgive. His problem is, that Troy and history will never forgive him, and that he doesn't care.  
*Polyxena* You stick to your defeatism.  
*Cassandra* It's not mine, Polyxena. Apollo does what he can, but what can beauty and culture do against a war? That's Apollo's dilemma and mine as his priestess.  
*Polyxena* I guess that all you can do is to keep it up and be consistent.  
*Cassandra* Until the end and further on. Eternity always goes further and beyond time, and the gods have eternity on their side.  
*Polyxena* Paris denies that, and I have also doubted it.  
*Cassandra* That if anything I must never doubt. If we don't have eternity within reach and maybe at our disposal, why are we living? What is man then more than a parasite on nature? Time is nothing but a limited dimension, and the only real time is timelessness. If we don't have eternity to strive for, we have absolutely nothing to live for, and then we are already dead while living. We only have eternity, Polyxena. That's our only life.  
*Polyxena* You speak for yourself.  
*Cassandra* No, I speak for Apollo.

### Scene 3. The Greek camp by Troy.

*Kalkhas* I would almost advise you against it, Achilles.  
*Achilles* Why? What could you lose by it?  
*Kalkhas* It is never without risks to tell potentates the truth.  
*Achilles* But it has to be told! And you are a priest. You have the proper authority! If I would say it, I would only be laughed at.  
*Kalkhas* You can't imagine what crises it could result in.  
*Achilles* I don't care! I only want to do good! If Agamemnon has done something wrong, he has to stand for it.  
*Kalkhas* Very well, Achilles, but remember your promise! I stand under your protection!  
*Achilles* Yes, under my infallible protection, and my weapons will protect you against all weapons of the Hellenes whenever necessary!

*(They enter Agamemnon's tent, which opens up.)*

*Agamemnon (recognizing Kalkhas immediately)* What devil of a man is it you bring into my tent?

*Achilles* You know very well who he is.

*Agamemnon* Of course I know. It was that miserable old beggar we had such troubles with at Aulis when the fleet was to sail out from Hellas! Admit it, Kalkhas, that you demanded the sacrifice of my daughter for us to get fair weather for the transit only in order to as far as possible thwart our enterprise! You are on the Trojan side, and your daughter is the mistress of a Trojan!

*Kalkhas (to Achilles)* What did I tell you, Achilles? Here we will only get problems. I want to get back out of here.

*Achilles* Too late, Kalkhas. Agamemnon, we are here to stop the plague epidemic in the camp. Kalkhas knows its origin.

*Agamemnon* Just don't tell me, Kalkhas, that the plague will cease as soon as we sail back to Greece.

*Kalkhas* No, great Agamemnon, the only sacrifice demanded is of you alone.

*Agamemnon* What did I tell you? Who am I to sacrifice now? I have no children here that you could claim for a human sacrifice.

*Kalkhas* No, but you have abducted a sacred priestess from the altar service of Apollo, and her father has complained to Apollo. That's why Apollo has struck you with the plague.

*Agamemnon* Chryseis? Is that the one? And who shall I live with then instead? I can't spend a life in the field without mistresses.

*Kalkhas* That's your problem. The issue concerns your entire Hellenic army. If you return Chryseis to her father, Apollo will cease smiting you with the plague.

*Achilles* You should have accepted her father's offer, which was much more favourable. He told me, that he promised you that Apollo would war on our side and quickly give us victory if you just returned his daughter, but you laughed him to scorn and drove him away.

*Agamemnon* That old fool. I can't stand superstitious priests. They try to make us believe that they have power over us by trying to frighten us with imagined far-fetched threats. Don't you have a nice mistress yourself, Achilles?

*Achilles* Briseis is mine!

*Agamemnon* Give me Briseis, and the old man Chryses will have his daughter Chryseis back, and they redeem the army from the plague. Isn't that all right?

*Achilles* I will never voluntarily part with Briseis! She is mine!

*Agamemnon* If I have to relinquish Chryseis, which you demand by Kalkhas, then you have to give me Briseis instead. That's just how it is.

*Achilles* I refuse!

*Agamemnon* You can't refuse. Then I must send my men to get her.

*Achilles* Agamemnon, how do you think you could ever win the war if you only keep acting like an outrageous villain all the time?

*Agamemnon* Even a king has natural urges. If he can't release them he can't answer for the consequences. And royal eruptions are more serious and difficult to deal with than those of ordinary mortals.

*Achilles* If you bereave me of Briseis, Agamemnon, I will pull out of the war!

*Agamemnon* As if you were indispensable! If you were, you would have won it for us long ago, but here we are stuck in an intolerable deadlock year after year although you are our leading fighter! Your stock has never been valued less, Achilles! Lie fallow as much as you want! We don't care! And I must have Briseis!

*Achilles* And for that king of shit I allowed myself to be persuaded to leave everything to wage my life for him! Go to blazes and hell and further on to perdition, you worthless villainous bully! I hope the Trojans soon will burn all your thousand ships! Come, Kalkhas! (*leaves infuriated. Kalkhas follows.*)

*Agamemnon* Achilles is angry. Let him rave. Now we will be rid of him for some time. Perhaps that might even lead to our war making some progress. We shall see.

*Achilles (with Kalkhas, outside)* Kalkhas, he cannot act like that. Apollo might withhold his plague, but pray to him that he might give the Trojans enough victories to let them burn the Hellenic ships, so that they then will be compelled to come on their knees to me to beg me to return to battle! I want to see Agamemnon crawling in the dust for this!

*Kalkhas* I will of course do my very best.

*Achilles* I don't know how to associate with gods, to have to do so with kings who believe themselves to be immortal in their bullying presumption and vanity is quite enough as a hell for me, but I rely on you to do your work, Kalkhas.

#### Scene 4. Troy.

*Hecuba (dressed in black, leading the chorus of women in front of a large sitting statue of Athena outside a temple.)* For nine years, Troy has struggled for her life against invading strangers, who had no business at all in Asia. Nine years of reckless war have spread death and terror around Troy, transformed its fields and meadows to unending graveyards, bereft every honest family of an able man, transformed mothers into wailing grieving widows, robbed children of their fathers and turned many young and happy marriages into nightmares of despair and loneliness and ruined widowhood. You gods, why don't you put a stop to this?

*Chorus of women (all in black)* Troy is crying over fatherless children and aging parents who lost all their security by their fallen sons of youth and glory, harvested by death in their very blossomtime of freshness, health and strength.

*Hecuba* We can't endure this any more. Troy is still alive, but if this war must still go on some years, there will be nothing left of the whole city but black wailing aged and widowed women.

*Chorus* For every woman war is the supreme ordeal of unendurability. She can never on any condition face it or accept it.

*Hecuba* But she has no say, for the men in power never ask permission of the women to make war. He just goes blundering to war according to the blinding folly of power and then fights on until he falls or prevails. Whether he falls or prevails, he will never admit though that he acted wrong or foolishly.

*Chorus* That's all what men are fighting for: to avoid having to admit their wrongs. A man is never wrong if he destroys cities or rapes women, for who has the power can never be wrong.

*Hecuba* So cruel is the folly with these men possessed by the madness of war and the complexes of power, that the only hope of Troy is with those gods who merely keep their silence for all eternity.

*Chorus* We cannot know if the divine world gives us any attention by hearing or seeing. We can only hope for their attention, and that hope if anything is blind indeed.

*Hecuba* But that is all we have got, for our sons are not enough against the superior force of war, and their number is slowly ebbing out inevitably with relentless certainty.

*Hector (has entered in helmet and fully armed)* Where is my brother Paris, mother?

*Hecuba* What are you doing in here? Why are you not fighting in the front line of the battle leading our defense as you are wont to for our homes, our city and our future, foremost of our sons and warrior leaders and our chief protection?

*Hector* Don't scold me, mother, for the sloth and laziness that only Paris demonstrates. We are hard pressed by Diomedes, who has launched a brave offensive and is breaking down on us like the reaper himself among the sons of Troy, while Paris just sits in Helena's lap idling and trifling, lulled to lethargic debility by her sensuality.

*Hecuba* So you came here for his reinforcement?

*Hector* Yes, every man is needed, and he is a skulful marksman with his bow.

*Hecuba* Your wife just keeps on crying.

*Hector* I must see her as well.

*Hecuba* She is on the highest top of the wall with your little son.

*Hector* Then it will take time for them to come down. I won't have time to see them.

*Hecuba* Here is the one you have been looking for, the scoundrel who started the war.  
*(enter Paris with Helena)*

Do you dare to show yourselves in public?

*Paris* Mother, by your increasing age you are only constantly growing more quarrelsome, which you seem to enjoy cultivating and accelerating. I can protect both myself and my consort well enough.

*Hector* My brother, you are needed in the war. By just sitting at home you will only get more curses from all the people of Troy and all your brothers and comrades.

*Paris* You have said yourself that a battlefield of honour has no place for both you and me.

*Hector* Because you have no honour. I at least fight for the honour. But now it is different. Diomedes is on the offensive, and for the moment he is doubly worse than Achilles.

*Paris* So Achilles is still indisposed?

*Hector* Yes. Like you he sulks in cowardice with a lazy and erotic concubine.

*Helena* I must ask you, brave Hector, not to insult me. I am not guilty of the war. Menelaos was an insufficient man, and no woman must be forced to accept any unendurable marriage. You know that I left my husband for Paris by my own accord, and as long as the war goes on I cannot return.

*Hector* I apologise, lovely queen, but you misunderstood my point. Achilles is not comparable with Paris, for the concubine of Achilles' is not any queen of higher rank but just a man of lower rank.

*Helena* A bugger?

*Hector* So much inferior to Paris is nowadays Achilles, the ace of Greece.

*Paris* Well, I'll join you in the battle. But first I have to follow my queen home.

*Hector* Just don't remain with her then but come out and join us.

*Paris* I will not let down my brothers or Troy. *(leaves with Helena)*

*Hector (alone)* So what did you do until now then? How did you not fail Troy and your house when you brought Helena here, abducted from another powerful royal house of the fearsome Sparta, foremost of all warrior communities of Hellas? Dear Paris, you know how to take sharp aim and strike with your bow, and you certainly can love your Helena, but your brains do not reach any longer than your flat nose.

*(enter Andromakhe with the boy Astyanax.)*

But here enters now a sensitive chapter.

*Hecuba* Do you wish me to leave with my women?

*Hector* No, mother, stay with them and pray. That is after all maybe the last hope of Troy.

*Andromakhe (catches sight of Hector)* My husband! My Hector! *(wants to hurry up to him with Astyanax.)*

*Hector* No, my beloved Andromakhe, stop there and don't force my tender son to run! Look! I am the one running to you! *(has rushed up to them and embraces them both tenderly and for long, as he actually raises her from the ground.)*

*Andromakhe* Is the war over?

*Hector* No, it is raging more furiously than ever.

*Andromakhe* What has then brought you here to me?

*Hector* The atrocious dullness of my brother. He doesn't want to fight but just lies slouching with his sleazy mistress, perishing in beguiling comfort while Ilion is bleeding to death.

*Andromakhe* So you haven't come for my sake.

*Hector* Yes, for your own sake, Andromakhe, and for the sake of all the women here in Troy! Paris' help is extremely urgent.

*Andromakhe* Still I think he is actually rather wise deep inside.

*Hector* In what way?

*Andromakhe* He refuses to fight. He appreciates life more than glory. He doesn't want to make Helena a miserable widow.

*Hector* Andromakhe, politics is not for you.

*Andromakhe* No, for I am a mother. That's why I know more about life than what is known to any politics. That's why I beg you, my beloved and noble husband, not to resume your fighting.

*Hector* But it is my duty.

*Andromakhe* Your duty is first of all to your son and to your wife, for by me, your wife, you have given your son a life.

*Hector* My beloved, I can't stay here in the street and argue.

*Andromakhe* (*throws herself down on her knees and embraces Hector's knees*) I implore you on my knees, my beloved! Don't make your wife a widow! Don't make your son fatherless!

*Hector* My wife, rise! Don't give me such fatal warnings! (*wants to raise her up, therefore bends, whereupon Astyanax is frightened by his waving crest, cries out and starts crying*)

*Andromakhe* You hear yourself how Astyanax agrees with my prayer. A god has sent you in to town to give you this chance of your life.

*Hector* Rise, poor darling, from the dust of the street!

*Andromakhe* I implore you, sisters, help me convince him!

*Chorus* War will only lead to certain death, but marriage ensures life and security. Inside Troy there is life. Outside in the war there is only death.

*Hector* My beloved, you may be right, but I cannot wait. Everyone must already be asking for me. (*Paris returns, fully armed.*)

*Paris* What are you standing here for, loitering and pathetically crying with your weak wife, you, who scorned me for my laxity? Stay home then, you crybaby, and weep with your pathetic lady! I can fight for Troy in your place.

*Hector* Paris, don't wait for me. Run along. I will come.

*Paris* I do hope so. Or else Troy will fall. (*leaves*)

*Hector* You hear, my beloved. We are not the legislators of the war. They appear capriciously by chance and rule our destinies without any right by order of an unknown impeccable general. I must go out to war, and I must not linger any longer.

*Andromakhe* No woman has any right to retain a husband against his will. Go, my Hector, out to the men's war. I and my son will wait for you here with our home of peace.

*Hector* One last tender and unending hug... (*embraces her long and tenderly, then bends down to his son but first removes his helmet.*) My son, take care of your mother, in case I would not come back. (*embraces him also. The boy cries. Hector hurries away from there and puts his helmet back on.*)

*Andromakhe* Alas, that was my last glimpse of him.

*Hecuba* And how do you know?

*Andromakhe* Cassandra told me so.

*Hecuba* The young witch! Everything coming out of her is just bad news.

*Andromakhe* Yes, but she is always right.

*Hecuba* That's the worst thing about her.



*Chorus* The gods proclaim their terrible trials of man by despised oracles who are blamed for divine reports, but they are only victims. Men blindly carry through the horrible decisions of the gods and die for it. And the women have nothing to do but to receive the hard blows and survive by suffering.

*Hecuba* And therefore the women are complaining forever. Come with us, Andromakhe! Dress up in our black mourning shrouds and raise your voice with us against the cruel inhuman gods!

*Andromakhe* There is still hope. I will first go home with Astyanax.

*Hecuba* Yes, go home and nourish your hope with your son, who is still alive. But for all these women there is no hope any more, for they have lost their sons. Something tells me that you will also gradually join the black bleak flock without any sons left.

*Andromakhe* I leave you to your sorrows to water my own. (*leaves with Astyanax*)

*Hecuba* Yes, go and cultivate it until soon it will grow like to everyone else over your head.

*Chorus* You cry in endless complaint in the vain hope that your tears one day will run out, but we will never run out of tears. The grief of true pain and suffering has always an abundance of tears left over forever, for the oceans of the world will never be enough filled with the saltiest of all waters – the tears of abandoned women.

#### Scene 5.

*Agamemnon* This damned war gets on my nerves. Now we can't even keep our own women in peace without resulting in poisonous quarrels in our own lines. Is this the end of the war, the beginning of the end or the beginning of the end for us? I don't seem to care much any more which it will be. We don't get anywhere anyway. Why can't you then even be allowed to have ladies to comfort you?

*Menelaos* Brother, our generals are here and waiting for the conference.

*Agamemnon* Let them wait, the damned bores. They came here to make war and conquer Troy for me, but what have they done? Just bored me by their constant quarrels about nothing.

*Menelaos* They can't wait any longer.

*Agamemnon* Let the bloodthirsty wolfpack in then, and let them finish off each other!

*Menelaos (opening the tent)* You are all most cordially welcome in to Agamemnon's war council.

(*They all enter: Aias, Nestor, Ulysses, Diomedes, Achilles, and others.*)

*Agamemnon* Brothers! Friends! Comrades! Welcome all! And how morning fresh and cheerful you all appear today!

*Achilles* Don't pretend, you damned swindler, cheat, pimp and lewd thief!

*Ulysses* Achilles, don't insult our highest general.

*Achilles* General? That one? He can't even use a sling!

*Nestor* Quiet, gentlemen! Try to control yourself, Achilles! We are not here to quarrel but to try to make an end to the war.

*Achilles* That we will never do as long as our highest general steals wives from his foremost brothers, friends and comrades!

*Menelaos* Has he stolen more than one?

*Achilles* One is more than the whole world when it was from me!

*Diomedes* Why have you stolen Achilles' wife, Agamemnon?

*Agamemnon* It was not *his* wife. Achilles always turns ants into elephants. It was only Briseis, that nymphomaniac hussy, an ordinary army whore who had already passed through a number of tender warriors' hands. She was not bound to Achilles in any way. Anyone had a right to claim her.

*Achilles* But I loved her!

*Agamemnon* Yes, you shared her, like everyone did.

*Nestor* Can't we keep this discussion out of the war, which surely should be more important?

*Achilles* Nothing is more important to the war than the welfare of its soldiers! You ruined all my joy and fighting spirit by first bereaving me of Chryseis and then also Briseis on top of that! I didn't come here to be a pimp and provider of whores for Agamemnon.

*Agamemnon* This is awfully awkward. The war went bad, and a priest notified us that it was the fault of Chryseis, the beautiful concubine I had borrowed from Achilles, whose father was a priest of Apollo's and who had invoked Apollo's curse on us by the plague. So I had to send that darling wench Chryseis back home again. We were in the same boat, Achilles. We both lost her. Instead I borrowed another concubine from Achilles, less attractive but quite satisfactory anyway. Was it wrong? Don't we all borrow mistresses from each other and exchange them sometimes? But obviously Achilles had a real crush for this slut, although he keeps Patroclus in his bed every night.

*Achilles* I have had enough of this crowned crook's constant gibes and insults! I give a damn for your war! Try to conquer Troy without me from now on! I don't give a shit for anyone of you any more! (*leaves in fury*)

*Menelaos* This is all most awfully awkward.

*Diomedes* If I know Achilles correctly he will not be back. He will sulk in his tent and abuse us with Patroclus and his myrmidons and be a constant source of bad morals for the entire army.

*Nestor* Diomedes is right.

*Agamemnon* Is then this hot-livered unfledged young rooster Achilles that indispensable? Can't we do without him? I had a dream tonight that the gods intended to fight on our side today. So let's then finally take Troy and have done with it! Aias, what are we waiting for?

*Aias* Agamemnon is right. No one is indispensable and least of all such a brawling swashbuckler as Achilles, who only keeps bragging about his feats without accomplishing anything. We have agents inside the city who are just waiting for the

opportunity to open the city for us. Let's show Achilles what a coward he is by managing what he never even tried to accomplish!

*Agamemnon* Are we all agreed on this?

*Nestor* A broken link forges the others to strengthen their alliance.

*Menelaos* Nestor has spoken.

*Diomedes* The fact is that the situation is in our favour at the moment. The Trojans think we are weakened and incapacitated and take it easy without expecting any sudden attack, which is why that would be most opportune just now.

*Ulysses* We can always drive them back inside their walls.

*Agamemnon* Then I find our unity restored. Back to order, each man to his company, and let's attack at once!

*All (enthusiastically)* Yes! *(The war council breaks up.)*

### Act III scene 1. Troy.

*Polyxena* Sisters, strange tidings have reached us from the war. Achilles is out of work, and Hector has driven the Hellenes all the way back to their ships!

*Andromakhe* This is what we have waited for all the time, a ray of light, a hope, a turning point for the better.

*Cassandra* How is Achilles out of work?

*Polyxena* It is by some quarrel between the Hellenes for the sake of some mistresses. It started after Chryseis had come back here.

*Cassandra* Of course.

*Andromakhe* Destiny seems to have favoured us in a way that not even the gods could have guessed.

*Polyxena* Attention, father is entering with his entire court.

*Priam* Are the reports correct? Can we trust them?

*Helenos* It is confirmed, that the Hellenes have been driven back to their camps by the beach, and that Hector has broken through their fortification.

*Priam* Will he at last be able to burn their ships?

*Helenos* We shall know that within the next hours.

*Priam* Cassandra, what do you mean about this? How do you interpret this to any misfortune for Troy?

*Hecuba* Don't provoke her, Priam, but let her for once keep quiet in peace.

*Cassandra* Father, I have nothing to say. Like my brother always uses his wisdom to keep still in quiet and wait, so will I.

*Andromakhe* This however will not prevent joy from blooming forth in the whole city. Perhaps we now at last could dedicate ourselves to more important things like trade and cultivation, sowing and harvesting, work and construction.

*Priam* I hope you will be right, Andromakhe.

*Paris (breaking in)* Hector has broken through the camp of the Hellenes and burnt their supplies and tents and reached the ships!

*Priam* Slow it down, Paris. And why aren't you there yourself to lead the fighting?  
*Paris (ignores him)* What do you now have to say, you croaking witch? When the Hellenes have left the shores of Ilion we will settle with you and burn you at the stake for always having favoured Menelaos' cause in Troy!

*Cassandra* Paris, the war isn't over yet.

*Priam* Answer my question! Why don't you stand up for Hector and support him when he needs you the most?

*Paris* I have to tell Helena the fantastic news.

*Helena (appears)* No need. I am here.

*Priam* What do you think of Hector's advances, Helena?

*Helena* Like Cassandra I mean that the best way to put a victory at risk is to celebrate it in advance. I don't believe in any victory until Hector is back.

*Cassandra* He has more than a thousand ships to burn. He might have burned one.

*Paris* Shut up, Cassandra!

*Priam* Return immediately to the fighting, Paris! Hector needs you.

*Paris* Yes, father. (*leaves*)

*Priam* The best news is not that Hector threatens the ships but that Achilles suddenly has turned against his own. Thereby we have suddenly become more even and perhaps even achieved something of an advantage. And the reason for this I can only find in the quarrel of Achilles for the sake of Chryseis, the daughter of that priest of Apollo with whom you had dealings, Cassandra, and whom you gave some good advice that brought us back Chryseis. Thereby we also owe Apollo and Cassandra some thanks and not just Hector and Aeneas.

*Cassandra* Father, I never foresaw Achilles' way of action. And the risk is that he will be back.

*Priam* We are aware of this. But as long as Achilles is out of the way we must take advantage of our sudden upper hand. We must immediately send news abroad about the change of the tide of battle, Helenos, so that we could get more fighters on our side.

*Helenos* Father, I have already prepared the broadcast.

*Priam* Excellent, my son! For the rest, the least thing we can do is to stay in good reports with the gods and pray that this turn of events will not suddenly end in any setback.

## Scene 2. The Greek camp.

*Agamemnon* Remember now to be careful and not to step on his toes. We don't want him even more quarrelsome than he already is.

*Menelaos* Consider that the outcome of the entire war could depend on your diplomatic discretion.

*Diomedes* You send us to negotiate and get him back into the fight by any means while at the same time you pinion our arms behind our backs and ask us to caress him only with the furs with silk gloves. How will you have it?

*Agamemnon* Promise him anything. He may choose anyone of my daughters for his wife, and his dowry will then be the world's greatest with a city to come with it. Give him an offer that he can't refuse.

*Ulysses* And if he turns it down?

*Thersites* He will turn down whatever you offer, you fools! All he is interested in is to coddle and play with Patroclus.

*Agamemnon* He must not turn us down. Anything but not that.

*Thersites (teasing)* He will say no!

*Ulysses* We will do our best, Agamemnon, but don't rebuke us if he says no.

*Agamemnon* You have to succeed!

*Nestor* That's easy to say, Agamemnon, but you send us to persuade him only because you can't do it yourself. I can't promise either that we will succeed, but he is an idiot if he does not accept your overwhelmingly generous offers.

*Menelaos* Yes, he is.

*Agamemnon* That's good, Nestor. I trust you, Nestor, Diomedes and Ulysses, for you are the three best men we have. Go now, and good luck!

*Menelaos* Remember that the outcome of the war depends on your success!

*Agamemnon* Quiet, Menelaos.

*(Nestor, Diomedes and Ulysses leave, followed by Thersites)*

*Thersites* Achilles has turned into a woman. He lies in bed all days just drivelling with Patroclus. He is sorted out by himself and can never become a soldier again.

*Achilles (in his tent)* How you bore me, Patroclus, with your monotonous songs! Don't you have anything else to present than vain flattery and glorifications of those villains Agamemnon and Menelaos?

*Patroclus* But Achilles, the meaning of poetry is idealization.

*Achilles* I am tired of all conceited idealistic lies! Why don't you sing instead of how Agamemnon sacrificed his own daughter just to get a favourable wind to blow him across the sea to Troy?

*Patroclus* There are such different opinions about that event.

*Achilles* Yes, truth is always controversial.

*Thersites (the first one to enter of the delegation)* Achilles, you have a visit. Agamemnon still believes that you can repent from your indulgences and your wines and your buggery company and from bed back to war. He thinks you are asleep while no one believes me when I say that you are constantly busy just playing.

*Achilles* Don't tell me that Agamemnon dares come back here again!

*Thersites* No, he has sent his pimps.

*Diomedes (enters)* Isn't he lying here in bed in the middle of the afternoon just drinking with his bed partner? Whatever has become of you, Achilles?

*Achilles* If you have come here just to insult me, Diomedes, you had better leave again.

*Ulysses* Agamemnon needs you in the war, Achilles. Hector is pressing us back and could reach the ships any time. Only you can master him. Agamemnon returns

Briseis to you, whom he hasn't touched, and also makes you an offer of any of his daughters that might please you and a city of your own to be king of.

*Achilles* Agamemnon still believes he could buy and bribe me. Would Briseis be untouched after having spent weeks in the custody of Agamemnon? Hasn't he hoodlums and soldiers that do as they please behind his back? His offer is a scorn, Ulysses. Tell him that I refuse to have anything to do with such rogues as he and Menelaos.

*Nestor* Achilles, you don't seem to realize how serious the situation is. If Hector reaches the camp and sets the ships on fire, it will then be too late for you to intervene. Then you will be burnt alive like everyone else, and you will be sacrificing your own myrmidons.

*Achilles* Nestor, I never had any reason to disdain you like everybody else. On the contrary. On the day when Hector sets fire to our ships, I will perhaps reconsider my position, but Agamemnon is and remains a villain. I give a damn about him and couldn't care less. He has himself to blame if he allows Hector to burn his ships. I don't support villains. I would rather support Hector, for he is at least honourable and honest.

*Patroclus* Achilles, shouldn't you accept Agamemnon's sincere effort at a reconciliation after all?

*Achilles* Never! It was Menelaos' own fault that he lost his wife to someone who could love her better than himself. He has only himself to blame for having lost her, and Agamemnon must bear the blame for having started the war! I am not going to win it for him. Hector is a better man than he.

*Diomedes* Achilles, you are just putting yourself to shame in front of the whole army. Everybody is discussing what a wine-drinking sissy and good-for-nothing you have turned into after your longterm lazy softness in bed. After all your daily sleeping late into professional slothfulness you will hardly be able to lift a sword any more. We despise you, Achilles. Come, Ulysses and Nestor. Let's leave that disgusting creep alone with his dishonour.

*Thersites* What did I say? He said no! He gave you the finger! Agamemnon can lick his arse!

*Ulysses* Achilles, it is never too late for you to change your mind, before Hector surprises you in bed.

*Achilles* Let him find me in bed. I will welcome him, and we will have a nice time and take a cup or two together when he has burnt your ships.

*Nestor* Achilles, you have grown intolerable. Just saying.

*Achilles* Not as intolerable as Agamemnon. No one can beat him in unbearable haughtiness.

*Nestor* We have done what we could. Let's return to Agamemnon and tell him that Achilles insists on playing a coward in bed.

*(Nestor, Diomedes and Ulysses leave.)*

*Thersites* I knew it! I bet on you, Achilles! The whole army has been waging for or against that you would allow yourself to be roused. The odds were against that you would stay in bed, but you fooled them!

*Achilles* You are the only wise man in the army, Thersites, for you scorn us all. Listen to this poetical genius, Patroclus. You have much to learn from him. He idealizes no war but sees everything with his eyes open and scorns the folly of all who are part of it.

*Patroclus* But he is unsympathetic.

*Achilles* For telling the truth?

*Patroclus* What is truth?

*Achilles* Give us an example of truth, Thersites.

*Thersites* The greatest and most fatal illness in the world is called stupidity, it is incurable, and all humanity suffers from it.

*Achilles* Was that unsympathetic, Patroclus?

*Patroclus* Not exactly.

*Achilles* There you are. Let's learn from Thersites' wisdom. Entertain us, Thersites. Fools are always indispensable.

*Thersites* The last fool is the best fool, and he has the best laugh who has the last laugh, for there is no end to the ridiculousness of serious people. You can see the ridiculous and have fun at anything, if you just look at it from the outside and don't take any part in the human folly yourself.

*Achilles* There you are, Patroclus. Thersites is wise, for he is funny.

*Patroclus* It's lucky for me that you exist, Thersites, for although Achilles loves me he finds love rather boring sometimes.

*Thersites* Nothing becomes a bore more easily than love. That's why generally all ladies usually are abandoned.

*Achilles* Carry on like that, Thersites. Now tell me something funny about Agamemnon's trials and despair.

*Thersites* Alas, all his nights are sleepless, and he just wanders around in circles, wondering whether he should go home with the entire navy and give up or carry on the war continuously to more damnation, while his wife at home just curses him and betrays him.

*Achilles* That's right! Go on! What about Menelaos?

*Thersites* His horns are so long that they long since outgrew his head.

*Achilles* Good, splendid, Thersites! But tell me then, how can so decent and wise chiefs like Ulysses, Diomedes and Nestor allow themselves to be led by such incompetent harebrains, remorseless villains and sentimental dunces like Agamemnon and Menelaos?

*Thersites* There's the rub. Who can explain it? Ask Helena. But I have a persistent suspicion that Herlena actually knew what she did when she challenged the entire world by running off with a careless adventurer just to betray the most potent royal house in existence. And that challenge has caused all Greek men to catch on. That's why they have joined the madness with any kind of incompetent nincompoops, like

that bellowing stupid bull called Aias, just to accept an absurd challenge. Helena is too delicious a bait to be resisted by any man.

*Achilles* Personally I don't give a damn about women and Helena.

*Thersites* Yes, you have your mother.

*Achilles* She is at least wise. Teach us some more, Thersites! Who will win the war?

*Thersites* Troy by losing it.

*Achilles* How do you mean?

*Thersites* The war was lost by both parties from the beginning. Troy will hit the dust first but will win at length, while the disaster for Hellas will be a long term trauma. No victor will come home happy after the war.

*Achilles* Then I will rather die than come home unhappy.

*Patroclus* Does that mean that you already reconsider Agamemnon's offer?

*Achilles* Let Agamemnon sweat. I enjoy every second of his torment, that villain. Let him perish in the terror of expecting the steadily approaching defeat. I will just lie here and enjoy it. More wine, Patroclus. Thersites, keep on entertaining us.

*Thersites* Who else do you wish me to abuse?

*Achilles* Who is the vilest of all vile Hellenes?

*Thersites* Ulysses of course.

*Patroclus* He is the sliest, always survives and is the last man to give up, but I wouldn't call him vile.

*Achilles* Who is the most dangerous?

*Patroclus* Diomedes is the most aggressive one, isn't he, Thersites?

*Thersites* Everyone has good reasons to keep out of the way of Diomedes.

*Achilles* Who is the bravest?

*Thersites* Achilles of course, when he doesn't stay in bed all day to just indulge in fair boys and wine.

*Achilles* Do the Greeks really think that I lost my zest and indulge sexually in anything but slave girls?

*Patroclus* No, Achilles, they just try to provoke you back into battle, and by every right, by spreading foul dirty rumours specially intended to reach your ears.

*Achilles* I wish they could whisper bugger nonsense about Agamemnon instead.

*Thersites* He is too powerful. Unfortunately his power brings respect.

*Achilles* Who is the most stupid?

*Thersites* There you have many candidates. Is it Menelaos with his sullen helplessness? Is it Aias with all his substance in his muscles and no brains? Or is it Thersites?

*(They go on like that.)*

*Menelaos (when Ulysses and the others return)* Here is our legation back again.

*Agamemnon (rather gloomy, as they come)* Well?

*Ulysses* We are sorry, Agamemnon, but Achilles said no.

*Diomedes* He doesn't believe in your promises.

*Nestor* He refuses to listen to common sense.



*Agamemnon* Then the situation is worrisome, gentlemen. Hector is pressing on and could break through our protection wall at any moment. Strategically we are at a disadvantage. We can't risk having our ships burned. I find it a necessity to tow the ships out from the beach and make them ready for departure.

*Diomedes* Are you giving up so easily, Agamemnon?

*Ulysses* Agamemnon, with all respect, but your suggestion is extreme folly. If we pull out the ships from the beach, every man will interpret it as an obvious signal for retreat and decampment, there will be chaos and panic when everyone wants to hurry on board all at the same time, and the worst kind of defeat will be a fact: an escape in dishonour. Hellas would never be able to forgive you for that. Better then to fall fighting on the beach.

*Nestor* Ulysses is right.

*Agamemnon* The war is lost anyway. I have to carry the responsibility of new casualties every day, and we have been fighting for nine years without being able to break the deadlock. On the contrary! Today we are harder pressed than in nine years! Isn't it my duty then to pull the entire remaining army out of the war with as small losses as possible?

*Diomedes* You are speaking of an escape, Agamemnon, an escape in disgrace after nine years of hard work and sacrifice.

*Menelaos* I can't come back to Sparta without Helena, Agamemnon.

*Ulysses* Menelaos is right. It will not work, Agamemnon. We have to carry on here until we prevail or die. We have no choice.

*Nestor* Ulysses is right.

*Agamemnon* The situation does not get less serious just because it is hopeless. As you wish, gentlemen, but blame yourselves, and don't blame me afterwards. (*Aias breaks in.*)

*Aias* Are you sitting here, you dumbbells, just doting with your thumbs in your arse while Hector is raving at large!

*Nestor* What has happened?

*Aias* The Troyans have broken through the wall and are attacking the ships! They have already reached and set fire to one!

*Diomedes (rising)* What are we waiting for?

*Agamemnon* Gentlemen, our confrens is over. Death is calling us to another meeting.

*Diomedes* Don't be so melodramatic, Agamemnon. We are still alive.

*Agamemnon* Yes, to fulfill a work perhaps to our own eternal disgrace!

*(The meeting is dissolved, and everyone rushes to prepare for more fighting.)*

*Diomedes (runs quickly across to Achilles' tent, rips it open and roars: )*

Are you happy now, Miss Achilles? The Troyans have broken through the wall and started burning the ships! (*rushes immediately out again back to battle*)

*Patroclus* Achilles, this is going too far. You can't let your people the Hellenes perish for your sake!

*Achilles* Why not? They are all just worthless dunces and despicable wretches who follow Agamemnon! Let Hector burn Agamemnon's ships, and he will get what he deserves and be justly grilled on the beach!

*Thersites* Achilles, can't you see how your concubine is crying?

*Achilles* What now, Patroclus? You are weeping like a girl, like the weakest of girls running after mother and begging to be taken up in her arms, so that the mother is interrupted in whatever she is doing.

*Patroclus* If you refuse to fight yourself, Achilles, I must ask to replace you in battle.

*Achilles* Do as you wish.

*Thersites* Patroclus could actually be efficient. You are cousins and like each other. If Patroclus may don your armour, Achilles, the Troyans could believe that it is you, and then they will immediately disperse in chaotic flight.

*Patroclus* It's worth a try, Achilles. Let me do what I can now, since you no longer dare.

*Achilles* You sound more and more like Diomedes. Have I then made myself that despicable? Very well, Patroclus, lend my weapons and my armour and do what you can to cleanse our ships from Troyans, but come back here afterwards. If the Troyans flee, you must not pursue them.

*Patroclus (eager at once)* I will fight as well as you in your stead, Achilles! The Troyans will see!

*Thersites* Perhaps I said too much.

*Achilles* Someone like you can never say too much, Thersites. It will be a nice treat, and at best the Troyans will see the devil.

*Thersites* And at worst?

*Patroclus* I can't wait! I am off! (*leaves*)

*Achilles* Nothing can resist Patroclus when he may use my outfit. It will be a significant change of the war, which could be very appropriate now. And best of all: Agamemnon will not need to thank me.

*Thersites* Also the Hellenes will believe Patroclus to be you.

*Achilles* Let them believe so. They are used anyway at deceiving themselves.

*Aias (dropping in brutally)* Are you still sitting here, you milksops? Ulysses is wounded and has had to withdraw from the fighting.

*Achilles* Let him be wounded. He is ordinarily only used to wounding others. Let him bleed to death with his slyness, and we will be rid of him.

*Aias* Where is Patroclus?

*Thersites* He intends to fight for you for a change. He got tired of Achilles beating him in bed.

*Aias* While you just stay there in bed, you bed wetter!

*Achilles* If you are bed-ridden you are always innocent. No one can say that about anyone of you.

*Aias* May you stifle in your self-satisfaction, you bottle-brush! (*leaves*)

*Achilles* Why is everyone so angry with me today? Is there any reason?

*Thersites* Perhaps because you drink too much.

*Achilles* No, I drink too little. You can never drink too much.

*Diomedes (breaking in)* Agamemnon is wounded and has been forced to leave the field, while you just make of yourself the most abominable creep of Hellas by doing nothing, you, the only one who could have done something about it, you godforsaken traitor!

*Achilles* Calm down, Diomedes. Help is on its way. I sent Patroclus to cheer you up.

*Diomedes* What can a shadow do without its owner?

*Achilles* He is fighting in my armour.

*Diomedes* So that the Trojans will believe it is you?

*Achilles* Yes, he looks like me in other ways also.

*Diomedes* You are the one who is needed, Achilles, not a dummy. (*leaves*)

*Achilles* Patroclus a dummy? Isn't that a bit thick, Thersites?

*Thersites* A dummy *could* be better than nothing.

*Achilles* But Patroclus is still trained for fighting, and I trained him myself.

*Thersites* Then we'll just hope that he comes back alive.

*Achilles* What do you mean?

*Thersites* Here is the shadow of another's dummy.

*Menelaos (enters)* We are almost done for, Achilles, and it is all your fault. Diomedes has been forced to withdraw from fighting after having been wounded.

*Achilles* You are then falling like tin soldiers. Why are you alone still standing? Have you gone into hiding as usual?

*Menelaos* Achilles, everyone is fighting to the utmost of his powers, and you just scorn us. It's not appropriate for one who once was the foremost warrior of Hellas.

*Achilles* I only scorn Agamemnon and everyone who follows him.

*Menelaos* That's all Hellas except you.

*Achilles* Have you come here only to quarrel?

*Menelaos* Yes, with you.

*Achilles* Isn't my double visible there at the head of my myrmidons?

*Menelaos* Do you mean Patroclus?

*Achilles* Yes.

*Menelaos* I forgot to tell you. He drove the Trojans away from the ships and chased them all the way back to Troy, but there he was speared in the belly by Hector.

*Achilles (rushing up)* What are you saying??!!

*Menelaos* I tell you that he is dead, and you were the one who sent him to battle because you didn't want to go yourself.

*Achilles* Menelaos! You are lying!

*Menelaos* Why would I lie? Have I ever lied before?

*Achilles* Menelaos! Tell me it isn't true!

*Thersites* Why do you ask him to lie?

*Menelaos* I can't say that it isn't true since it is true, Achilles. I never lie.

*Achilles* Menelaos! You scoundrel!

*Thersites* Take it easy, Achilles. He is not the one who has murdered him. He tells you it is you, and he never lies.

*Achilles* This must not be true!

*Menelaos* It's impossible to talk sense with him. Take care of him, Thersites. They will soon bring Patroclus' corpse, and Patroclus can no longer serve his master. Maybe you could substitute him in the lack of others. (*is about to leave when Nestor enters with others carrying the body of Patroclus*)

*Nestor* Pull yourself together, Achilles. I know that Menelaos fortunately got here before me with the news. At least we could save his body.

*Achilles* Patroclus! I told you not to pursue the Trojans!

*Menelaos* He thought he could take Troy alone when the Trojans ran away for him like scattered hens.

*Nestor* Menelaos succeeded in saving the body, but he couldn't stop the murderer from taking the armour.

*Achilles* That armour was *mine*! Who is wearing it now?

*Menelaos* Hector.

*Achilles* That mean murderer! And he dares to dress in my finest outfit after having taken the life of my best and only friend!

*Menelaos* We hope you will now resume fighting.

*Achilles* Who could stop me? Hector least of all!

*Nestor* Of course all of Agamemnon's offers are still valid.

*Achilles* I don't want his whores or bastard daughters or his money! He could stick all his powers and riches up his arse! I don't despise him less for Patroclus being dead. My Patroclus! Lay him there on the bed. He will have a funeral that the gods themselves shall envy him! I will only live to avenge his death, and when it is done, I'll gladly follow him into the shadows. We were inseparable as long as we lived, and death is the last thing that could separate us!

*Menelaos* Don't think of death now, Achilles. We have a war to manage.

*Achilles* I don't give a damn about your war! For my part you are welcome to lose and get all your ships burned! What business do we Hellenes have here with Troy? That you can bring yourself, Menelaos, to make so much trouble for the sake of one wanton woman! I would have scrapped her at once and taken another and be satisfied with publishing Helena's bad reputation abroad to the whole world for a revenge.

*Menelaos* She was not only my wife but also Agamemnon's sister-in-law.

*Achilles* Exactly! And therefore he started the war just to get Troy! That you didn't see him through from the beginning!

*Menelaos* He is my brother.

*Achilles* And Patroclus was my cousin but dearer to me than a brother, and your Trojan war has killed him!

*Nestor* Don't forget, Achilles, that he only went into it because you wouldn't yourself help your countrymen.

*Achilles* Yes, yes, I know, everything is my own fault. Go now, you bloody panders, and let me grieve alone. You too, Thersites, for I can't laugh at you any more.

*Thersites* You are not much fun yourself any more either.

*Achilles* Don't remind me! Get lost, all of you!

*(All retire respectfully.)*

*Achilles* Alas, my only dear fellow being, my second and better ego, how could I lose you and send you to death before me? You will now bathe in my tears until the body of your beautiful youth is dissolved in the cascades of my grief! Alas, so cold and lifeless, like a shell! Still my love and our friendship live a life of its own in eternity, for we were born to be there together in immortality.

*Patroclus (unmoving)* I will wait for you, cousin. On the other side of life we are free to start again from the beginning.

*Achilles* You tempt me with paradise itself and lovelier fruits than can be found here on earth! Let me hurry! Let me just do my duty and quickly finish the process with Hector, beloved Patroclus, and then I will come! I rush! All I need is an armour, new weapons and a helmet to strike fear in the world with, and I am ready for the cruellest possible revenge! But let me grieve first and cry out my heart, for as long as sorrow is brimming over the measures of endurance, I have no capacity left but to just let it flow. *(lies down beside Patroclus, embraces him and cries bitterly.)*

### Scene 3.

*Hector* Everything is wrong, everything went wrong from the beginning, and no one has been able to do anything about it, least of all myself, who most clearly discerned the error starting the landslide. They imprisoned Cassandra for having expressed the obvious, and I had to use force to liberate her. That is actually my only commendable feat in the Trojan war. For the rest I only killed a lot of Hellenes, like Hellenes have kept on killing Trojans for nothing and without any results. The only one who is satisfied is the war god Ares, who only lives on as many deaths of good men as possible and in as bloody a manner as possible, and perhaps Helena, who might get some pleasure out of seeing so many men fighting for her and dying for her sake.

Of course I have to defend Troy. I have no choice. With or without right, the Hellenes are here to smother Troy, and I must prevent that as far as possible. Still I am just a mortal human being and limited as such, I haven't more than managed to light a hope of a glimpse of a victory for the Trojans by making my way all the way down to the ships and set fire to a few of them, but Aias beat us back, and when Patroclus appeared in Achilles' armour all Trojans ran away in a panic for the sake of Achilles' armour. Only by that Achilles is back in the fighting with a vengeance, and he will kill me, for he uses tricks that I refuse to avail myself of in honest fighting. He has his myrmidons while I stand alone against his butchers, against the

war and against all meaningless madness in the world which always controlled it. May I perish for my ideal, my Troy, my beloved family and everything in life that I found worth living for, but Achilles and his myrmidons shall find that I will never give up without a fair fight, and that the freedom of our people never can be vanquished by honest means.

Scene 4. Troy.

*Priam* Are all Trojans inside?

*Helenos* I think so, father.

*Priam* It is as if the war god himself had taken charge of Achilles. Two of my sons killed by him on the same day! It is too much.

*Helena* There you are, Paris! Thank heavens! We feared that someone might have been left outside the gate.

*Paris (enters, panting and worn out)* I think I was the last one. Achilles doesn't spare anyone.

*Priam* Yes, I know. It's most unusual. It is an unwritten law, that who begs for mercy shall have mercy. But Achilles goes on a killing spree consistently without distinction and would not spare a father's last living son, no matter how obsequiously he would pray for his life.

*Hecuba* Where is Hector?

*Priam* Hasn't he come back with the others?

*Helenos* I haven't seen him.

*Paris* I thought he was inside long before me, for Achilles keeps bellowing his name in such appalling obvious bloodthirst that could make all hairs stand on end on anyone.

*(enter Cassandra)*

*Helenos* Cassandra, have you seen Hector?

*Cassandra* No one has seen him. Where is he?

*Priam* Alas, the day started with the fall of Polydorus, and then Achilles also murdered my son Lychaon in cold blood, although he surrendered and pleaded for his life. Even Troilus he has killed, all my youngest and fairest sons! If also Hector's hour now is struck, I will not be able to endure life any more.

*Hecuba* Be calm, Priam. Hector can always manage on his own.

*Priam* Who can manage against Achilles?

*Helenos* There he is! I can see him! He must have remained outside the gate of his own accord just to face Achilles.

*Priam* That fool! He stands no chance!

*Cassandra* He would rather stubbornly and bravely keep his stand and fight until death than try to escape for protection.

*Paris* It will not be a fair fight. Achilles has a spear but Hector is without.

*Helenos* How is it possible?

*Paris* Hector must have thrown it, missed and lost it.

*Deiphobos* I have several times seen Achilles throwing his, but there was always someone at hand who could return it to him.

*Helenos* While no one is helping Hector.

*Priam* Alas, my son, my son, why did you remain outside the wall!

*Cassandra* Because he is Hector.

*Paris* Hector only has his sword against Achilles' sharpened spear.

*Helenos* If Hector attacks he has no chance.

*Deiphobos* Both are worn out and panting after having fought all day.

*Paris* They must have chased each other around the city. That's why we haven't seen them.

*Priam (calling)* Come inside the city, Hector, my son, I pray you, for the sake of all the sons and women of Troy! Avoid meeting the terrible Achilles, who just kills everything wherever he passes without sparing neither innocence nor nobility!

*Cassandra* Hector is not the one to run away, father. He knows that Achilles would not spare him even if we offered Helena back and peace and half of all the Trojan riches. Achilles is a blind murderer on his killing spree, and Hector has chosen to confront him.

*Paris* If only I could reach Achilles from here with my bow! But he is moving too fast and out of range.

*Helenos (calling)* Hector, we need your life! Achilles does not need it!

*Deiphobos* Don't risk your life for such a vile brute as Achilles!

*Cassandra* Achilles has killed two of his brothers today, and Hector has killed his dearest cousin. They must reach a settlement, and nothing can stop them.

*Paris* Now Hector is attacking.

*Hecuba* No, my son, no!

*Hector (from below)* From where did you get your spear, Achilles? Didn't you throw it and miss just like me?

*Achilles* What does it matter? The point is that you shall die!

*Hector* You already killed two of my brothers today. The second pleaded for his life and surrendered at your mercy. Still you butchered him. Isn't two enough? Do you have to bereave my father one more son?

*Achilles* Yes, I have to, for that son is a murderer!

*Hector* What soldier is not a murderer?

*Achilles* Patroclus was my closest cousin and only friend!

*Hector* And a murderer like you.

*Achilles* Stop arguing and fight!

*Hector* You are war mad.

*Achilles* Who can avoid being it when he sees the murderer of his best friend?

*Hector* Neither you nor I wanted this war, Achilles. My father wanted it least of all. You and your Hellenes have just been enticed into an action of plunder by Agamemnon.

*Achilles* Shut up!

*Hector* Not as long as I live.

*Achilles* Die then, enervating chatterbox!

*Hector* I did not throw the first spear into Patroclus. He made war in your outfit, and everyone thought it was you. I only ended his misery. He would have died anyway. You even got his body back. If you kill me, I ask you not to have my body desecrated but restored to my own.

*Achilles* Your body will be thrown to the dogs for them to gnaw at and pee on under the burial mound of Patroclus! You will never get away!

*Hector* You are burning of fanatic fever as if you were facing death yourself.

*Achilles* I will gladly embrace it, if only you die first!

*Hector* You have been fooled by Agamemnon and will never see the fall of Troy!

*Achilles* Shut up!

*Hector* Thus are the best men of the world sacrificed by some idiotic power maniacs, who only think of themselves and only live to seduce as many innocents as possible for the sake of their own perdition. We have only defended our city, our homes and our families, Achilles, but you Hellenes have only been lured out to kill for nothing.

*Achilles* Shut up!

*Hector* Never in eternity.

*Achilles* Yes, now and forever! (*pierces him with his spear*)

*Helenos* (*from above on the wall*) Achilles has killed him.

*Priam* Alas, my best son! He only kills my best sons!

*Helenos* And that's not enough. Now all the hoodlums and bloodhounds of Achilles join the feast of vultures, sticking their spears in the body.

*Paris* But what is Achilles doing?

*Helenos* He undresses the body and pierces Hector's heel sinews to enter a rope through them. He is apparently up to desecrating the body with a vengeance.

*Paris* The sadistic violator if the dead is obviously going to drag the corpse after his chariot. He will gain no honour by that.

*Helenos* Indeed.

*Hecuba* My son! My son! What are they doing with him?

*Priam* My dearest, there is nothing we can do about their doing everything possible to humiliate him in our sight.

*Cassandra* Hector lives! He can never die! He is more immortal than Achilles!

*Andromakhe* (*enters*) I hear upset wails which paralyze my blood into ice. Is the worst a fact?

*Hecuba* The unendurable is a fact, my daughter, and we must live with it as an eternal curse of our lives, which will be our punishment for surviving this.

*Andromakhe* Hector! I warned you! We all warned you!

*Cassandra* I knew that he wouldn't come back.

*Paris* Now Achilles drives his chariot around all the city with the corpse dragged behind it just to demonstrate to Troy the desecration of Hector in public.

*Helenos* Was it the Hellenes who called us barbarians?



*Hecuba* I can't stand it. (*retires*)

*Priam* To thus violate the body of a murdered man of honour in the eyes of his mother – why does it have to happen to us here in Troy, and why Hector?

*Helenos* Father, you had better go down. This is not an edifying spectacle.

*Andromakhe* Thus am I then a widow and the most exposed widow in the world, for my husband was the best man in the world.

*Helena (coming up)* I heard that Hector had been murdered.

*Paris* Helena, this is no show for ladies.

*Helena* I understand. Hector always treated me with politeness in contrast to all other Troyans. He was even more courteous than you, Paris. Only Priam was always equally warm, polite and respectful towards me, but Hector was the warmest and most polite. See now what the Hellenes are doing with him. What Trojan can now question that I escaped and sought protection from such Hellenes?

*Priam* I never did, Helena. You have become more our daughter than anyone else's.

*Helena* Still I always felt guilty of the destiny and ordeal of Troy, since they could have been eliminated if I hadn't existed.

*Priam* It's the Hellenes who make trouble for your sake. We only defend you.

*Andromakhe* Helena, be my sister and closer as a sister than any natural one, for destiny binds us together by harder ties than any tragedy. Your Hector was my husband, and by him we have become sisters for eternity. (*embraces her. They remain in each other's arms.*)

*Helenos* I beg you, father, go down with all the women, for Achilles obviously intends to circle the city with his tug for several rounds.

*Cassandra* Achilles is dead. He has ratified his own death sentence in the eternal book of the dead.

*Helenos* He has nothing to live for when he behaves like that.

*Paris* That's for certain. He must have had some stroke of madness.

*Cassandra* He suffers from war psychosis. He can never become normal again.

*Priamos* I will speak some sense into him.

*Helenos* It will not work, father.

*Priam* Don't worry, my son. I am not mad yet. I am sure I will come to terms with Achilles. An old man like me must be excused. It will work out well.

*Helenos* Take him down, Cassandra. He has seen too much.

*Cassandra* Come, father. You need some rest.

*Priam* I will not sleep nor eat until I have been given leave to bury my best son's body. (*Cassandra goes down with him.*)

*Paris* What do you think about father, Helenos?

*Helenos* He will recover. He is just old but can still take a great deal.

*Paris* But can he still take anything?

*Helenos* You can never know where the limit of suffering is until it has been transgressed, Paris. Father's limit of endurance has consistently only been stretched further on beyond absurdity. It will more likely be a miracle if it doesn't finally break.

*Paris* My arrows long for Achilles' blood.  
*Helenos* Not just your arrows, Paris. The whole world is crying for his blood after his outrageous murder of the best one of us all.  
*Paris* I wouldn't like to be in Achilles' armour in these days.  
*Helenos* I don't think anyone would and least of all Achilles himself.

Scene 4. Achilles' camp.

*Achilles* I have done everything to offend and desecrate my enemy, but still I am not satisfied. What more can I do for you, Patroclus? Can I still make my vengeance better after having driven around with Hector's mangled body for twelve days in the view of all Trojans? Still it feels as if I had just quenched a desert thirst by only one drop and thereby only made the thirst more burning. Patroclus is dead, as a revenge for his death also Hector is dead, but the result of my revenge on Hector is just that I feel more dead than either of them. – Yes, what is it?

*Servant* Someone is looking for you, master.

*Achilles* Who?

*Servant* Some old man.

*Achilles* Then he wishes me no harm. Then he is innocent. Show him in.

*Priam* (*enters in humility with a beggar's stick, falls on his knees for Achilles, embraces his knees and cries*)

*Achilles* What kind of a pathetic scene is this, old man?

*Priam* I beg of you my son's body.

*Achilles* Great heavens! You are king Priam himself!

*Priam* I come unnoticed incognito. I have stolen away from my royal castle, by court and my guards and found all my way here on my own.

*Achilles* Does no one know that you are here?

*Priam* No, no one knows that I am here.

*Achilles* It's a terrible risk you are taking, poor king.

*Priam* What could you not risk for your best and most beloved son, although he is already dead but there still is hope for a decent funeral?

*Achilles* If Agamemnon learns that you are here...

*Priam* He will not know that I am here. I will go back immediately if only you grant me my prayer to be allowed to bury my son.

*Achilles* Arise, poor king. This pathetically humble position of yours in the dust is not worthy of you. I am the one who should bend my knees to you.

*Priam* I had fifty sons, nineteen with my queen. Almost all of them have perished in this war which no one wanted, but as long as there was Hector there was still hope of some honest outcome of the war. That hope is no longer, but my last remaining hope is to at least be able to bury him. What satisfaction can you get out of a lifeless body? Hasn't he started to smell already? Still you continue every day to

expose it in its total humiliation and irrerecognizability just because it once was Hector. Wouldn't it be better then to allow his own to lay it at rest?

*Achilles* Old king, I thought I could have revenge, but that revenge has only increased my desire for it and given me an intolerable abyssal emptiness. Now you make me ashamed. Yes, king Priam, you have won, and I admit defeat. This war has given me nothing, and least of all I got anything out of my revenge. I will make sure that you will get what is left of your son. Forgive me, that I have gone too far.

*Priam* A war goes too far the moment it breaks out. Then nothing can stop it any more. There's the problem complex of war. No one wants it, and no one can stop it. It is worse than a natural catastrophe, for a natural catastrophe is at least natural.

*Achilles* Stay with me for the night, old king. You will have your own bed in a room of your own. But before that I wish you to share my supper with me.

*Priam* I haven't slept or eaten since Hector died.

*Achilles* The more reason then to do so now, when you get him back.

*Priam* I thank you, Achilles. I knew for certain that I could speak with you.

*Achilles* You see, poor old king, that I can cry like everybody else. Even I am only human no matter how divine I sometimes am considered. Even I am mortal, and that is nowadays my only comfort.

*Priam* That's the final comfort for us all.

*Achilles* Imagine that the two of us from such different worlds and of such a different age could have so much in common.

*Priam* We all share the same timelessness to some degree. At length that's the only dimension of any validity, consistence and importance. I think we both share it to a higher degree than many others.

*Achilles* I am glad you bothered to come here, king Priam.

*Priam* Something told me that it would not be in vain.

*Achilles* Nothing is ever in vain, as long as it is good. It is only war and violence and death and revenge that you fight for in vain, which all the world does to no good, just to keep the eternal chain reaction going of only the grinding machinery of evil, which reduces everything human to tragedy...

*Priam* Still Menelaos and Agamemnon were right in claiming, that Paris had no right to abduct Helena.

*Achilles* It wasn't their fault. It was Helena herself who wanted it. Who can rule or decide for a woman?

*Priam* I am sorry and regret that Hector put an end to your Patroclus.

*Achilles* He was not alone. Everybody believed Patroclus to be myself. Patroclus enjoyed playing that role and allowed it to grow over his head. I had admonished him not to pursue you. They were a number who finally forced him down on his knees. Your Hector just gave him the final thrust.

*Priam* I am sorry.

*Achilles* Old man, we are both rather pitiable. Now we will have a good dinner with good wine and thereafter a night of better dreams than we perhaps so far never

could dream of. Can you accept your son's murderer's most sincerely benevolent hospitality?

*Priam* I can accept anything, if only I may bring my son's body home with me.

*Achilles* I envy your Hector that he had such a good father.

*Priam* I had the best son in the world. The problem is that he is gone while I am still alive. It's unfair.

*Achilles* On the other side of life, Priam, we will all be free to start again from a new beginning.

*Priam* We have that to look forward to if nothing else.

*Achilles* That's how I feel it also.

*Priam* We meet in the sign of death to perhaps both take our next step to the grave.

*Achilles* I have nothing else to look forward to.

*Priam* I just want to bury Hector first.

*Achilles* How long time do you need?

*Priam* Twelve days.

*Achilles* Good. I will restrain Agamemnon and his war during these days of mourning. Then we will carry on the war as usual.

*Priam* That's fair. Thank you, Achilles.

*Achilles* It is I, king Priam, who am to thank you for coming. Now at last I can have peace and turn down my revenge.

*Priam* If only the war was over! But I fear we haven't seen the worst of it yet.

*Achilles* Priam, the worst is always remaining. All tragedies so far are no more than just a beginning.

*Priam* You start more and more to sound like myself.

*Achilles* We understand each other.

*(Achilles takes care of Priam and leads him gently to dinner with his arms around the old man's shoulders.)*

#### Act IV scene 1.

*Andromakhe* The grief is total, and nothing can alleviate it, for Hector is butchered and desecrated beyond all inhuman unreason.

*Chorus* Fallen is Troy, for Hector alone carried all the best of Troy. Never can Troy rise again from the fall, for we are bereft of all courage and have lost our morals, for Paris can only cowardly defend Troy as a sniper behind the walls, and Aeneas has never entered a close fight without escaping.

*Andromakhe* Cry your hearts out of blood, o women of Troy, for now there is only perdition left for us by the supreme humiliation through rape or slavery.

*Chorus* We fear and cry with you Andromakhe, for there is no woman here in Troy who can see any salvation out of the hand of the injustice of destiny by the tyranny of Agamemnon and the hopeless recklessness and inhumanity of his soldiers.

*Andromakhe* We can only complain, for that is our last human right in life, so let's complain and loud to the endlessness of eternity so that our cries of bitter lamentations never fall silent in the march of history.

*Chorus* What is history but an uncontrolled bolting machinery of hell, which no one can stop but which all must fall victims to?

*Andromakhe* And the men are running it or claim to be leading it, such men that started the infernal endlessness of sufferings of the Trojan war and murdered my Hector, such as the butcher Achilles and his hoodlums and slaves the myrmidons, who are nought but brainwashed killing machines.

*Chorus* Not only the myrmidons, but all soldiers who blindly march in columns and obey orders are brainwashed murder machines who have been robbed of their souls and accepted it.

*Andromakhe* And therefore they are only good for being butchered since how to butcher is all they know.

*Priam (to Hecuba)* My queen, at least we managed to get back our son's body.

*Hecuba* Do you think that could comfort me? His corpse is irre recognizable, inhumanly mangled to shreds, worse desecrated than an unburied dog left to rats and carrion eaters to gnaw at and glut in. The desecration of Hector is far worse than his foul death. My life is finished, for all the best of my life was Hector, and now only all the worst remains.

*Priam* Your inconsolability is the same for all Troy, and I fear that no more Trojan could ever rise from this overwhelming fall down the bog of sorrow to its very bottom, where we are stuck as overburdened by the loss of the only one who was man and strong enough to stand up against the outrage of Hellas.

*Cassandra* He lives.

*Priam* Cassandra, now it's more inappropriate than ever that you present inconsiderate blunders.

*Cassandra* Hector lives, for he cannot die.

*Paris* She goes from madness to higher insanity and doesn't notice herself how she just exacerbates the desperate situation of our city. In her mental darkness she does not see that Troy is screaming and bleeding to death but only keeps spreading salt in the wounds of our heart.

*Helenos* Do you then wish to improve things by repeating the inhuman treatment of your sister?

*Paris* Yes, that would be my honour and joy, for now there is no Hector any more to liberate her.

*Hecuba* Son, it's you yourself who are consistently emptying barrels of salt into our wounds of outrageous pain after Hector, by insisting on the acceleration of your criminal inhumanity, just because Hector isn't there any more to check your recklessness.

*Paris* I maintain that Cassandra is our first security risk and that she always was.

*Priam* Son, your mother is right. You are of no use at all for us in the city but only worsen our sufferings and situation. Make yourself useful then at least and do

your duty as a sniper and shoot your brother's murderer then at last! That oughtn't be asking too much.

*Paris* Father, I will not rest on my bow until Hector's murderer and violater is dead.

*Priam* That's Hector's brother talking. Do what you promised, and perhaps our city may breathe a little while more.

*Andromakhe* But we must never cease our righteous lifelong complaint aimed at the gods who could allow a war like this that harvests most victims among the most innocent and best.

*Chorus* We shall wail with you, Andromakhe, until the twilight of the gods at the end of time, for as long as there are humans, eternal protests will be raised against all inhuman divine injustice without ever being able to be silenced.

*Andromakhe* Thank you, sisters, for your support, for we have a task ahead of us which is more difficult than any toil of Sisyphus, since our complaint and protest never must be quiet.

*Chorus* Yes, it is a work of eternity which will cry louder than all the screams of hell forever, for if anyone tolerates injustice he makes himself an accomplice of it and becomes as criminal as the perpetrator of injustice.

*Hector (aside)* Cassandra! Psst!

*Cassandra* Hector!

*Hector* Only you can see me. In vain I tried to wake up all the sleepers of our family.

*Cassandra* I knew that you were alive.

*Hector* It's worse than that. I live although I am dead.

*Cassandra* That's usually the case with immortal spirits.

*Hector* But there is nothing I can do. I can only appear to such as you. I am without communications in limbo and am pending in a nothingness of powerless desorientation and total confusion.

*Cassandra* Just take it easy, Hector, and stick to me.

*Hector* Finally someone who understands me! Then I will stay here until further and keep watching what will happen to you. Who knows if I might not do something even from the other side of death.

*Cassandra* Stay on, brother, and don't let us down, but let us face the final crisis together. It was good luck that you didn't appear while Paris was here. Then he would have thought himself in possession of evidence for my mental disease.

*Hector* I deliberately waited until he was out of the way. I never want to see him again. He alone is guilty of all the tragedies of this war, for without him Helena would never have entered the idea of coming to Troy.

*Cassandra* So you acquit her?

*Hector* She is only a woman.

*Cassandra* Alas, brother, your noble forbearance turns your heart as warm still as when you lived, although you are dead. (*tries to embrace him*)

*Hector* Don't touch me, for it will not work. Don't deceive yourself, Cassandra. I belong in another dimension, and we can associate through separate dimensions, since our love between brother and sister has bridged the impossible difference.

*Cassandra* You do look well and sound though without a trace of your desecration.

*Hector* I feel better than I ever did while I lived, for I am free now from all my human duties and limitations. Let's maintain our close contact now when we have found it and never let it go.

*Cassandra* Of course, brother. I always knew you couldn't die.

*Hector* Keep in touch! (*vanishes*)

*Cassandra* Thus the tale goes on into eternity regardless of the fall of Troy or the vain war of the Hellenes. The contact is carried on out into the endless timelessness to never be broken, and in view of this, suddenly all wars and catastrophes become so utterly futile and ignominious. Yes, brother, I will always be here to lead your spirit on by Apollo's fortune, and not only you will be welcome with me when you are gone, but all the victims of this war will live forever in my soul, and I will always keep in touch with all of you. It doesn't matter if you die, for you shall all survive the extreme efforts of the Trojan war to make you surrender to its vanity. Thereby the victory will be forever of all its victims, while those responsible never will be released from being constantly accused and brought to trial at the hardest and most implacable of all courts which is eternity.

## Scene 2.

*Agamemnon* We can't let him go on. Paris is too dangerous.

*Ulysses* Who can stop him? Who can keep a warrior out of war?

*Menelaos* He is war mad. He just keeps taking worse risks all the time, as if he considered risking his life a sport.

*Diomedes* Troy hasn't fallen yet. Who can help us take Troy any better than Achilles?

*Agamemnon* That's precisely why we need him. He must not fight any more at the walls!

*Diomedes* Be reasonable then, Agamemnon. If we keep him away from the fighting, the Trojans will drive us back down to the ships again, and if we let Achilles fight he must drive the Trojans back behind the walls. There's our deadlock.

*Ulysses* Or are you suggesting, Agamemnon, that we can afford losing anyone except Achilles?

*Agamemnon* Nestor, you say nothing. What is your opinion, who are the wisest of us?

*Nestor* We can't hold Achilles back. To fight is all he knows and wants. After Patroclus' death he has nothing left to live for, so it's just to let him go on according to his own wish to continue racing against his own death.

*Agamemnon* Paris has grown too skilful with his bow! No one dares to expose himself to him any more, except Achilles, who foolhardily does so on purpose.

*Achilles (enters)* And what Hellene or Trojan could possibly stop me?

*Ulysses* That's what we are trying to convince our lords Agamemnon and Menelaos here, Achilles, that no one can stop you.

*Achilles* Haven't you found out any invidious trick yet, Ulysses, by which we could vanquish the city?

*Ulysses* Don't you think all Hellenic brain trusts are working on it at the highest gear?

*Achilles* How do you think you could ever get the city as long as you don't take it, if I would not help you?

*Agamemnon* We are grateful for your help, Achilles, but we don't want to lose you.

*Achilles* Your concern touches me and brings me to tears, Agamemnon. What are your soldiers for if not for you to sacrifice in battle?

*Menelaos* But you are the best one we have.

*Achilles* And for that reason I would not fight? Your logic transcends itself, Menelaos.

*Diomedes* Let Achilles fight if he wants to. He could actually take the city.

*Agamemnon* Why hasn't he done it so far then? He got his Briseis, his gold and whatever daughter of mine that could please him, and yet we are still in the god damn deadlock now since ten years!

*Diomedes* You make it sound as if Achilles was to blame for it, Agamemnon.

*Achilles* Will it get better if you recall me from fighting? Should I let the Trojans set fire to your ships again? Is that what you wish? I shall be delighted! But let me then at least die first – for you, Agamemnon, which might make you happy.

*Ulysses* We can stop the rivers by dams and spite nature, but we cannot stop Achilles.

*Agamemnon* Why do we always have to quarrel, Achilles? Is it your fault or mine?

*Achilles* You are the one who is responsible for the entire situation, Agamemnon. That's why everyone has every right to quarrel with you. (*leaves*)

*Menelaos* Now he is mad with anger again driving the Trojans up to the walls.

*Agamemnon* That's all Paris is waiting for.

*Menelaos* All Troy has reasons for revenge on Achilles, there is not one Trojan who is not obsessed with revenge thirst, while Achilles gleefully exposes himself to all Troy just because he is Achilles.

*Ulysses* A glorious exhibition of hubris.

*Diomedes* Achilles thinks he is invulnerable, and perhaps he is.

*Agamemnon* Every victor believes that until he is defeated.

*Menelaos* Achilles is the most accomplished of all warriors, every opponent he ever met in battle he has efficiently killed by his swiftness, but that does not make him invulnerable. On the contrary he only thereby gets more exposed to attacks from behind and by arrows, especially if he imagines he is invulnerable. That's why Agamemnon and I wished to protect him against his own carelessness.

*Ulysses* Achilles and caution are incompatible as opposites.

*Diomedes* But on the other hand, of what help was all Hector's caution when it came to blows? It's a strategic axiom that attack is the best defense.

*Ulysses* Take cover now, for here is Thersites.



*Agamemnon* The only one among us all who deserved to fall and almost the only one who didn't.

*Ulysses* What's up, Thersites? How is Achilles doing in the fighting? Has he chased all Trojans back into Troy again?

*Thersites* You can't imagine how the fighting goes.

*Ulysses* That's why we ask, stupid.

*Thersites* Incorrigible Ulysses, sometimes the most stupid of all, who always instead of advice brings the opposite.

*Ulysses* Save your compliments, Thersites. We know them by heart. What about the fighting?

*Thersites* You can't guess what is going on.

*Diomedes* Thersites, if you only came here to provoke us you came in vain, for that is already settled. Achilles just left from here after once more having shattered all the moral base of Agamemnon.

*Thersites* Has he ever had any?

*Ulysses* Good question, Thersites, but that's no answer to our question!

*Diomedes (pulls his sword)* Shall I at last cut him short once and for all?

*Menelaos* Sheathe your sword, Diomedes, for some better use. Thersites is Thersites and can't help it. He is like that. Your sword is needed for the Trojans, not for incompetent bastards and parasites in our own garbage.

*Thersites* You flatter me as usual, Menelaos.

*Menelaos* Is anything else possible?

*Nestor* Thersites, why did you come here?

*Thersites* To provoke you, as Diomedes said.

*Nestor* Why?

*Ulysses* Something has happened over there on the field, and he doesn't want to tell what it is.

*Thersites* Who needs to tell you anything, Ulysses, who knows everything in advance?

*Diomedes* You are just playing around with us, Thersites.

*Thersites* That's intended.

*Agamemnon* Don't mind him. He is just Achilles' discarded fool, and his tragedy is that nobody is laughing at him any more.

*Thersites* Achilles least of all.

*Ulysses (reacts)* Has Paris hit him?

*Thersites* I am sorry, gentlemen, particularly for you, Agamemnon, that Achilles no longer will quarrel with you. You will have to do with me.

*Diomedes* What has happened?

*Thersites* He challenged Paris from in front of the wall. What do you think Paris did then?

*Ulysses* Gave an answer.

*Thersites* Yes, since Paris is as stupid as Achilles, equally irascible, equally implacable, equally proud and presumptuous, so Paris answered but more musically and eloquently, as he sounded a string.

*Diomedes* Did he hit Achilles?

*Thersites* Yes, straight in his heel.

*Agamemnon* Is Achilles fallen?

*Thersites* When he couldn't rise any more from his fall, everybody went at him with arrows and spears, lances and swords. I regret, gentlemen, but Achilles can't insult you any more.

*Agamemnon* Achilles dead?

*Menelaos* What about his corpse? His armour?

*Thersites* You can take it easy, gentlemen. The Trojans left him alone when content with having killed him. They are no desecrators like Achilles.

*Diomedes (upset)* Achilles is fallen! And we haven't taken Troy yet!

*Ulysses* It's not Achilles' fault.

*Diomedes* Your sarcasm are out of place now, Ulysses. As long as Achilles lived we at least had the initiative. What do we have now except the vanity and emptiness of ten years of failures? (*leaves in anger*)

*Menelaos* Now we are in emergency for advice, Ulysses. What do we do now?

*Ulysses (shrugs his shoulders)* Bury Achilles.

*Agamemnon* And what then, Ulysses? We can't postpone the fall of Troy any longer. Suddenly we are in a desperate situation.

*Ulysses* Let us bury Achilles first, Agamemnon. Let's take one day at a time. Shouldn't we, Nestor?

*Nestor* Ulysses is right as always. There is not much more we can do.

*Agamemnon* Everything goes against me. Achilles falls just when I tried everything just to avoid that. My great war enterprise with all its ambitions constantly keeps turning against itself by all its adverse results.

*Ulysses* We still have Aias.

*Menelaos* We need more than Aias, Ulysses.

*Ulysses* We have lost Achilles against Paris. But against Paris we have Philoctetes.

*Agamemnon* Philoctetes? That old quarrelsome invalid that we left half way?

*Menelaos* I remember him. He cursed us and swore that we would never succeed in taking Troy until we returned and picked him up again.

*Ulysses* And after ten years it's not at all certain that he is still alive. We left him there after he had been stung by a snake and was so sore that he could only spew poison around him scaring everyone off and obliging us to leave him there.

*Agamemnon* Let's find out what became of him.

*Menelaos* Yes, that's the least thing we can do.

*Agamemnon* Ulysses, thanks for the idea, but I don't think it's enough.

*Nestor* Ulysses always brings new ideas.

*Ulysses* One thing at a time, gentlemen.

*Thersites* Ulysses always knows what to do. He always has the solution to every problem. He will win the war for you, my lords, although you have sacrificed Achilles, the best fighter Hellas ever saw.

*Menelaos* Quiet, Thersites! Let us think.

*Thersites* Can you think, Menelaos?

*Ulysses* That's precisely why he needs to think.

*Agamemnon* Let us retire, gentlemen, and devote ourselves to honouring Achilles' funeral. Then let's concentrate on the case of Philoktetes.

*Menelaos* Agamemnon has spoken.

*Thersites* Now Agamemnon can speak, when Achilles is dead.

*Ulysses* Quiet, Thersites. Don't provoke Agamemnon.

*Thersites* No, he is enough irritable as he is.

*Nestor* Yet another grim grave has been buried for the Greeks of Hellas. Doesn't it harm you, Thersites, that Achilles, the greatest warrior of all, now is fallen?

*Thersites* That's the very reason why I am here, you dumbbell.

*Menelaos* Shall you answer Nestor thus?

*Ulysses* Don't quarrel with Thersites. He is the way he is, and he doesn't get any better by anyone quarrelling with him.

*Thersites* If only all grumpy ruffians of Greece were equally well grounded in careful common sense like you, Ulysses, you would all have been the better for never having to come to Troy.

*Ulysses* Say that to Agamemnon.

*Thersites* That's the one I am aiming at, but Agamemnon is asleep. Let him sleep, so that he don't have to wake up.

*Ulysses* Go now, Thersites.

*Thersites* Yes, I will. (*leaves*)

*Agamemnon* Could the solution to the problem of Philoktetes bring us the solution to the problem of Troy, Ulysses?

*Ulysses* That remains to be seen. We can't do more than try our way forward.

*Menelaos* Right you are, Ulysses.

*Nestor* So let's now all go to rest and sleep on it.

*Agamemnon* As usual, Nestor is the wisest of us all. After the solemnities of the departure of Achilles with an appropriate week of mourning afterwards, I will summon you to a decisive war council. I beg you all to carefully consider the matter until then, for I must enforce a decision. We can't endure this deadlock any longer. There must be either a solution or a cancellation of the whole project while we are still alive.

*Menelaos* That sounds like an ultimatum.

*Agamemnon* It is an ultimatum, Menelaos. We can't afford losing one more single life.

*Ulysses* We shall carefully consider the problem, Agamemnon. It will satisfy Diomedes that wish to enforce a decision.

*Agamemnon* I have to, Ulysses, whatever the cost will be, and it may succeed or founder, but anything will now be better than a continued deadlock. See you again after our farewell to Achilles, gentlemen. (*retires with Menelaos*)

*Nestor* He really is desperate now.

*Ulysses* He has been for long. Now for the first time he has openly admitted it to himself. He never dared as long as Achilles lived.

### Scene 3. War council.

*Agamemnon* This is an emergency situation. Our position is serious and intolerable.

*Ulysses* Yes, you don't exactly look like joking, Agamemnon.

*Menelaos* No condescending sarcasms now please, Ulysses. Achilles is dead. We can't afford jokes any more.

*Diomedes* But Ulysses acknowledged himself that Agamemnon's attitude excluded all jokes. Can't you hear, Menelaos?

*Aias* Don't pull poor Menelaos' legs, Diomedes. After all, he has almost lost the war.

*Agamemnon* Stop it, all of you! You are worse than a flock of lost old maids! This is war and no sewing reunion.

*Nestor* Well, what was it you really wanted, king Agamemnon?

*Idomeneus* Dear Nestor, didn't you hear just now that he tries to arrange some sewing reunion?

*Diomedes* Wasn't that exactly what he didn't want to do?

*Menelaos* Quiet, comrades! Listen to what Agamemnon has to say!

*Agamemnon* The situation is extremely bothersome. We have now laid siege to Troy for exactly ten years, and during these ten years the deadlock has constantly grown worse. During this last year many thought that a final settlement was at hand, and it actually looked like it, when suddenly our prime fighter Achilles by a petty quarrel about some women suddenly withdrew from all fighting to leave the field to Hector, who decided to take advantage of the situation, beat us all down to our ships and burned them. It looked worse for us than ever. Then suddenly Patroclus, Achilles' friend, entered the fighting in the armour of Achilles, so that Troy thought Achilles had returned. He drove the Trojans back home behind their walls, but the wise Hector saw through Patroclus' disguise and defeated Achilles' friend. The death of Patroclus...

*Diomedes* Yes, yes, we know all that. To the point!

*Menelaos* Let Agamemnon explain our situation.

*Aias* Does he think we are all imbeciles? Does he think we have forgotten Achilles inhuman revenge on Hector for Patroclus?

*Agamemnon* Since then Paris with his bow has succeeded in also killing our Achilles. With Achilles back into our lines victory was within reach again, but when he fell, our deadlock grew more fatally definite than ever. We have lost too many

indispensable warriors like Patroclus and Achilles, and we who still are standing and fighting are not growing younger. On the contrary, we are getting slower and heavier while grey hairs are spreading like our baldness. We don't want an old men's war, and the siege of Troy has already cost more than what Hellas can pay.

*Diomedes* Do you want us then to go home?

*Ulysses* That would be confessing defeat to the whole world in its greatest war ever.

*Nestor* Can Menelaos accept that and go home to Sparta after ten years and still without his wife?

*Diomedes* Could Menelaos stand Paris' laughing him to scorn, the victory parties of Troy and Helena's eternal disdain of him for having given up?

*Agamemnon* (*hinders Menelaos from speaking*) It is obvious that such a suicide for us all is quite unthinkable. But the situation must be resolved now! I want advice and action! We must take Troy now! And we must use any means!

*Diomedes* You, Ulysses, are the only one who could work out an enough ruthless and applicable solution.

*Ulysses* Perhaps.

*Nestor* For my part I have no desire to stay on and fight until I die here at Troy not in battle but of old age.

*Agamemnon* That is what we mean.

*Menelaos* We have all aged quite enough already here at Troy.

*Aias* And I guess that would also include Helena.

*Menelaos* Yes, it certainly does.

*Aias* It's strange that Menelaos hasn't tired yet of such a woman.

*Menelaos* And what do you mean by that?

*Agamemnon* Don't leave the subject! Has no one of you any idea of how Troy could be taken by cunning, treason or any method? (*silence*) If not, I must unfortunately sound a general retreat at once.

*Diomedes* Are you giving up so easily? Ulysses has an idea.

*Ulysses* I certainly don't.

*Diomedes* Yes, you have!

*Ulysses* I warned you against bringing it up.

*Agamemnon* Let's hear it.

*Ulysses* Blame yourselves. It's not good. It is risky and so foul that the world, if it succeeds, never could pardon the foulness of the trick and forgive us.

*Agamemnon* That sounds interesting, Let's hear it.

*Ulysses* We can't enter the city. That has so far decided the war in favour of the Trojans. Our only chance has been if the Trojans would have let us in themselves. We have searched for a traitor among them now for ten years in vain. But if we could trick them...

*Agamemnon* Let's hear your plan.

*Ulysses* We build a wooden horse consecrated to Athena. We leave it on the beach while we depart with all our ships. The Trojans will think that we have given

up and left the horse as an atonement sacrifice to Athena. Then they will out of piety bring the horse into their city and sanctify it.

*Aias* You are crazy, Ulysses. This is war and no innocent religious ceremony.

*Ulysses* But inside the belly of the great horse twenty of us will sit in arms. When the city has gone to sleep in the night we will open the horse and enter the town and open the city gates to all of you, who then will have returned from your fake escape at sea. If everything works out well, the matter would be settled.

*Agamemnon* A remarkable scheme.

*Ulysses* It could fail though. It's possible that the Trojans won't be deceived by such a plain trick.

*Nestor* The wisest of them, Hector, is no more.

*Ulysses* But there are some women with second sight like Cassandra and the precocious Helenos, the only one among the Trojans who tried to negotiate with us already before the war to accomplish an acceptable peace for all of us with a return of Menelaos' queen to us.

*Agamemnon* Our collected experience of the Trojans seems to establish, that the wisest of them are silenced and driven over, like Helenos and Cassandra, or sacrificed, like Hector. This speaks for Ulysses' plan, to cunningly use their religious feeling to get a ticket into town. We have no other plan. I therefore suggest that we wage on the suggested horse. I will give unlimited resources and authority to Ulysses to carry through the scheme according to his plan. But, Ulysses, I must make one condition.

*Ulysses* Well?

*Agamemnon* You will sit in the horse yourself.

*Ulysses* Accepted.

*Agamemnon* Any other comments to the idea?

*Nestor* I think we are all agreed. We have no other plan. This is outrageous but the last possibility.

*Agamemnon* Let's go to work then. The horse will be constructed according to Ulysses' engineering while at the same time we prepare for departure. Any questions? (*silence*) Then I conclude our war council, perhaps and hopefully the last one.

*(rises. All others follow the example and break it up.)*

*Diomedes* Well, Aias, what do you really think? I suppose you would like the citizens of Troy to make a nice bonfire of the horse with Ulysses in it, just to get rid of him?

*Aias* You know me for sure, Diomedes, but in this case I would prefer to have Troy burning. But the best thing would be to have Ulysses burning with Troy.

*Diomedes* The danger of wishful thinking is that it could be realized. What do you do then when you are struck by the shock of a terrible result which you must feel responsible for?

*Aias* No matter how foul our wishful thinking is, reality will always turn even worse anyway than we could ever imagine.

*Diomedes* This war seems to make spectacular philosophers of us all.  
(*They leave in opposite directions,*  
*after Diomedes having given Aias a friendly pat on his shoulder.*)

*3 alternative scenes:*

1. The Hellenic camp.

*Ulysses* Agamemnon is quite demoralised after Achilles' death. We must do something about it.

*Nestor* What can we do?

*Ulysses* Take Troy.

*Nestor* Kiss my arse. That platitude has fallen flat to the ground during all these ten years and grown flatter every time.

*Ulysses* The alternative is to go home, in which direction Agamemnon is constantly leaning more abjectly. Is that a better alternative?

*Nestor* It would be the ruin of Menelaos.

*Ulysses* And that's why Agamemnon keeps postponing it all the time although that is what he has wanted most all since his quarrel with Achilles.

*Nestor* Achilles is dead.

*Ulysses* Try to convince Agamemnon of that. He will never get rid of him. (*enter Menelaos*)

*Menelaos* Well, can you solve the problem?

*Nestor* No. We can only postpone it.

*Ulysses* We can't go home, Menelaos, not without Helena. All I can suggest is new negotiations with Priam.

*Menelaos* You know that it will lead nowhere as long as Helena doesn't want to give herself up herself.

*Nestor* And she never will, for she is the most headstrong woman in the world.

*Menelaos* Don't remind me of it.

*Ulysses* We must have another talk with Priam. That's the only way. We could always hope for a miracle.

*Menelaos* Thanks for promoting the most hopeless of all projects, Ulysses, namely peace. Unfortunately I know Helena and am therefore convinced of its hopelessness.

*Ulysses* You are almost as defeatist as Agamemnon.

*Menelaos* We all are. The poison is not from him but from the war.

*Nestor* Call it by its proper name the deadlock.

*Diomedes (enters)* How are you doing, boys? Have you cracked the nut of how we shall take Troy?

*Ulysses* Not yet. We still believe in negotiations.

*Diomedes* Forget it. The city has to be taken. Period. We can't give up after ten years.

*Menelaos* No, we can't.

*Agamemnon (backstage)* Stop reproaching me!

*Menelaos (darkly)* He is delirious.

*Ulysses* Isn't he just imagining things?

*Diomedes* We can't have a mentally unstable general.

*Nestor* Could anyone replace him?

*Diomedes* No. He has to pull himself together.

*Agamemnon (breaks in)* I can't take it any longer! Achilles is on to me day and night! He never stops harassing me for his failed life and gives me all the blame for the whole war and his and Patroclus' death!

*Diomedes* Achilles is dead, Agamemnon.

*Agamemnon* Who is then speaking in his voice and has taken the shape of his own figure?

*Diomedes* Well, it certainly isn't Paris, who got him by a poisoned arrow in his heel and who is still alive without our having taken Troy. Is that something you find acceptable?

*Agamemnon* No!

*Diomedes* Stop mingling then with crazy spooks and mind your strategy instead!

*Menelaos* Ulysses has offered his willingness to new negotiations.

*Agamemnon* Let him try. He will never succeed anyway. All the ghosts of the fallen have turned against us and are haunting us.

*Diomedes* Are you sure? Do you really believe Patroclus would join hands with Hector?

*Agamemnon* Alas, I don't know anything any more. I only know that I am getting more confused every day by the dark powers that assault me and muddle my judgement and turn me less and less capable to make any decisions. I just hope my increasing pessimism is not contagious.

*Nestor* Only the whole army is already contaminated, so that more and more just want to go home since they neither can understand why we can't negotiate any peace nor get Helena out of the city or take it. They are tired of constantly trampling in the same shit. If Ulysses can't get any positive peace deal now, I suggest that we go home.

*Ulysses* Nestor's suggestion is reasonable.

*Diomedes* Never, Ulysses. If you can't get Helena out in a last effort, our only choice is to take the city by any means.

*Ulysses* What do you mean by any means?

*Diomedes* I simply mean by any means. Don't forget that Paris shot Achilles with a poisoned arrow, the first one ever fired in an honest war.

*Agamemnon* Don't talk of Achilles. Don't disturb him. Don't wake him up again.

*Menelaos* Get inside and sleep, Agamemnon.

*Agamemnon* Impossible. He just keeps me awake.

*Nestor* Our king is in a bad condition, Ulysses. You have to succeed.

*Ulysses* I can't do more than what's in the power of any mortal.

*Nestor* Use your common sense, which imports higher power than any mortal.



*Ulysses* Unfortunately common sense has been of no use against any war.

*Menelaos* I don't think we'll get any further now. We might as well go back to our tents before Aias also comes to demonstrate his madness.

*Diomedes* The most hysterical of us all. At least he refuses to give up.

*Nestor* After the death of Achilles he has grown completely unbearable and imagines himself capable of conquering Troy alone all by himself every day without realizing that he actually fails every day. If anyone made me ashamed of our war he was the one.

*Menelaos* Don't call on him. We don't want any uninvited guests around.

*Agamemnon* He is here. I can feel him.

*Menelaos* Here he goes again.

*Diomedes* Aias? Is he here?

*Menelaos* No. It's worse than that. Go inside, Agamemnon, before it is too late.

*Agamemnon* It doesn't help. He is here.

*Ulysses* Who is here? (*looks around confusedly*)

*Menelaos* It's just Agamemnon's fancies, Ulysses. Now you may get to know them, even if you can't see them.

*Agamemnon* Are you here now again, you damned and eternally cursed trouble-maker! Can't you ever leave me alone then?

*Achilles (enters, armed to his teeth for war)* No, you miserable national disaster, I will never leave you alone as long as you live, but I will relentlessly remind you day and night of your crimes against humanity and me, how you alone caused the death of me and Patroclus and tens of thousands of others by dragging all Hellas into the most foolish world war in history, which never will end as long as you go on leading it by your from the beginning failed and abortive strategy...

*Agamemnon* Is there no god then to release me from this indefatigably cruel and lethal murderer of all senses?

*Nestor* Alas, he is completely out of his mind.

*Menelaos* It's worse than that.

*Ulysses* He is persecuted by the dead. There can be no destiny more cruel for a mortal.

*Diomedes* Ulysses, you will only have one more chance to get Helena out of there. Then we must needs use any extreme and unorthodox trick.

*Ulysses* Who can restrict the dead from continuing to disturb the living?

*Achilles* You will never get home alive, Agamemnon! I shall see you splashing in your own blood in a worse dishonour than Hector's naked corpse being dragged after my triumph chariot in a worse scandal for history than all your monumental failure of a stillborn war!

*Agamemnon* Spare me, o ye gods! I can't endure his eternal reproaches! No one is so defenceless as one who is faced by the relentless accusations of one immortal!

*Menelaos (rises and helps Agamemnon on his feet)* Pull yourself together, brother! You are dreaming while awake! Let me take you to bed.

*Diomedes* Give him some heavy drugs so that he doesn't have to dream.

*Ulysses* I fear it would only make matters worse.  
*Nestor* Neither wine nor drugs help against dreams of truth.  
*Menelaos* Come, brother. Let's get home to your tent. (*helps out the tottering and trembling Agamemnon. Achilles follows them.*)  
*Diomedes* He is all washed up.  
*Nestor* Good luck that Aias wasn't here.  
*Diomedes* Do you mean that Aias' madness could have been made worse by Agamemnon's?  
*Nestor* That's exactly what I mean.  
*Ulysses (rising)* Gentlemen, I will require an audience with Priam tomorrow. That will be the last chance for Troy.  
*Diomedes* Good, Ulysses.  
*Nestor* Good luck, Ulysses. I really hope you will succeed.  
*Ulysses* It all depends on Helena. If I can persuade her, everything can still be saved including Troy. If not, we'll have to take Troy with all the consequences it would import after ten years, and may in that case the gods help us all.  
*Diomedes* Don't paint the devil on the wall, Ulysses. Just do what must be done.  
*Nestor* All our destinies depend on you, Ulysses. Good luck.  
*(Ulysses leaves. They break up.)*

## 2. Troy.

*Priam* Ulysses has announced his arrival. This could be our last chance for peace.  
*Paris* The Hellenes are tired. They have lost their zest for fighting. The death of Achilles has put them out of breath.  
*Priam* Like the death of Hector devastated us.  
*Paris* Father, not one Hellene has come across our walls. Our city is intact, and not a stone has been touched. We can endure forever.  
*Priam* You mean that we should turn Ulysses down whatever he says?  
*Paris* Yes.  
*Priam* We must listen to him though.  
*Helenos* I have reasons to believe that the peace party with the Hellenes is stronger than ever. After Achilles' death, Nestor and Ulysses are their most respected leaders while more and more despise Menelaos and Agamemnon. Aias appears to be approaching madness, and only Diomedes is still a potent warrior. If Ulysses presents a positive deal, I must insist that it should not be discarded.  
*A herald (announcing)* Ulysses of Ithaca.  
*(like last time, Ulysses enters in plain simplicity)*  
*Ulysses* King Priam. (*bows*)  
*Priam* Our friend, our best friend among the Hellenes.  
*Ulysses* Also Nestor wishes to leave Troy in peace.  
*Paris* Then why don't you?

*Priam* Quiet, Paris! Ulysses, what is your proposition?

*Ulysses* Only one last appeal to your personal common sense, o king, that Helena may be returned to her only lawful husband. In return, Sparta promises to at last deliver your sister Hesione back to Troy under escort.

*Paris (laughs scornfully)*

*Priam* Paris, you have no say.

*Helenos* Ulysses' proposition is fair and actually the only sensible one. If the Hellenes are prepared to leave Troy in peace in exchange of Helena and we get Hesione back, the conflict should be resolved.

*Paris* And what guarantees do we have? We can let hem have Helena at once, but we might have to wait a year for the kings of perfidy Agamemnon and Menelaos to come home and then dispatch Hesione on a long and difficult voyage. We have no warrant for Hesione arriving here even alive. She perhaps might even not *want to* come back after having been brainwashed into a Hellene by the Hellenes.

*Priam* Unfortunately, Ulysses, there is some truth in what Paris says. It is not fair that we release Helena until we have received Hesione.

*Ulysses* Then I must insist on pleading directly to Helena. Is she here?

*Helena (not visible before, now appearing)* Yes, Ulysses, I am here.

*Ulysses* My queen, the fate of Troy and the Hellenes is in your hand. You can save the lives of many by following directly to the camp of the Hellenes. If not, your remaining here will only bring continued bloodslaughter outside the walls of Troy, which sooner or later are doomed to crumb in a continued war of wearing out, since time is on our side.

*Helena* I regret to have to say that Paris is right in many ways. What guarantees can you offer? If I now follow you to the tent of Menelaos, what treatment will I get by the Hellenes, that now for ten years have seen their friends falling to death which they only can blame on me? No, Ulysses, if Menelaos so sincerely wants me back, he will have to come and fetch me himself. My view is that Agamemnon desired this war long before I ever entered the thought of leaving Sparta. I saw the war approaching. Agamemnon tried to raise the interest of Menelaos and Diomedes for it, and when Paris came to Sparta and his demand of the return of Hesione was met with arrogance and furtive scorn, I decided to take part for Troy as the wronged part, and here I will stay until Troy has perished.

*Ulysses* Is that your last word?

*Helena* That is my last word.

*Ulysses* In that case, Trojans, I renounce all responsibility for the consequences. I can't see that this could lead to anything else than evil for all parts, and I swear myself free from anything that the Hellenes could turn out.

*Cassandra* You can't do that, Ulysses, since you are a Hellene yourself.

*Priam* Can you foresee some consequences, Cassandra?

*Hector* Don't tell them what you see. Spare them.

*Cassandra (ecstatic, negatively)* Poseidon! (*mumblings around*)

*Paris* She refers to Poseidon's prophecy that the walls of Troy never can fall before the Hellenes have left.

*Priam* What do you see, Cassandra?

*Hector* Spare them.

*Cassandra* One only wants to spare you all, and that is Hector.

*Paris* She is deranged, as usual.

*Hecuba* What do you mean, girl? Try for once to express yourself clearly!

*Priam* What does Apollo say?

*Cassandra* Apollo is silent like he was at the death of Hector and at Paris' cowardly poisoned arrow into the heel of Achilles.

*Paris* Her god is always silent whenever a god if anyone should have done something.

*Priam* I am afraid we can't get any further, Ulysses. Cassandra's visions always lead to blind alleys and sunken rocks.

*Ulysses* I am sorry. (*bows*) Some Hellenes will regrettably rejoice at your negative response, while Nestor, the only wise one, will regret it.

*Helenos* Give him my compliment and my equal regrets.

*Ulysses* I will, Helenos. (*bows again and leaves.*)

*Priam* There we lost our only friend.

*Helenos* Congratulations, Paris. You got your continued meaningless war.

*Paris* We are invulnerable. Why would we then give up?

*Hector (to Cassandra)* Paris is a blind mate whom an unfortunate destiny placed at the helm which he refuses to let go until he has completed a shipwreck for everyone.

*Cassandra* And then he is innocent since he is blind.

*Priam* What are you saying, Cassandra?

*Paris* She is babbling nonsense as usual. Don't listen to her.

*Helena (to Cassandra)* Come, sister. I suspect that you see more than any one else. (*leaves with Cassandra*)

*Paris* Then it's just for us to return to the order of the day, that is the war.

*Helenos* Yes, hide as usual among the towers and shoot your poisoned arrows against innocent defenceless Hellenes who you don't even know the names of. There is your war for you, Paris. (*leaves embittered*)

*Priam* You will soon be fighting for Troy alone and can't even do it with honour.

*Paris* Still someone has to do it. (*leaves*)

*Hecuba* We will soon have no sons left.

*Priam* Except Paris.

*Hecuba* I am afraid we have missed our last chance.

*Priam* I am afraid so too. (*They leave together.*)

3.

*Diomedes* We have no choice. We have to untie the knot.  
*Nestor* But how?

*Menelaos* Ulysses is on his way back. Everything rests on him. At best he will bring the key to Troy.

*Agamemnon* Menelaos, your optimism never ceases to surprise me.

*Nestor* Here he is now.

*Diomedes* Welcome, Ulysses. How shall we take the city?

*Ulysses* As expected, Troy answered no, although I offered them Hesione, although I had no authority to do so.

*Agamemnon* Hesione will never return to Troy.

*Ulysses* I know. Still I wanted to venture that bluff.

*Diomedes* To the point. What did you find?

*Ulysses* What was I expected to find?

*Menelaos* The key to Troy.

*Ulysses* There is no key to Troy. I know the city. The walls with their massive and well guarded gates are and remain impregnable. No one can enter the city in any way unless Troy itself opens its walls and gates.

*Diomedes* There must be some way.

*Nestor* Why did Priam decline Hesione?

*Ulysses* Paris ruined Priam's argument, and Helena said no herself.

*Menelaos* What was her argument?

*Ulysses* That you, Menelaos, should come and get her yourself. She had no intention to expose herself to the risk of running the gauntlet in order to get home to Sparta. She wants an insurance of her safety.

*Menelaos* That I take as a challenge to me to really make it happen.

*Diomedes* Have you never found any weak spot in Troy?

*Ulysses* According to a promise by Poseidon himself, the city can never be taken until the Hellenes have left Ilion.

*Diomedes* So it's Poseidon more than Apollo who protects the city.

*Ulysses* Yes.

*Diomedes* But Poseidon is just a god, and gods can be cheated. Remember Prometheus.

*Ulysses* How can you cheat Poseidon?

*Diomedes* Add two and two, Ulysses, since you are smart.

*Ulysses* Am I?

*Diomedes* So Poseidon has promised, that Troy can't be taken until the Hellenes have left Ilion. That means, that Troy can be taken by the Hellenes, if they leave Ilion and then return.

*Ulysses* You suggest a trick, to fool the Trojans that we have left and then return to take them by surprise?

*Diomedes* Something like that.

*Ulysses* It will be more difficult to fool the Trojans than to fool the gods. You need more than just a stratagem.

*Diomedes* If we can fool Poseidon we can fool the Trojans. I think we are on the right track.

*Menelaos* A sacrifice to Poseidon, that he may grant us a safe journey home? Wouldn't that fool the Trojans?

*Ulysses* What is the best sacrifice to Poseidon?

*Nestor* Horses.

*Diomedes* That will not do. The Hellenes need their horses and never sacrifice them.

*Nestor* I mean *in effigie*.

*Ulysses* I think I understand what Nestor means. A giant horse erected to the honour of Poseidon, to make it appear that we pray for a safe journey home. We leave the giant horse on the beach. The Trojans are pious and immediately get the idea. They rejoice and absolutely have to celebrate our departure, so they take care of the horse and perhaps bring it into the city...

*Diomedes* A giant horse, for which they have to tear down a part of the city wall to bring it in...

*Agamemnon* The scheme is clear.

*Ulysses* Not quite. We have to be sure. Let's hide a number of chosen warriors inside the horse's belly. Then when the town sleeps some of our spies could give a signal and let us out. So we can open the gates ourselves when the city sleeps and take it by surprise in the night.

*Nestor* An infernal plan.

*Diomedes* Don't forget Paris' poisoned arrow at a cowardly distance from Achilles.

*Nestor* This entire war has only consisted of foul play and blows under the belt. Such a horse trick to fool Poseidon crowns all this dirty business.

*Menelaos* Poseidon will never forgive you, Ulysses.

*Ulysses* Diomedes is right. If you can fool the gods it's worth doing it. I love challenges, and such a one as this is irresistibly tempting. But the most important thing is that the horse must be irresistible in beauty and perfect construction. It must inspire admiration and amazement. Or else it will be recognized as a trick.

*Menelaos* We have resources enough. We can make the horse unequalled in formal perfection.

*Agamemnon* You and Menelaos will sit in the horse, Ulysses, for you are the most cautious of all of us. We can't allow the rowdy Aias in it. You two may choose suitable comrades.

*Diomedes* Let's start constructing the horse at once.

*Ulysses* Diomedes must be with us to counterbalance perhaps the over-anxiety of the caution of me and Menelaos.

*Diomedes* I shall be delighted.

*Agamemnon* The matter is settled. We cannot fail, and Poseidon is the one who will pay.

*Diomedes* But whatever will Apollo say to such a blatant audacity?

*Ulysses* We shall see, Diomedes. That's part of the challenge.



Scene 4. Troy.  
(parties and laughter in town)

*Priam* The Trojans are quite hysterical. I don't like it. It is too good to be true.

*Helenos* But still it seems credible enough. No one except these Greeks would endure a war of wearing out for ten full years, and no one except these Greeks would after these ten years give up. And the horse couldn't be more real. It can only be explained as a sacrifice of atonement to a god. The weather is a capricious superior power, and who wants a stormy sea crossing after ten years of a hopeless war?

*Priam* But they didn't lose the war. They gave up.

*Helenos* For realistic reasons. The deadlock was hopeless, despite the fact that Hector fell, especially as also their foremost fighter Achilles went down. They probably realized that the city never could be taken.

*Priam* Still it seems wondrous strange. What does your soothsaying sister say?

*Helenos* No one will allow her to speak. The definite departure of the Greeks is seen as the evidence that all Cassandra's bad prophecies and warnings from the beginning just were utterly unjustified and false.

*Priam* Still I would wish that they would wait a while with dragging that horse inside the walls. Caution is never a bad policy.

*Helenos* They are too gay. Nothing can stop them.

*Paris (enters)* Well, you dull and gloomy brooders, what do you think now of the situation? Imagine, that we at last got rid of them, that Troy succeeded in defeating them! If only Hector had lived!

*Priam* What about the horse?

*Paris* Our men are eagerly busy about dragging it up to our city, but we have to tear down some part of the wall to get it inside. It will be a lasting monument to the ultimate victory of Troy.

*Priam* But I told you to wait! The priest Laokoon was anxious about first undertaking a closer investigation of the horse.

*Paris* He died.

*Priam* What are you saying?

*Paris* He arrived at the beach quite hysterical, yelled fanatically about that the horse had to be burned at once, and even thrust a spear into the horse's belly. Then the horse seemed to give up a sigh, like of fatigue and despair for the limited stupidity of human nature, which became too much for the Trojans. They thought the fanatic went over the top. They didn't want to contract a god's anger for the assault of a fanatic priest on a sacred horse. So Laokoon was lynched there on the spot. When his sons tried to help him, they also went down.

*Helenos* And now they are dragging the horse to our city?

*Paris* I think they already have started pulling down a part of the wall around the south gate.

*Priam* The murder on Laokoon is not acceptable.

*Paris* Those who took his life are aware of that. They now tell the people there were two serpents coming out of the sea that devoured Laokoon and his sons.

*Priam* Such legends are unfortunately easier believed by the people than the truth.

*Paris* Now they are dragging the beautifully manufactured horse inside the walls. Try to stop a sincere party when once it has had such a good start! (*joins the other cheerful warriors, who are pulling in an enormous wooden horse on the right part of the stage*)

*Priam* It doesn't give any sacred impression. It looks more like the sphinx: evil and enigmatic.

*Helenos* The sphinx was not mute, but the horse is. I would hardly think it capable of any evil.

*Cassandra* The more evil the more quiet.

*Priam* Cassandra! Do you dare showing yourself? What are you doing here?

*Helenos* Don't you know that all the people are against you today?

*Cassandra* That's why I am here. That horse is consecrated to Athena of the Greeks. She never did us any good. I am priestess of Apollo, who alone has not deserted us. He warns us against the scheme of Athena's favourite, which is connected with the false horse.

*Helenos* The priest Laokoon was murdered for having attacked the horse with a spear.

*Cassandra* The priest was right in his naivety, for horses made of wood for gods cannot be attacked and murdered. They can only be burnt. If we burned the horse we could perhaps be certain of the salvation of Troy.

*Priam* Do you know anything about the horse's secret?





*Cassandra* I am only a woman. I can feel but not know. The sensitivity of women can never result in anything concrete. I only feel that that horse is the greatest danger that ever threatened Troy.

*Priam* And now the horse is inside our city and in the middle of the central square. What is done is done. We can only resign.

*Helenos* In any case it is impossible to spite the will of the people. They have brought the horse to town and want to celebrate it as a victory over the Greeks with joyfulness, parties and wine and songs. If we tried to stop them we would only make ourselves extremely unpopular.

*Priam* You are right, my son. Come, let us retire piously in discreet resignation, so that we don't provoke anyone. The horse is and may remain standing for what it is. I wash my hands. *(leaves)*

*Helenos* Are you coming, Cassandra?

*Cassandra* If only I could divine the secret of the horse!

*Helenos* If you could it would still be too late. Come, let's go.

*Cassandra* I am coming. *(leaves)*

*Paris (to the people)* So let us party all night! The Greeks have pulled out, and we can at last bury our weapons! The future is ours! We have successfully defended Troy for ten years and retained our queen of Asia intact and unharmed, Helena! She and I are

now your future, which is awakening! Hellas has lost against our ancient city and Asia!

*People* Long live Paris! Long live Helena, our queen of beauty!  
(*They celebrate and extol Paris, carrying him away on a shield.*)



#### Scene 5.

*The royal palace, the room of Aeneas. He is in bed but writhing in difficult nightmares.*

*Outside, the city slowly starts appearing in flames. Gradually cries are being heard.*

*A faint light starts growing at the entrance. Aeneas wakes up with a jerk, appears like in a fever and dries his front. When the light at the door reaches a maximum, Hector enters as a ghost, terribly disfigured, as the corpse desecrated by Achilles.*

*Aeneas (catches sight of the entering Hector and jerks with a cry)*

Don't let me dream any more! Let me awake from these feverish intolerable nightmares!

*Hector* Fear not, Aeneas. It's only me.

*Aeneas* I can see well enough who you are, but aren't you dead? Have you returned then from the grave and the pyre?

*Hector* I haven't time for mortal questions. Troy is lost, Aeneas. What you have dreamt and what you are dreaming is the regrettable reality.

*Aeneas* You are then alive as dead? And this smell of burning, and this ghostly and nightmarish light of fire is an unendurable reality?

*Hector* The Hellenes have accomplished an infernal trick. In the horse which you brought into Troy there was Ulysses and Menelaos and a dozen of others. You let yourselves be fooled. When you had partied and caroused and passed out in sleep after too much wine, they opened the lid of the horse's belly and let themselves quietly down to the ground, gave the signal to those Greeks who had sailed no

further away than Tenedos and that now swarmed through the hole in the wall you had opened to the town, and now Troy is burning, taken by surprise in the night by the Greeks. The Trojans have been overtaken with their stupidity and naïvety in their beds.

*Aeneas* It must not be true! (*rushes to the window*) I hear the cries of ravished women and see how the whole city is burning! Priam! My wife! My family! I must rescue them!

*Hector* You aptly get my message without having heard it. Yes, Aeneas, run and save your family, your old father and your son, your wife and as many as you can, and go far away and build beyond Hellas a new and better Ilion, which never will fall. That's why I came here to exhort you to this one possibility of salvation for at least a remnant of your people and this wonderful Ilion.

*Aeneas* Thanks, great Hector, for haunting me. You make a terrible appearance, but your boon is heard. You shall not need to exhort me twice.

*Hector* The rule is unfortunately that we may not visit mortal kinsmen except in the very shape as the one who last saw us alive left us in. Achilles was the last one I saw in life, and he left me in this condition. You can see the holes he made in my heels with the pricker, and you can see the traces of his desecration of my body left in my irrecognizably ruined face. But also the terrible Achilles is now dead, and he will have to endure worse torments in hell than I. Farewell, my good Aeneas. You are now the only hope of Troy and its survival. (*leaves. The light fades.*)

*Aeneas* Stay with me, you sweetest phantom! I will not avenge you, but I will give you an exoneration for all times by obeying your command. As truly as I live, this Troy will survive!

*Hector (outside)* Hurry, Aeneas! Time will not wait!

(*Aeneas rushes up and starts hurriedly to don all his armour.*)

*Hecuba (outside)* My daughters! Ravished! Where are now my sons? Dead! Murderers have ravished all Troy! Rapists have murdered all Troy! Woe is me! Woe is me! Woe is me!

(*Aeneas, ready, rushes out. The scene is turned to the right, showing Priam's palace.*

*All is chaos.*)

*Chorus* Our sons! Dead! Our daughters! Murdered and ravished! What have we done to deserve this horrendous day of wrath? We were only pious mothers! Woe betide us that we have to survive!

*Hecuba* Wail, o mothers, over this city which is burning to never rise again from the ashes! The world is lost by the destructive suicidal efforts of the men! Self-indulgence has driven men's aggressions to the entire world's perdition!

*Chorus* We are burning with our misery and pain for the world never to know about it, for the truth of the ways of the world is what is always getting buried alive.

*Hecuba* Anguished mothers, cry and scream and tear your clothes, for all that now remains for us is just to burn in the flaming Trojan funeral pyre, which now is the only future of the world!

*Chorus* Let's obey our queen! Let's tear our clothes in our grief and throw ourselves into the Trojan funeral pyre, which should be the eternal curse for all the world and its future!

*Hecuba* Here comes Paris, the worst of my sons and the only one who has survived. What are you doing here, you good-for-nothing of a worthless bastard?

*Paris (enters dragging Helena)* Come on, Helena! We still have a chance of an escape!

*Helena* I don't want to follow you any more. You now see the result of your policy. I followed you in love, but when this love has led to such hatred against Troy, I am no longer yours.

*Paris* Come on now, you lousy bitch! Do you wish to die with the mothers of Troy?

*Helena* Rather that than to follow you, you mad egoist!

*Aeneas* You have no right to force her into following you, incorrigible Paris!

*Paris* Stay away, you cheeky scoundrel!

*Aeneas* Release Helena!

*Paris* Keep away, if you don't want to be liquidated and get one head shorter!

*Aeneas* Isn't it enough that you have caused this disaster to Troy?

*Paris* Is it Aeneas or Hector? Only Hector could admonish me thus. But Hector is dead. Out of my way, you bloody blackguard! Whoever tries to stop me is dead, even if he is a Trojan!

*(drags Helena by force out with him . She makes desperate resistance all the way but in vain.)*

*Priam (appearing)* You wonderful city, which had the future of the world in your grasp and at your feet! You are still eternal, you glorious capital of Asia, our centre of all trades in the world east of the Hellenic sea, glowing and smiling like never before! Now Troy enters eternity in higher splendour and more shining and sumptuously stately than ever before! So shining was never any city in the world, and so precious no capital on earth!

*Hecuba* He is mad. – Priam, you can no longer defend this city, for it is fallen!

*Priam* Sweetest woman, queen of the world, incomparable maid, like all women you can only talk nonsense. I know too well what you are saying. It's the world that doesn't know and never has known what it has done.

*Aeneas* He is prophetic.

*Hecuba* I am your wife, Priam! Sheathe your sword! You are no longer young!

*Priam* You prattle, poor woman. Would the king of Troy not defend his city and that of his fathers? Are you trying to make me imagine that I as king would accept being the last king of Troy, although I was the father of fifty sons?

*Hecuba* They are all dead except Paris!

*Priam* Didn't I have Hector for a son?

*Hecuba* He is long since dead and desecrated by the vile Achilles!

*Priam* Does that concern me? Doesn't he have eternal life? A son of the last king of Troy cannot die. Didn't I myself secure his body from the in spite of all reconciliatory Achilles? Didn't we drink together some brothers' toasts over Hector's own body? Didn't he invite me like a good son his own father to spend the night in pious company with the murderer himself of my best son and the most beloved son

of Troy? Haven't I done everything that could at all be done to accomplish a universal reconciliation? Haven't I forgiven the Greeks everything they have done even long before they have done it? Am I not old enough to know...

*Hecuba* Sheathe your sword and come down to me and die, you old terrible distracted man!

*Priam* I refuse, for I am a king and the last one to defend this by traitors abandoned Troy. Who was it that let in a Greek? Was it maybe Paris? Bring him to me, and I shall chastise him, as befits a good father to strike a naughty demoralized son who can't obey! I can still teach him a lesson – although I knew very well in the same moment when he came dragging his Helena into our house that he would probably be the one to wreck all Troy, my family and our whole royal house and realm. Alas, I knew it all but could do nothing!

*Hecuba* Priam! It is too late!

*Chorus* Everything is too late, for the city is burning and going to cinders to be forgotten by history, and not even its black naked widows have anything to say in town any more.

*Andromakhe (appearing with Astyanax)* Is there no way of escape? Alas, Hector, how lost the world is without you!

*Priam* My dear widowed daughter-in-law, forget this world and vanish into the bleak chorus of black nuns and widows where there is nothing but complaints, for that's the only sensible thing anyone can commit himself to any more in this world.

*Aeneas* Andromakhe, come and fly with me across the sea to find a better world!

*Andromakhe* There is no better world than the one we are living in which is burning and perishing like everything good here in our only life.

*Chorus* Come with us to join our terrible chorus, you widow of widows, for there is nowhere else where you could find yourself better belonging in a home!

*Priam* Obey the wise chorus, for it was always right, and the men were always wrong, who could do nothing to check their own outbreaks of senselessness and the scourges and catastrophes of their curses of which they alone were outrageously responsible and guilty without exceptions.

*Hecuba* He is just doting. Don't listen to my poor misfortunate and crazy old husband!

*Andromakhe* I still have my and Hector's son to live for if even our home and Troy itself will have to perish. I will not join your chorus of surrender and desolation as long as I still have a son and a future with him to live for.

*Hecuba* You will become one of us sooner or later, you beautiful widow.

*Aeneas* Come with me and my family. Your son will be like one of us with the future.

*Andromakhe* You speak optimistically with light and hope as if Troy wasn't even burning.

*Priam* Alas, it is burning indeed, and it will burn now forever in a world conflagration which nothing can put out, for it's the bolting insane rampaging of

mad politicians which set it on fire, and nothing can put out the horrible annihilation of all humanity by the eternal infernal self-destructiveness of the folly of politics!

*Pyrrhus (enters fully armed and in war hysterics)* I searched for the king's harem but only found bleak black widows. Where is the king?

*Priam* I have been waiting for you, Pyrrhus, the son of the slayer of my noblest son. I stand prepared for battle with sword and armour like yourself, you son of the worst murderer of Hellas. I stand here for the defence of my city instead of my son, whom your father murdered to shortly thereafter rightly be murdered himself, for nothing can disturb the laws of logic.

*Pyrrhus (laughing hard and rough)* You old jumping-jack, what kind of a fool are you? A parody of all the powerlessness and senility of Troy, a pathetic carcass who on tottering failing legs still dresses up to tilt against windmills if nothing else! Are you really king Priam, who had the greatest harem in the world? Where is your harem then?

*Priam* Don't scorn me, ruthless short-sighted ignorance! Can't you see that I was the father of Hector, the supreme noble warrior of self-sacrifice for Troy, who made it withstand your attacks through ten long bloody horrendous years of siege? Your father at least treated me with some sort of respect.

*Pyrrhus* I asked you, king of scoundrels, where is your harem?

*Priam* I have no harem. You see my wife Hecuba over there, a sore and hopeless witch with no milk in her breasts any more, and in bed she is but dry and tough. The other secondary wives I had have all been raped or murdered by you with the Hellenes. If you want to take over my harem, it is unfortunately empty now, for you and your likes have thoroughly plundered it, exploited it, destroyed it and turned it all into nothing but shreds.

*Pyrrhus (to Aeneas)* Can that really be Priam, the great king, the crazy old fool up there?

*Priam* If there is nought left of me but a scarecrow, plucked to some pathetic straws and tatters by Hellenic crows, carrion birds and vultures, nevertheless I am still the only king of Troy, the most glorious city in the world, its only future, its rarest pearl and finest jewel that ever existed! And I can still defend the city and its honour against mad and brutal hooligans like you, demented warlord of barbarians! *(raises his sword)*

*Pyrrhus* Poor old man lost in madness, you are but a cockroach! I have more important business than to bother about toothless deranged wrecks like you. But your pathetic vanity in all its laughable insanity is in my way. *(advances with his sword drawn against Priam)*

*Andromakhe* Don't harm the old man! *(interferes)*

*Pyrrhus* Who are you, unharmed beauty? You seem to be someone's mother, and then you also have a husband. If this is your son, he stands in my way. *(kills Astyanax)*

*Andromakhe* Not my son, my only son, the only future Ilion has!

*Aeneas* You villain born of poison of vipers and evil, are Hellenes then such cowards that they murder children?

*Priam* Outrageous barbarian and killer of children, how dare you use weapons on Hector's only son! (*raises his sword against Pyrrhus*)

*Pyrrhus* So this was then Hector's son, and this lady is Andromakhe? It's getting better and better. It's always safest to murder also the son of a murdered father. But you, ridiculous old bonehead, are becoming a bore!

*Priam* Says you, impertinent bastard, scoundrel and villain of a viper's offspring of the worst murderer of all, who still had some dignity and politeness towards his elders, but you, worthless brat of shit, you desperately lack respect! Can't the Greeks even bring up the sons of their leading heroes? Do the supermen of the world, the Hellenes, then have to just be more intolerable for every new generation?

*Pyrrhus* You just keep prattling like a parrot, worthless jumping-jack! Move over!

*Priam* Would I give way to an incorrigible barbarian?

*Pyrrhus* Don't you have any old people's home here in Troy for miserable old demented fools like this worthless old piece of shit of a shredded wreck? (*strikes down Priam*)

*Hecuba* Achilles was the bravest of Hellenic heroes, but his son is raving around here murdering children and old men!

*Chorus* The fall of Hellas is deep, deeper than the fall of Troy.

*Pyrrhus* I am tired of your dismal horrors, you old hags and whores! Give me younger women! I came here only for that! (*rushes on*)

*Andromakhe* My son! My only son!

*Aeneas* Come with me, Andromakhe. My family will sincerely guard you and keep you and care for you like one of them.

*Adromakhe* Aeneas, now it's too late. Now I will be one of these dismal widows' anonymous chorus of hopelessness.

*Hecuba* I'll follow you, Andromakhe. We shall keep company.

*Pyrrhus (behind stage)* Well, here at last is a juicy girl!

*Aias (behind stage)* I saw her first! That whore belongs to me!

*Cassandra (behind stage)* Go home to your dirty sties, you swine! You are gruntingly rooting with your snouts in a monastery and not in a trough! I am a priestess and belong to no one else than Apollo! (*breaks in on stage*)

What kind of a horrendous family scene do I find here? Hecuba with a murdered bleeding Priam in a blooded bosom, a feverish with an equally blooded Andromakhe – is it the blood of the son, our only son of Hector?

*Aeneas* Everything you see is true, Cassandra. Everything you prophesied has been verified, to the curse and perdition of Troy.

*Cassandra* So now Troy can believe me when it is too late! But I also have some good news to bring. Hecuba, now Paris is murdered, your last living son. Helena is with Menelaos, so now she may at last go home to Sparta. Aren't you pleased?

*Hecuba* Cassandra, look at Andromakhe with her massacred son! How could anyone be pleased?

*Andromakhe* Helena was my sister, we kept to each other, and although it pleases me that she has managed to get out of this alive and perhaps could find something of her old life and pious past in a beautiful home, I can't be pleased, for today all the men of my family have been murdered.

*Cassandra* Don't be sorry, Andromakhe. Pyrrhus will soon be back, and then he will make you his concubine.

*Hecuba* How can you be pleased, Cassandra? Why this absurd gaiety? Have you caught a glimpse of some future offering some light for you?

*Cassandra* I shall be the concubine of Agamemnon, and he shall be murdered. My Apollo has told me that. None of us has any reason to be pleased, but if the heroes of the oppressors are murdered and perish, some malicious pleasure can do no harm.

*Chorus* Joy is the falsest of instruments, and no joy sounds falsest than the bride's, when she goes to the scaffold called wedding to be deprived of all the sacred joy of virginity, which is exchanged to slavery for life. But she will seem happy anyway and will conceal well her tragedy under the make-up of her false joy, this paint, that constantly has to be speckled on thicker in constantly smearing layers. The mirror, which she only sees alone and in the mornings, will be her only truth.

*Cassandra* Rejoice with us, o women of Troy, that we now without restrictions may abandon ourselves to a total tragedy without end! (*laughs hysterically*)

*Creusa* (*appears with her son and Anchises*) Have we come right? All the city is a madhouse, but the royal palace seems to be the worst.

*Aeneas* There you are at last! I was on my way to you but was checked by these horrors. Priam is dead and also Hector's only little son. I could not defend them against Pyrrhus, a combination of fearful war madness and war god.

*Creusa* And I can tell you that the dashing Paris is no more. When he couldn't escape with his Helena one more time, for this time she was no longer willing to follow him as his slave, he was just about to take the Spartan lady's life, when he was discovered up on the north wall. Someone calmly drew a bow, fired and hit the young rogue straight in his throat, and he fell, but Helena is now again with Menelaos.

*Aeneas* I don't know if I can regret this. But we have to escape.

*Anchises* I can't make it any more, my son. I am too old. Leave me with Priam and let me be a gravedigger for Troy, for I will hardly be good for anything else any more.

*Hecuba* So all the surviving victims of Troy turn into deprived old men, who have nothing more to do in life but to bury such corpses of Troy that can be found.

*Chorus* And the women, who are only childless widows, have nothing else to do in their lives than to cry themselves to death. For who can survive this night and live on?

*Cassandra* Only madmen who live to see the ruling tyrants perish. And I promise you, my grieving sisters, that they all will perish!



*Andromakhe* Aeneas, leave this terror stage of only raving violence and madness and desperate sorrow and escape with your family. You still have time, and you can make it. You have lingered far too long.

*Anchises* My legs just won't carry me. I cannot walk any more in a city like this. My knees are dragged down like lead to the running streams of blood among the stones of Ilium's lanes.

*Aeneas* Get up on my back, father! I shall carry you!

*Andromakhe* You must hurry!

*Pyrrhus (outside)* She ran into the palace. She is there with other fallen women. Arrest them all!

*Andromakhe* Hurry!

*Creusa* Come, Aeneas, before Pyrrhus discovers us.

*(Aeneas carries Anchises on his back. His little son Aschanios drags him in his pants. They leave, but Creusa stays behind.)*

Andromakhe, come with us.

*Andromakhe* I will not leave my dead son.

*Hecuba* She will not leave the dead Troy. She is one of us now, the gravedigging sisters of Troy.

*Creusa* No, you are one of the living. You are my sister. You are one of our family, and we shall not desert you.

*Pyrrhus (breaks in with a number of warriors)* Here they are gathered! Arrest those three who haven't turned yet into old witches!

*Andromakhe* Now it is too late.

*(Cassandra, Andromakhe and Creusa are arrested.)*

*Creusa* You do not touch me!

*Pyrrhus* Are you perhaps untouched? We will see about that! Beauties of Troy must not be left unmolested!

*Creusa (brings out a dagger)* Even if I am left alone, I will defend myself and Troy with my life! *(tries to strike at Pyrrhus)*

*Pyrrhus* I have no patience with such manners. *(strikes her down)* There are other whores who are less insane. *(to the warriors)* Take them away. I have in any case Cassandra and the beautiful Andromakhe.

*Hecuba* You have all the blood of Troy on your hands, and we furies will pursue you in your dreams forever so that you may never sleep again! This murder of this young mother is the crown of your life's work of curses and atrocities!

*Pyrrhus* Who was she?

*Hecuba* Creusa, the wife of Aeneas.

*Pyrrhus* One of them. One less. And where has Aeneas gone?

*Hecuba* I know that, but I will not tell you.

*Pyrrhus* Do you also want to die? I can subject women to slow torture until they speak or die.

*Hecuba* Yes, go ahead and kill me! But I will tell it anyway! Aeneas is safe! Did you understand? Aeneas is fled in safety!

*Pyrrhus* The old hag of a wasted whore only tries to tease me. She doesn't know where he is. Take them out now. Make sure no one escapes. Pinion their hands. Strike them if they make trouble. Our prices will be shared equally between us by Agamemnon.

*Andromakhe* You can wreck our bodies, but you will never gain the soul of Troy and even less any woman's heart from the Troy that you have ravished.

*Pyrrhus* I am happy if I just get the fair Andromakhe, Hector's widow.

*Chorus* The men enjoy humiliating. It's their only real passion. They never know any love, only the desire of violation. Love is the property of the women, but with them it is always just transformed into endless suffering.

*(The warriors push out the pinioned Andromakhe and Cassandra.)*

*Cassandra* Accursed Pyrrhus, your death will be more terrible than that of any dead Trojan. But ahead of that you shall be drowned in a worse dishonour than any mortal.

*Pyrrhus* Make sure that bitch is shut up!

*Cassandra* And the prophecies that I, Cassandra, make myself guilty of always come true, especially if people refused to listen to them.

*Pyrrhus* Shut up, you bitch! You will never be mine! Gag her!

*(Cassandra is gagged and brought out.)*

*Hecuba* Will you not also strike and bind and gag me and all my sisters?

*Pyrrhus* You old whore of a hag has nothing left to give. You are not attractive to anyone. I will give over you and your sisters to Ulysses for having given us the hell of Troy.

*Hecuba* Was he the one who was Athena's favourite and who built the horse?

*Pyrrhus* Yes, who else? No one else is so infernally sly. He alone gave us all Troy but not until after ten years of human torment and ordeals.

*Hecuba* Then I and my sisters will belong to Ulysses.

*Pyrrhus* Yes, give him hell, so that he will have ten years of an extra hell as proper thanks for these ten years of hell by Troy. *(leaves)*

*Hecuba* The Greeks will be much to be pitied.

*Chorus* For Troy is to be pitied, and that is only because of the Greeks.

*Hecuba* I think those who survive will be more pitiable than those who already died.

*Chorus* You mean that your old man Priam, the beautiful Creusa, Aeneas' wife, and the small child Astyanax are happy and lucky, who already have been killed?

*Hecuba* As unendurable as our lives now will become, the already dead are comparatively happy who don't have to experience the horrific consequences of the fall of Troy.

*Chorus* For Troy will fall but once, while men shall go on falling forever.

*Hecuba* And no fall is harder nor deeper than the one that never reaches an end.

*Chorus* And such a fall is common for all humanity with their heart-crushing history.

*Hecuba* Grieve and cry forever, poor shattered heartbroken women tormented to death, for your only life is suffering!

*Chorus* We follow you, Hecuba, crying and grieving forever for the benefit of the world, for all the rain that gives life to earth and the world is only tears of suffering and of women's sorrows, of which there will never be any end.

Scene 6.

*Ulysses* Who wanted this? Not I. Damned Diomedes, who made me disclose the trick of the wooden horse against my own will! I forbade that rogue to reveal that infamous possibility! But what's done is done and cannot be undone, and I fear that future generations will accuse us forever and call us the vilest barbarians. The worst would be if they put all the blame on me. I will probably be censured for all times and defined as the villain whose schemes led to the fall of the wonderful city of Troy.

*Menelaos* So you stand here alone brooding heavily, Ulysses, while all the others are busy about the sack and at work with plunder?

*Ulysses* Isn't it enough that I caused the fall of Troy?

*Menelaos* You only hatched the plan. All the others carried it through, while you are just standing here looking on.

*Ulysses* You were the only Greek who had any reason to come here to make trouble with the Trojans, for you were the one whose wife they abducted.

*Menelaos* And still I was more disgusted by the exaggerated enterprise than anyone else, especially after ten years.

*Ulysses* Wasn't Helena worth the price?

*Menelaos* No woman was ever worth such a price and not even a tenth of that price. But my brother turned this painful scandal into a political issue, and thus he got all Hellas to follow him on a conquest expedition to Troy. My wife was just an excuse.

*Ulysses* And therefore we have ten years of fatal harvests of young people's bodies in the burial grounds of the battlefields of Troy, rotting without sense or meaning, just for Agamemnon's royal vanity.

*Menelaos* Among them Achilles, the greatest hero of Hellas, and the noble Hector, even greater as a man.

*Ulysses* And half the population of Ilium.

*Menelaos* Including Priam, the old wasted man, practically murdered on his death bed, and the small boy Astyanax, the only son of Hector, brutally slaughtered for nothing.

*Ulysses* We fought the war during ten long years, but young brats like Pyrrhus brought home the victory in his first fights – and expropriates the honour while he commits dishonourable murders of old men, women and children.

*Menelaos* So he took the lives of king Priam and Astyanax and even Creusa, the wife of Aeneas, inside the royal palace?

*Ulysses* Many women have testified to that and among them Hecuba and Cassandra.

*Menelaos* And what did Aeneas do?

*Ulysses* He seems to just have remained standing there looking on until he eventually fled. The slaughter wrath of Pyrrhus was so brutal that Aeneas hardly even dared to get near to him.

*Menelaos* But he got away with his life and that of his father and son.

*Ulysses* And a handful of other fugitive Trojans.

*Menelaos* I hope he makes it. I grant that to those few Trojans that are left.

*Ulysses* It's mostly only women.

*Menelaos* Yes, what shall we do with them all?

*Agamemnon (enters)* So here you are. Have you tired of the disgraceful war the hour before it is over?

*Ulysses* We are standing here discussing the fates of the Trojan women.

*Agamemnon* That's why I came here. I was just hoping to meet you. Is there any special woman you wish to take care of, Ulysses?

*Ulysses* No one at all. I have my Penelope at home, and all I want is to get home to her quickly.

*Agamemnon* And you, my brother?

*Menelaos* I only want my Helena.

*Agamemnon* She is yours of course, this time forever, as everybody hopes. But we have some problems. There is no one who wants to take care of Hecuba. Could you, Ulysses, at all consider accepting her?

*Ulysses* I would gladly do what I can for her and support her.

*Menelaos* Who gets Andromakhe?

*Agamemnon* For the sake of Achilles, I believe we have to give her to the young Pyrrhus, although it's against my mind. But he is hard and insists on having the poor mother for his slave.

*Menelaos* And you take Cassandra yourself?

*Agamemnon* I could need a priestess of Apollo for moral comfort as I go home to Clytaemnestra.

*Ulysses* And what happens to the few Trojans that have survived? Helenos?

*Agamemnon* He retires back into the country and becomes a hermit.

*Menelaos* I trust there is no one else than Aeneas who has got away?

*Agamemnon* Yes. That refugee, who alone among all Trojans escaped from his city, is the only Trojan hope for a future. But once you have started running away from your duty of fighting for it, you usually continue running away for the rest of your life.

*Ulysses* Poor Aeneas. We shall probably hear about his wanderings.

*Menelaos* He has probably gone to Libya.

*Agamemnon* I think so too. May he survive. After all this I wish no more harm to anyone who once had a home in the fallen Troy.

*Ulysses* Not even the dead Paris?

*Agamemnon* He got his reward and rests in an unknown grave without a name and no inscription, according to the will of both Menelaos and Helena.

*Menelaos* To protect Paris' body from being desecrated. No one except me and Agamemnon knows the location of the grave.

*Ulysses* Then perhaps he may rest in a peace he never deserved.

*Agamemnon* That's what it looks like, but it is best that way. We don't want a sequel to the war. It is over now.

*Ulysses* Paris was its beginning and its end. The major damage was that Paris' end did not come directly at the beginning of his damage.

*Agamemnon* Yes, I agree. Paris alone was responsible for every single tragedy that was caused by the Trojan war. (*Menelaos and Ulysses look at each other.*)

*Ulysses* Is that the official Greek version?

*Agamemnon* There is no other. So it shall be written in history.

*Ulysses* And the sack of the city? The plunder? The treasures that Pyrrhus, Aias, you and others have taken care of? And the control of the Dardanelles?

*Agamemnon* Ulysses, leave the political part to me. I will handle it. And you will be wisest in holding your tongue about everything that doesn't concern you.

*Ulysses* So I must content myself with Hecuba.

*Agamemnon* The only reward of war is the glory of it. No one ever got any better reward of a war than his own participation in it.

*Menelaos* But who has used a victory to punish a loser has only sowed the seeds of revenge.

*Ulysses* It will be impossible here in Troy. The city is reduced to rabble and gravel. It can never be raised from the dead.

*Agamemnon* Let the case rest at that, Ulysses, and you will be a wise politician. (*leaves.*)

*Ulysses* What does he mean? What is he afraid of?

*Menelaos* He has always been like that.

*Ulysses* Why?

*Menelaos* He has always felt the power of the family as a curse on his shoulders. That's why he has never been able to joke.

*Ulysses* Poor Agamemnon!

*Menelaos* Poor all of us, who have carried through this damned disgraceful war.

#### Scene 7. Darkness and spooky shadows.

*Cassandra* The halls are empty of echoing ghosts. Nothing is so dark as the mental darkness. People are transformed into shadows without speech and without shapes, that hide in darkness where only prophetic eyes can see them that can penetrate the deepest dimensions of darkness. Come forth, you unhappy executed shadows, and feel ashamed that you exist although you are dead, for no life is so obstinately surviving as the one that was extinguished without right by force and violence.

*Hecuba (comes crawling forth)* Cassandra, my daughter, I fear that we are the only survivors.

*Cassandra* The question is whether we are alive or dead. The question is if we who are dead are the ones who are living or if we are dead although living.

*Hecuba* Alas, she is out of her mind.

*Cassandra* No, mother, my mind is clear and with me. What I don't know is if my body is with me or not.

*Hecuba* You warned against the horse, but as usual no one wanted to listen to you, and Paris silenced you brutally as always and drowned you and Laokoon and all other negative voices with his party brawling and hysterical dance music, as if he wanted to force everyone to be merry and start the dance over Trojan graves. Alas, I don't know if he lives any longer. I don't know if any of my sons is still alive.

*Cassandra* The voice of sense is silenced with the moderate diplomat Helenos, my precocious twin brother. The voice of outrageously scornful presumption is silenced with my beautiful but seductive brother Paris. The voice of righteousness and honesty is silenced with the eternally royal Hector, best among men and better than all gods. Youth with its freshness and innocence is murdered with Troilus, my youngest brother. Silenced and murdered is the dashing loveliness of youth with my thoroughly positive and friendly brother Deiphobus. Silenced is Troy by the rape of the murderers and their flames, which sacrificed the independence of Troy first of all by the vilest of all murders on my father, an old man on the brink of death, tottering by his grave, who couldn't even defend himself or Troy but who was butchered anyway.

*Hecuba* Alas, Cassandra, your complaints are hardly making things any better.

*Cassandra* You just wait. I have only started.

*Andromakhe* (*enters with hesitation, in grey rags, torn and worn and white-haired*)

I still hear living voices in Troy if though it's only plaintive cries and woes and furious gnashings of teeth. Alas, my mother-in-law and sister, are there only wasted wrecks of women left then?

*Hecuba* It doesn't look any better.

*Cassandra* Don't grieve, Andromakhe, for Hector, your husband, is alive. Don't grieve, mother, for all your sons are alive, and Priam, our father, praises himself blessed among them. Don't grieve, you redundant widows of Troy, all victims of rape and fatherless children, all childless mothers and wild distracted children who don't know their names any more and all madmen who have been bereft of their minds and sense and souls by the war, for you are all living in triumph, while the victorious Hellenes are facing the woes and miseries of doomsday forever.

*Hecuba* As usual, Cassandra, your speech is not very appropriate.

*Cassandra* Apollo doesn't care.

*Chorus* (*of women, crawling and dragging themselves in, a frightful collection of revolting widows and haggard halfmad creatures in rags*)

It is still not too late. Still Hector could rise from the dead and redeem us from the tyranny of the rapists. Still Troy can be resurrected and rebuilt in greater glory than ever. Still Paris could draw his bow and send his poisoned arrows into our uncompromising oppressors. Still Aeneas could save himself and his people to

another and better country than that of the Hellenes. We can still like the fifty daughters of Danaos set our knives into anyone who tries to touch us. Still Poseidon and Apollo could take a massive revenge on the whole world for our sake.

*(They break out into a horrifying chorus of complaints, like professional weepers.)*

*Agamemnon (enters with Ulysses)* It's worse than I thought. What have we done? Are there only mourners left of all Troy?

*Ulysses* Mourners and ghosts and ruins.

*Agamemnon* We must take care of them. *(approaches the women)*

My ladies, we wish you no harm.

*Cassandra (bursting into mad laughter of scorn)* Listen to him! The foremost rapist of all! The leader of the massacre on the people of Troy! Hector, did you know that the leader of the Hellenes was such a preposterous jester?

*Ulysses* Hector is dead, Cassandra, as dead as Achilles.

*Cassandra* No, he isn't dead, for he has a work of eternity to perform in that he forever will demand revenge on Achilles.

*Agamemnon* Alas, the demented prophetess wounds my heart. Are you also pursued by wronged ghosts, poor priestess?

*Cassandra* I see a king carrying the worst of burdens of guilt in our time which he will have to atone for by the most abominable death in the name of injustice.

*Agamemnon* Do you then divine some cure for my pain?

*Cassandra* I see a cure for everyone's pains – death.

*Agamemnon* Can you see that I am persecuted?

*Cassandra* Yes, you are persecuted by yourself.

*Agamemnon* Not by Achilles, Iphigenia, Priam, Hector and Patroclus?

*Cassandra* Yes, and many more.

*Agamemnon* Come then and comfort me and show me the right way onto death.

*Cassandra* Apollo will help you to your doom, which won't be his though but that of the human injustice.

*Agamemnon* You enchant me by your ambiguous language, which is too enigmatic not to convey some meaning.

*Ulysses* Queen Hecuba, it has fallen on my part to take care of you and give you an old age of decency.

*Hecuba* What old age has any decency? Not that of an abominable old widow like me, who only has curses left of her life to pepper the world with until I at last may be allowed to die. I hope it will be soon, so that you won't have to suffer me, Ulysses.

*Andromakhe* Poor Hellenes, by trying to dress our wounds you can only prolong our pains. Don't you realize that there is nothing for you to do here but to make the situation worse? Your bandages only make our wounds deeper, your efforts at comforts only poison our souls, your alimonies are just new humiliations, and your mere presence can never become more than just hateful to us. Take your slaves and murder them and then go after having done with it. You have got your trade

monopoly on the Hellespont. What more can you ask for? What is then the prostrated human shreds of Troy more to you?

*Agamemnon* Andromakhe, venerable widow of Hector, I am afraid that you have been allotted to Pyrrhus, the son of Achilles.

*Andromakhe* That is worse than a death sentence. So my husband's murderer is given the right to ravish me?

*Hecuba* You are wasted and grey, Andromakhe. Don't worry. No one wants any of us any more.

*Agamemnon* Come to my heart, my child, and comfort me and help me atone for my crimes against humanity.

*Cassandra* Agamemnon, your crimes against humanity shall always be surpassed by worse crimes against humanity, if that could be some comfort to you.

*Agamemnon* Any comfort is better than no comfort, and I will buy it for whatever you demand up to the price of my life.

*Cassandra* It is not I nor the gods who will demand your life but the one you would least of all suspect.

*Agamemnon* Some of my own kin? Menelaos?

*Cassandra* No, no one you could imagine, so don't even try to guess.

*Agamemnon* Your spells fascinate and entrance me. May they lead me right and show me the way out of the jungle of my crimes.

*Cassandra* I will follow you, Agamemnon, all the way to death.

*(Agamemnon leaves with Cassandra, and Ulysses with Hecuba.)*

*Andromakhe* Come then, Pyrrhus, and take me, so that my poison may infect all your tribe and all your race forever.

*Chorus* That's all we are good for any more – cursing all men forever. May the poison imbue all the societies of Hellas, so that they all may perish in self-destructive civil wars. No one can ever chastise hate when once it has been let out by the violence of transgressions, and when once it is let out it will bolt forever and spread only the death of vendettas further on. Thus have we been made witches by the war, who forever may have the useful function in the world to curse all wars and all men who take part in them.

*Andromakhe* Let's retire back into the shadows and there lament forever without being seen and noticed but without ever falling quiet, so that the belated wisdom of our voices at length always may continue to sound louder and longer than all male self-indulgence.

*Chorus* Let's follow Andromakhe, sisters, down into the eternal bog of perdition of neverending complaints, protests and accusations against the men.

*Andromakhe* Let us vanish and cease to be, like death, but without ever ceasing to be active anyway.

*Chorus* We fade out with you, Andromakhe.

*(darkness)*



Scene 8.

*Menelaos* No trace of Paris?

*Diomedes* I am afraid he has got away.

*Menelaos* A rogue born with luck finally escapes the responsibility for the greatest social disaster of his time, and we don't even know if he is alive or dead.

*Diomedes* Aias could have killed him in his berserk confusion. He left all his butchered victims totally irrecognizable and went forth like a slaughtering machine leaving only mincemeat behind of people of old age, women and children.

*Menelaos* The worst face of war and its worst result: the total brutality completely dehumanised. Well, I am ready to meet my queen. Is she ready to meet me?

*Diomedes* She is ready for the confrontation, Menelaos.

*Menelaos* I hope so after ten years, for I have some things to say to her.

*Diomedes (commands)* Bring in Queen Helena of Sparta!

*Helena (enters, more beautiful than ever)* My husband, what is your wish?

*Menelaos (loud)* Leave us alone!

*(Everybody leaves. Diomedes drives all out and is the last one to leave.)*

What do you think?

*Helena* It is difficult to reunite after a divorce of ten years.

*Menelaos* Don't be so bloody formal. You behave as if everything that Hellas and Troy went through for your sake was nothing much to care about as if you were pleased with the war.

*Helena* Don't talk to me about the war, Menelaos. It was yours and even more Agamemnon's war, who had decided to take Troy long before Paris came to Sparta. He kept Hesione in Argo in the hope that it would become a reason for war, but Troy had patience and just negotiated. You have finally won, you have honestly for ten years worked and fought for the reward of getting me back. What has happened to Paris?

*Menelaos* Nobody knows. Thousands of corpses lie rotting all over Troy, they have to be burned quickly or buried, and Paris could be one of them. The massacre was terrible. The men were completely out of control in their rage dammed up for ten years to the prospect of slaughtering Troy, which had caused so many casualties among them.

*Helena* Yes, that's how the men function. The rage is their motor, which they only live for cultivating and give vent to in as violent expressions as possible. There you have all the male power and the masculine force.

*Menelaos* You must despise all men infinitely.

*Helena* You have worked long and hard, Menelaos, and deserved your salary. I forgive you. Can you forgive me? *(approaches him with her hands stretched out in a conciliatory gesture)*

*Menelaos* Who was ever unable to forgive a woman? *(accepts her hands with both of his – and embraces her)* I have been longing for this for ten years, Helena.

*Helena* Thanks, Menelaos, for your fidelity. All the others have had their concubines, but I never heard of anything like that about you. Only faithfulness can convince a woman of a man's competence.

*Menelaos* My fidelity is yours for the rest of my life.

*Helena* I know one who could possibly know something about Paris.

*Menelaos* Who?

*Helena* Cassandra. She can see the dead and has been right alone throughout the war. Paris always tried to shut her in for her unpleasant truths, he charged her with treason and tried to have her sentenced for spreading bad morals, but she was always right.

*Menelaos* Agamemnon has taken care of her.

*Helena* Let's ask her about Paris and the unknown fates of others.

*Ulysses (enters)* Menelaos, Agamemnon is here with Cassandra and asks for an audience.

*Menelaos* He is welcome.

*(enter Agamemnon with Cassandra)*

*Helena (cordially approaches Cassandra)* Sister, we were just talking about you. Did you feel that we needed you?

*Menelaos* You seem quite calm and relaxed today, Agamemnon. Have the ghosts left you at last?

*Agamemnon* Cassandra here has scattered them.

*Cassandra* No, they are still there. They will always be there. After death they are desperate about all they have lost and try by any means to resume contact with those they left living behind, and sometimes they succeed with astonishing results. But they soon realize that there is nothing more they can do in the turbulent living world unless they take up life again in a new personality. Not until then they disappear.

*Ulysses* Cassandra is wiser than everybody else.

*Agamemnon* That's why I have chosen her for the chance of her being able to comfort me if anyone.

*Cassandra* You can't guess what comfort is expecting you.

*Helena* What do you know about Paris?

*Cassandra* I know everything about Paris. It's nothing to know anything about.

*Menelaos* Could you expound on this remarkable statement?

*Cassandra* Paris was all his life a scornful atheist. He denied all spiritual values and only lived for his egoism, his vanity and the satisfaction of his desires. He could only please sensually. He was a soul at a low level if he had any soul at all. Since he neither can be found in this world, in Hades or in the ether among other unblest spirits I am inclined to the last assumption.

*Menelaos* Are there people without souls?

*Ulysses* Just look at Aias.

*Agamemnon* You will have to discuss that later. We now have to organise our homeward journey and to get it started as soon as possible, for we are finished here

with Troy, and everyone is longing to get home. That's why I came here to get you going. Diomedes is already at it and almost ready to sail.

*Menelaos* At last I recognize my brother of action and determination.

*Agamemnon* The war is over, Menelaos. We now have a much longer and more difficult work ahead of us for peace.

*Ulysses* A war is atrociously efficient in its destruction, but peace is the eternal uphill struggle.

*Menelaos* And the greatest challenge.

*Agamemnon* Come, Cassandra. Help me become a better man, and help me create peace.

*Cassandra* The worst war is still waiting for you, Agamemnon.

*Agamemnon* Could there be a worse war than this one?

*Cassandra* Don't forget that you have a home and a wife in it.

*Agamemnon* If Menelaos has managed the problems with Helena, I should be able to manage her sister, who has just piously stayed at home.

*Helena* She will ask you about Iphigenia, Agamemnon.

*Agamemnon* And I am prepared to answer for everything – at the side of Cassandra.

*Cassandra* I will not leave you as long as you need me, Agamemnon.

*Agamemnon* Thank you, Cassandra. That's all I ask for. By your side I am prepared to meet and spite eternity with all its unblessed spirits.

*Cassandra* That's why they leave you alone, since the unblessed spirits of the living probably will be more than enough.

*Hector (vaguely in the background)* That's right, Cassandra. Keep it up, survive all our vain enemies, and let Troy triumph over history.

*Cassandra* Brother, what do you think I am here for?

*(The others look questioningly at each other.)*

*Helena* Don't ask Cassandra with whom she is talking when the immortals of eternity are speaking with her.

*(The others are content enough, and they all leave.)*

### Scene 9. Carthage. The splendid court.

*Dido* Your accounts, Aeneas, go deeper into my heart than any minstrel song. You are more than a poet, for your touching stories are the reality.

*Aeneas* But that reality is the saddest and most painful possible.

*Dido* But you have survived it. That's the point.

*Aeneas* Still I wonder if it wouldn't have been better if I had died with Hector or with Creusa.

*Dido* Forget your wife. She is dead. The only life that counts is the one that goes on. If we thought too much of the dead, they will just pull us down earlier into their darkness.

*Aeneas* Creusa was my wife and the beautiful mother of my son.

*Dido* She certainly was most enviable. But it is a pity that you don't know what happened to the Greeks after the fall of Troy.

*Aeneas* I have heard rumours.

*Dido* Do you know anything?

*Aeneas* We passed an island on the way after the storms where we ran into a hermit. He knew much that was of interest to us.

*Dido* You make me ready to burst with curiosity.

*Aeneas (turns to his own)* My old friend, tread forth and tell our noble queen what you recounted to us.

*Hermit (comes forth)* What I have learned I had from a secure source. I have always served Apollo, alone among the gods never to have deserted Troy, not even after the fall of Troy. I know everything about the Hellenes who joined in the fatal plunder and devastating slaughter. None of them will find any happiness at home.

*Aeneas* Pyrrhus, the butcher of Priam and Astyanax?

*Hermit* He will never know his most unwilling concubine Andromakhe. He thinks he loves her, but he only desires to violate the wife like his father violated the husband after having murdered him. The wise Andromakhe succeeds by patience to endure the evil and sadism of Pyrrhus, until Pyrrhus tires of the much older woman and takes to a mistress, then several such and finally the wives of close friends, for the wild Pyrrhus always wished for himself something of a harem. But that will not do in a country of strong wills and opposition like Hellas. He was finally disgracefully murdered by the vilest intrigue. He never had a son and least of all with Andromakhe.

*Aeneas* Ulysses, the executor of the fall of Troy?

*Hermit* The hardest tried of all. The god of stormy seas Poseidon brought him shipwrecks, delays and wayward journeys to nowhere without end. The king of Ithaca almost never came home, and when he did, all alone, naked and without means, there was immediately a local civil war on the island. He had been gone away for almost twenty years, and during this long period many tried to seize his property and wife Penelope, who remained loyal in spite of all, the mother of the only son Telemachus. When he came back he had to combat all the suitors, but with his bow he managed to dispose of all of them. This led to rebellion from his people, as all had relatives among the massacred suitors. There was never any peace on the island again until Ulysses finally was insidiously murdered in an ambush, and the question is if Telemachus could be a king any more.

*Aeneas* Murdered in an ambush! That's his reward for all his scheming!

*Dido* And Agamemnon?

*Hermit* Murdered in his bath the same evening he came home by his wife Clytaemnestra and her lover Aegisthos.

*Dido* What did Agamemnon's children think of that?

*Hermit* Agamemnon's son Orestes took his mother's life and that of Aegisthos and then went insane. Menelaos forced the poor youth into exile, and Electra, his sister, followed him.

*Dido* Agamemnon murdered in his bath by his wife, and his son a murderer of his own mother! It goes well with the history of the house of Atreus with all its bloody cruelty and power. And Menelaos and Helena? Did they ultimately find any happiness?

*Hermit* My queen, you can imagine. They were quite young when Helena was abducted, and then Paris made good use of her for ten years. When Menelaos finally saw her again they were both rather tired and wasted, but they still found some friendship together. Like Ulysses they were seized by dreadful storms on their way home and had to find refuge in Egypt. It took some year before they returned to Sparta, and then they found Agamemnon dead and Orestes insane. In brief, many hardships united them in a mature hardened friendship, and they are both still alive in a prosperous and well organized Sparta.

*Dido* Could you call them happy?

*Hermit* What do you think, noble queen, after ten years at Troy, after ten years of his wife having been made use of by another, and after disasters without end in the family in the advent of sad old age? Agamemnon had no sense of humour, and his brother has that even less after his life experience.

*Dido* Who else was there among the Hellenes? What about old Nestor?

*Hermit* He was the only one to reach home in safety to Pylus, and he had a harmonious old age and death. He was of great help to Telemakhos with his problems on the barren Ithaca.

*Dido* And Diomedes?

*Hermit* He also came home to endless civil wars and conflicts, but with his indomitability and great initiative he managed them all. He was alone in bringing no woman with him from Troy.

*Dido* Maybe that's why he reached home safely and happily and retained his position and realm: he got away.

*Aeneas* Aias?

*Hermit* Mad. After the sack of Troy he ended up in a conflict with Pyrrhus, went into a fit of berserk rage and could no longer have anything to do with anyone. Something went wrong with him in his head during the plundering of Troy. The Greeks had to take measures against him, and he then took his own life.

*Aeneas* The only honest Greek, alone about refusing to survive the fall of Troy.

*Hermit* But the fall of that city became to all the Hellenes like a heavy unbearable hangover. There they had made war for ten years, and after such a strain there had to be some kind of a reaction. When such an enormous effort comes to an end there is an emptiness which can't be coped with. Imagine ten years of incessant partying and drinking, and then imagine the consequences, waking up the day after. What a backlash!

*Dido* I am not initiated in the strange world of vanity and exaggerations which only men constantly associate with. To me love seems more worth to wage effort, life and energy on.

*Aeneas* The fact that women never can take part in any war just proves more than anything else that war is nothing but an inhuman aberration and an abhorrence to all common sense.

*Dido* That's my view as well. We seem to agree quite well, my dear guest from Troy.

*Aeneas* You are wise as a queen.

*Dido* Stay here and become my husband. Build your new Troy here by this holy Carthage. The two of us could together build a glorious future for us and our nation.

*Aeneas* My queen, such an overwhelmingly generous offer is difficult not to consider, but it demands careful afterthought. I am responsible for a number of men, and if they don't want to stay here I must continue further on with them.

*Dido* So confer with your men in peace and quiet, but you should be able to convince them.

*Aeneas* I can't convince anyone to abandon his free will and what it demands.

*Dido* Of course. You are free. I can't rule over you. But you can rule your destinies, decide them and form them according to constructive common sense.

*Hermit* Prince Aeneas, I can see a most unexpected impediment to the plans of our wise queen.

*Aeneas* Can you? I can't.

*(enter Creusa, exactly as she was after Pyrrhus' murder of her)*

*Hermit* So you can't see the guest who is now entering?

*Aeneas* Yes, by all the gods!

*Hermit* This is a sensitive position. Be careful about what you now say, for there are too many ears around here.

*Aeneas* Have you come to deliver some message?

*Creusa* Yes. I constantly watch over you. Go on, Aeneas, for Carthage has no future.

*Dido* Has he been visited by some god, whom he can only see himself with the hermit?

*Aeneas* Dido, I can't deceive you, it is Creusa, my wife, who now has visited me.

*Dido* But isn't she dead?

*Aeneas* The dead never sleep.

*Dido* And what does she want here?

*Aeneas* She advises me to travel on.

*Dido (rises)* Now it has gone too far! It is human enough for women to indulge in jealous intrigues, but for a deceased wife to hinder the widower from a new better marriage is over the top! I can't accept this! Obey your common sense, Aeneas, and forget the sickly phantoms that now haunt your brains and darken them by harmful morbidity of insane temptations of your imagination!

*Aeneas* My men have the last word.

*Dido* Go to your men then, and try to reason with them without superstitious emotions! Cold reasoning is the only way to lasting happiness! Everything else is just lies! (*leaves in anger*)

*Aeneas* Now we can speak undisturbed, Creusa. What is it you want?

*Creusa* Leave this place immediately and go on with your journey. There are dangers here that you can't see.

*Aeneas* What kind of dangers?

*Creusa* Dido is a dangerous woman.

*Aeneas* Why do you think so?

*Creusa* She has no feelings.

*Aeneas* Is that all? I thank you for the warning, but to me she seems quite reasonable.

*Creusa* Reason is not enough to the mechanisms of destiny. If you only stick to reason you see nothing of what really is going on.

*Aeneas* In life you were always right, Creusa, but what shall I think of you in death? If you see ghosts in the middle of the day, you must first of all doubt your own senses.

*Creusa* Take help of your supersenses. I have conveyed my message. Farewell until further. (*leaves*)

*Aeneas* Creusa!

*Hermit* She is gone. Ghosts usually are casual and brief and shocking in unpleasant obviousness. Your difficult situation, Aeneas, is now to take a stand in a most sensitive issue: the question of a choice between two women, and it will not be easier by one of them being out of this world. (*leaves*)

*Aeneas (alone, collects himself, cries:)* Creusa! You are asking too much!

(*curtain*)

#### Act V scene 1.

The castle of Argo with court, walls and watchtower.

*Guard 1* What is actually going on here?

*Guard 2* You tell me.

*Guard 1* We live in limbo and know neither a way in or out.

We are all pendant in the air and don't know if we are heading towards better times or straight at perdition, but honestly speaking, everything indicates the latter.

*Guard 2* I agree, and I suppose we all do.

*Guard 1* Still no solution of the situation is coming. We are sliding downhill to nowhere like the queen herself.

*Guard 2* But don't talk about it so she may hear it.

*Guard 1* Everybody is talking about it, and she doesn't care.

*Guard 2* Still she prefers not to hear about it in the open, and she has got the power.

*Guard 1* Talk about the power of women. There would be none if there weren't men who willingly let themselves be hen-pecked.

*Guard 2* Which men always did, and therefore there was never any order in the world.

*Guard 1* And there will hardly be any either, until Agamemnon eventually comes home, if he hasn't been slain like everybody else at Troy.

*Guard 2* The odds are against us and against the whole world order and have always been so.

*Guard 1* Still humanity oddly enough never succeeds in destroying itself but just goes one getting worse all the time.

*Guard 2 (touches the arm of 1)* You mentioned Agamemnon. Look over there. (*indicates a faint light in the distance*)

*Guard 1* A light! A fire!

*Guard 2* It could only mean one thing.

*Guard 1* You said it. The impossible has happened.

*Guard 2* Troy has fallen! The king is coming home!

*Guard 1* After ten years. Incredible.

*Guard 2* It must be celebrated.

*Guard 1* The whole world must celebrate it.

(*to a maid with a bucket of water passing below*) You there!

*Maid* Don't try it! I am working!

*Guard 1* No, no, don't misunderstand me!

*Maid* A male advance can never be misunderstood.

*Guard 1* That's not the case!

*Maid* What else would it be?

*Guard 2* Don't be so damned ignorant and impertinent, little girl! Something is going on!

*Maid* I am not interested. I am working.

*Guard 2 (to 1)* They are always jumping to conclusions!

(*to the maid*) It's not about sex, you fool!

*Maid* Then don't trouble me!

*Guard 2* You hopeless wench, do you see the fire over there?

*Maid* What fire?

*Guard 1* Are you then blind as well?

*Maid* Shut up, you dirty dunce! Don't you think that I can see, that you are both a couple of most common dirty dolts?

*Guard 1* That's not what it is about!

*Maid* What fire are you talking about if you haven't got it in your pants?

*Guard 2* Are you as lewd as the queen?

*Maid* I serve her, you dirty blockhead!

*Guard 1* Who doesn't?

*Guard 2* Not any more, for Agamemnon is coming home!

*Maid* How do you know? (*puts down her bucket*)



*Guard 1* That's what the fire means, you harebrained blockhead!

*Maid (sees the fire)* You are actually right. It's the promised signal. It's the fall of Troy. And it has travelled along the coasts for how many days and nights? Probably at least for a month. Then Agamemnon and Menelaos could already be back...

*Guard 2* That's what we are telling you!

*Maid* Why didn't you say so in the first place? (*rushes out and forgets the bucket*)

*Guard 1* Now the castle will wake up.

*Guard 2* And the whole town. They must have seen it from the harbour already long since.

*Guard 1* Just imagine, and we never thought the day would come.

*Guard 2* And not the night either.

*Guard 1* Imagine, Agamemnon is coming home! What will the queen say?

*Guard 2* She will probably receive him well.

*Guard 1* Look, people are coming.

*Guard 2* Hope is awakening in humanity. May it never fade and die.  
(*Enter the first chorus of old men in the courtyard with torches.*)

*Chorus of old men (a few)* Our lord is close. Prepare for a royal arrival, o Argo!

(*a few others*) At last we have reached the day so much longed for!

(*others*) Troy is fallen! And victory to Hellas! At last we have won!

(*the first*) Now Menelaos and Agamemnon are expected in triumph

(*the others*) of magnificent splendour and in greater glory than ever!

(*the third*) Now may the entire Peloponnese rejoice from Argo to Pylus

(*the first*) with all Hellas in joy and rapture without end!

(*the others*) For Troy is fallen, and Hellas is now victor of Asia!

(*the third*) And the power is king Agamemnon's, the greatest of kings of Hellas!

*Clytaemnestra (appears splendidly dressed on the wall)* So it's true. Agamemnon has prevailed. Everything returns to normal, but after ten years of waiting.

*A servant* My queen, I hope it will not displease you.

*Clytaemnestra* You scamp, do I look as if I cried? But ten years of war carve deep wounds and ineffaceable scars in the soul. You can't just ignore it like a parenthesis.

*Servant* We have all changed with the years.

*Clytaemnestra* And the world with us. It will never be the same any more.

*Servant* But now we hope everything will return to normal.

*Clytaemnestra* Get out of my sight, you silly moron! Your inventiveness of platitudes is plain torture!

*Servant (goes down to the old men)* What's the matter with the queen?

*Old man* Don't ask us. Ask her.

*Another* We know well enough but dare not discuss it.

*Clytaemnestra* My husband! For ten years I have been waiting, with patience at first as faithful as a sailor's wife. I longed for you and fanatically clung to every fragment of news that was transmitted to me from your eternally cursed war. But then there was monotony. There was a deadlock. Nothing happened, and during five years, the

only thing I heard from Troy was, that all the glorious fighters, Aias, Achilles, my Agamemnon, his brother Menelaos, my brother-in-law, and even Diomedes only quarrelled among themselves about stolen mistresses, who they robbed from each other. Was the Trojan war then only a war of mistresses with my sister Helena on top of it as a basis for an epidemic of accelerating infidelity, which demanded the lives of the men for their stupidity? So mighty mistresses the world has never seen, who then throws Hellas into ten years of war just for their caprices. Then I forgot you, Agamemnon. Then you were no better than the wanton Helena, my sister, who cast the world into misery, if you for her sake took part in the Greek war against Troy just to fight there with other Hellenes about each others' ravished mistresses. (*enter the maid*) Has Electra heard the news?

*Maid* She will come.

*Clytaemnestra* My daughter, dull and sterile as a nun, who only devotes herself exemplarily to duties will probably be the only one to be pleased, Agamemnon, that she at least now will have a father again. All the gods know, that all I can feel is indifference.

*An old man* Here comes Electra.

*Electra (dressed in grey, barefoot, like a Cinderella)* My mother, you have asked me out of my humble cell. What forces me out of my convent?

*Clytaemnestra* Come up here, my daughter. A light has appeared far away beyond the sea that should fill your heart with joy.

*Electra* Has Ilion fallen? (*comes up*)

*Clytaemnestra* The great day is here that we have been waiting for since ten years. The kings will now return in triumph, your father Agamemnon and Menelaos of Sparta.

*Electra* Then my aunt Helena will also return?

*Clytaemnestra* I suppose so. If the fire has been lit that proclaims the fall of Troy, we should expect everyone to be back.

*Electra* I don't believe it until I can see my father with my own eyes.

*Clytaemnestra* You are a realist, my Electra, like your own mother.

*Messenger (enters in haste)* Agamemnon has landed down by the coast! He didn't want to tarry but chose to come here directly! He will be here with the vanguard on his chariot of triumph!

*Clytaemnestra* Then he shall be received with the most worthy welcome of his life! Old men, get a move on! A festive banquet shall be prepared and be ready when he comes! He shall be greeted with celebrations and a sumptuous dinner, red carpets and a wholesome bath! Get moving, old fellows! (*claps her hands. The old men start stirring.*)

*Electra* Mother, honestly speaking, you don't seem to be pleased.

*Clytaemnestra* For ten years he has deceived me with his mistresses in Asia. Your own sister was sacrificed at Calchis just the sake of getting wind in his sails for the war. Here I have walked alone for a decade and waited for him while he enjoyed his mistresses at large. Electra, I am only doing my duty. Expect no feelings from me.

You may have them as much as you like, but spare me that obligation, which is not mine.

*Electra* Mother, you are bitter.

*Clytaemnestra* He shall have a worthy reception. Then we shall see what kind of life we can have afterwards.

*Electra* What do you mean?

*Clytaemnestra* Nothing. Just go and make yourself ready.

*Guard 1* I can see him coming! A vanguard with torches and music!

*Clytaemnestra* Is he coming alone?

*Messenger* He has company.

*Clytaemnestra* Of his soldiers?

*Messenger* Not only.

*Clytaemnestra* Who else?

*Messenger* Musicians and friends.

*Clytaemnestra* Not king Menelaos?

*Messenger* No, his ship has not arrived. I heard that it was blown off course.

*Clytaemnestra* So my husband comes completely alone?

*Messenger* No, he is not standing alone on his chariot.

*Clytaemnestra* Who is with him?

*Messenger* Apollo's priestess Cassandra.

*Clytaemnestra* A girl!

*Messenger* No, a priestess of Apollo.

*Clytaemnestra* Who is she? How young and how beautiful?

*Messenger* A daughter of Priam, sister of Paris, Helenos and Hector.

*Clytaemnestra* A royal daughter!

*Messenger* No, just a priestess of Apollo's. They say she has the second sight.

*Clytaemnestra* Electra, go at once and help the preparations for a party! And dress up, so that you will look decent! You don't have your own father to welcome home every day! Begone now! Get going!

*Electra* Yes, mother. (*leaves*)

*Messenger* A noble and pious poor girl.

*Clytaemnestra* Yes, for the sake of piety and nobility she is mostly to be pitied. But get away now and help them open the city gate to Agamemnon! When Troy has fallen, all the gates of Hellas will be opened just to him.

*Old man (to another)* What do you think about the queen's intentions?

*Another* She seems to put some effort in receiving the king well.

*Old man* Yes, and then?

*The other* You never know what women think.

*Clytaemnestra (alone)* Think fast, Clytaemnestra! All Hellas and our entire future depends on your reception of your husband! Shall you be submissive to him or give him what he deserves after ten years' suffering? He stole your daughter and gave you hell instead. Shall he be rewarded for that? Or do you have a woman's right to take the law in your hands and give yourself a new and free life? What will the price

be? That is my problem. All bills come afterwards. The party first, and then the bill. No party, no bill. But if you can escape the bill? There's the temptation in its full irresistibility.

*Ladies' chorus (enters)* The king is drawing nigh with torches and glorious hecatombs.

*Second part* Spread roses and palm leaves on the king's way to the banquet.

*Third part* He has arrived in triumph as a victor after a world war.

*First part (dances forth strewing flowers)* Strew violets and sweet smelling nectar to the king's feet.

*Second part* Fill Argo with scents of honey and sweetest perfumes.

*Third part* Roll out velvet mats on every path he treads.

*First part* For the road he walks is sacred, the glorious victor.

*Second part* May all stones vanish from under his feet.

*Third part* May the ground become smooth as softest downs to his steps,

*First part* for he enters in glory and splendour that will shine forever

*Second part* and never fade in any way. Hail, Agamemnon!

*Third part* The greatest king of our country for all ages!

*(The gates open. The festive procession enters with dancing and music and king Agamemnon's chariot of triumph at the centre. With him on board is Cassandra.)*

*Agamemnon* Be not afraid, Cassandra. I am calm although I know what will happen. If you are prepared for catastrophes you are not affected by them except physically: the shock will be absent.

*Cassandra* What do you know about catastrophes, great king, who only has caused catastrophes for others but never happened to any yourself?

*Agamemnon* The entire history of my family is only catastrophes.

*Cassandra* Still you are fortunate, and you didn't have to experience any yourself, the first in your family who wasn't struck by the curse of the Atrides.

*Agamemnon* And therefore I expect the worst possible catastrophe any moment. Therefore I wanted you with me as a priestess in direct connection with the god, so that maybe something divine could be the result or avert the worst.

*Cassandra* Don't count on it. No wife, and even more no queen could remain faithful to her king if he stays away from home and its politics for ten years.

*Agamemnon* Don't judge Argo from Troy.

*Cassandra* I don't. But don't believe that any Greek city, no matter how small, could evade the damnation that the fate of Troy resulted in for the whole world and especially for Greece.

*Agamemnon* Let's see what this fate could be. *(starts approaching the palace. Its gates open up, the walls glide apart and reveal a sumptuous banqueting hall with grand table already laid.)*

*Clytaemnestra* Roll out the carpets! Not one trace of dust must reach his foot!

*(Red carpets are quickly rolled out all the way from the castle entrance to the chariot.)*

*Agamemnon* This I call a royal reception indeed.

*Clytaemnestra* Glorious king, my husband! Welcome back! We salute you with all the generosity and perpetual sumptuousness of Greece!

*Agamemnon* My queen, my wife, this is almost too much.  
*Clytaemnestra* Too much of what and to whom? Could it be too much for the victor of Troy and ten years of war?  
*Agamemnon* I was not alone.  
*Clytaemnestra* But you were the king.  
*Agamemnon* It would never have worked without Ulysses and Nestor.  
*Clytaemnestra* Nor without my sister Helena and the gang of villains in Troy.  
*Agamemnon* What are we celebrating? Just a mass slaughter of thousands of men for nothing and the annihilation of an innocent and flourishing city of trade.  
*Clytaemnestra* But it is all over now, and you are at home.  
*Agamemnon* I thank you, my queen, but I can't bring myself to tread on your red carpet like of blood.  
*Clytaemnestra* Is then king Agamemnon superstitious and afraid?  
*Agamemnon* We all grow more sensitive with the years. In this carpet I can see nought else than innocent blood.  
*Clytaemnestra* It is just fabric that has been coloured.  
*Agamemnon* With blood?  
*Clytaemnestra* No, with flowers and juices.  
*Ladies' chorus* Tread forth, Agamemnon, on the path of triumph that you deserved.  
*Second part* The fabrics are dyed by ointments to beautify your feet.  
*Third part* Your steps are sacred to us, for you are sacred as our king.  
*First part* For ten years you were lost as our king, but now you have come home.  
*Second part* Never has Hellas seen a greater victor than Agamemnon.  
*Third part* You are already a national symbol to all Greek countries  
*First part* from Asia and Cyprus, from Pontus and Tarsus to Crete and Malta, Illyria, Italy and the rocks of Heracles.  
*Third part* Your glory is eternal, and so be all your splendour,  
*First part* great king, the most fortunate of all men!  
*Second part* In the palace there is a welcoming banquet with a bath.  
*Third part* You will always be served as the supreme king of Hellas.  
*Agamemnon* I thank you, girls. What is the matter, Cassandra?  
*Cassandra* Don't enter the castle!  
*Agamemnon* And why not?  
*Clytaemnestra* Who is she?  
*Agamemnon* A priestess of Apollo from Ilion. She is considered slightly out of her mind, but I think she is more prophetic.  
*Clytaemnestra* Rather young and rather beautiful to be holy.  
*Agamemnon* Cassandra is a virgin in the service of Apollo as his prophetess.  
*Clytaemnestra* I know who she is. She is sister of Paris, who stole your brother's wife, my sister Helena. Where are they by the way?  
*Agamemnon* They were on another ship and were driven out of sight from us in a storm.  
*Clytaemnestra* So they will probably never be back.

*Agamemnon* What is it, Cassandra?

*Cassandra* I see only blood. No, I also see other things but blood most of all.

*Agamemnon* And what else do you see?

*Cassandra* Only misery. Murder and misery.

*Clytaemnestra* Your girl friend does not seem to come here in any positive disposition.

*Agamemnon* We burned her city. What then does she have to be grateful for? She wanted to die in the ruins of Troy with her father and king.

*Clytaemnestra* And why didn't you let her have her will?

*Agamemnon* If women always had their will the world would no longer exist.

*Clytaemnestra* If the castle frightens her she could remain out here.

*Agamemnon* Cassandra, I have to take care of my wife and enter the castle to resume my position.

*Cassandra* Nothing can stop the victor from taking the consequences of his victories.

*Agamemnon* That is very true.

*Cassandra* But in the castle the victor is not a king but only fornication.

*Clytaemnestra* What does she mean?

*Agamemnon* Don't ask me.

*Chorus of old men (aside)* We know well what she means.

*Some old men (out of the chorus)* We can also guess it.

*Agamemnon* What is going on?

*Clytaemnestra* What do you desire most, Agamemnon? Your bath or your dinner? You must be tired and rather dirty now after your journey. Your bath of initiation into your eternal glory is waiting for you.

*Agamemnon* And to get there I must climb down and tread on your sanguine carpet?

*Clytaemnestra* It doesn't hurt. And it leads to the castle, to power and to your divine glory.

*Agamemnon* My wife, what is it you want? Are you trying to seduce me?

*Clytaemnestra* Just climb down. All the rest will be easily arranged.

*Agamemnon* I think you might have prepared some surprise for me.

*Clytaemnestra* You will see.

*Agamemnon* Something greater than all these welcome ceremonies.

*Clytaemnestra* I haven't said anything. Draw your own conclusions. Who knows? Maybe you will have the surprise of your life inside?

*Agamemnon (makes up his mind, climbs down)* I will have the bath first.

*Clytaemnestra* Yes, so would I have done. *(receives him. They embrace.)*

*Cassandra (cries out)* I see the bodies of the children! They are being eaten by their own father!

*Agamemnon (checks himself)* What is it, Cassandra?

*Some old men* She sees something of the past.

*Others* It must be the terrible meal of Thyestes.

*Third part* But how could she know anything about it?

*Agamemnon* How could you know anything about uncle Thyestes, Cassandra?

*Cassandra* I see what I see, and I cannot deny it.

*Clytaemnestra* Let her see what she sees. We can't deny it to her. Come! (*wants to lead him to the castle*)

*Agamemnon* I obey you, my wife, my beloved worthy queen.

(*They walk together up towards the castle, he on the carpet, she beside it, while the girls spread flowers for his feet and dance around.*)

*Cassandra* Yes, you maidens, on the impassable path of death!

Spread flowers for the victim and dance for death,  
so that he will grin the more from pleasure and scorn to death!  
Spread out your scents and palms to make his way smooth and easy,  
so that the scythe may reap the more freely and randomly  
and with greater range for swifter harder sweeps!

Dance yourselves wildly and joyfully to death in front of its altar,  
laugh from the incurable hysteria of life's joy, whisk away the illusions  
of all evil unthinkable dreams, and let illusion rule alone!

He alone is king of Hellas! He alone is powerful in the world!

There is no power except the superficial illusion of delight!

*Clytaemnestra* But what is it your concubine so crazily natters about?

*Agamemnon* Don't ask me. They never understood her at all over there at Troy. She constantly issued warnings but was never taken seriously, and therefore Troy subsided.

*Clytaemnestra* And such a one you brought here?

*Agamemnon* Clytaemnestra, I promise, she was never more than a slave. We were never more than friends.

*Clytaemnestra* So beautiful and expressionistic and young. If she had any virginity, you would have been the last one in the world to resist it.

*Agamemnon* She is a sacred priestess. You would do wisely in leaving her alone.

*Clytaemnestra* Like you have done, Agamemnon?

*Agamemnon* You only see her as a concubine. I only see her as a sacred priestess.

*Clytaemnestra* I only see her as a woman, and she came together with you.

*Agamemnon* But only as a prisoner.

*Clytaemnestra* Yes, try and tell that to someone else.

(*They go in. The doors are closed behind them.*)

*Cassandra* Now the crime is concealed behind stage.

Now all the devils steal forth to tear all hearts to pieces.

Now begins the new terrible age for everybody.

*Old man (imploring)* What is it you are prophesying, o priestess?

*Cassandra* Only misfortune for everyone! What happened in Troy is nothing to what will happen in your royal house.

*A woman* But what is she saying?

*Old man* She is just mad and raving.

*Woman* Yes, she seems hysterical, to say the least.

*Cassandra* You may call me what you want, but all I say is the truth. I can't say anything else. You may call it evil or mad, hysterical and impossible, but nevertheless it will remain the truth.

*Old man* We must listen to her. We can't just turn a deaf ear to what she says.

*Woman* And she is a woman, a sister and sacred at that. If woman is to keep quiet in life, then life is stillborn and just a boring desert of only desolation.

*Old man* Speak, Cassandra! We listen!

*Cassandra* Bring out poor sister Electra! She must hear what I have to say.

*Old man* Electra? That pauper? The barefoot girl in sackcloth and unkept hair let loose, who just keeps atoning for everyone forever?

*Cassandra* Yes, for she is now my sister, my destiny is hers, but unlike me she will live on.

*Old man (to the woman)* Fetch Electra!

*Woman* Here she comes herself. (*enter barefooted Electra with her hair let loose*)

*Electra* Here I am, Cassandra. What did you want of me?

*Cassandra* Listen to me, dear sister. Don't be shocked.

*Electra* I spend my life in prayer in sober asceticism. Nothing can scare me.

*Cassandra* Yes, so they all say until something happens to them. But then it's all done for. Never believe in yourself any more, dear sister of destiny, for the ego is worthless. The soul, which all are sharing, is alone of any significance. Against it all self-awareness and vainglory in all the world disappears.

*Electra* Come to the point, dear sister.

*Cassandra* There are preparations for a party in the castle?

*Electra* My mother is mobilizing all possible festivity. But my father wants to have his bath first.

*Cassandra* Of course, for he is full of dust and dirt and wants to dress up handsomely in view of his return. But he could never suspect what kind of shrouds he will be dressed in.

*Electra* Sister, Cassandra, what are you insinuating?

*Cassandra* But you, good sister Electra, will manage and live on to give all the necessary support to your brother Orestes that he shall later need to get at all the evil that constitutes the power of Argo.

*Electra* You speak covertly in superstitious and prejudicial innuendos.

*Cassandra* I always did that in Troy but was always right. And now I do it again as a slave in Argo and will be right again. But this is the last time I do it.

*Electra* Explain yourself! Everything you say is obscure.

*Cassandra* A priestess of Apollo needs no further explanation. The god will make himself clearer by his own reality.

*Electra* You keep threatening and insinuating but come with no clear message.

*Cassandra* I have said everything that needs to be said. The reality will make the rest clear enough. (*steps down from the chariot*)

*Electra* What will you do?



*Cassandra* What have I to do? All I can do is to follow my destiny in humility according to my divine lord Apollo's decisions. (*approaches the castle*)

*Chorus leader (of the ladies)* But you refused to enter.

*Cassandra* That was then. Now the time is getting ripe.

*Electra* For what?

*Cassandra* Can't you add two and two, my dear sister of destiny? You as one of the family know what your family has earlier been up to. I saw by the god's insight the meal that was served with great generosity to your grandfather's brother the poor Thyestes. He enjoyed the meat of his two children with good appetite without knowing they had been slaughtered just for him.

*Electra* That was an eternity ago.

*Cassandra* And you have forgotten all about it. That is usually the case. You usually suppress unpleasant memories, but they always come back and make themselves persistently remembered with pain and anguish. And they have the special capacity, that the more they are suppressed, the worse grows their actuality. Didn't Thyestes have a third son who survived?

*Electra* He just disappeared. No one of us ever learned anything about him.

*Cassandra* He just disappeared, but he will come back and in the most inappropriate moment possible.

*Chorus leader* What do you know about the last son of Thyestes?

*Cassandra* Absolutely nothing, but I see what I see, and I see a great connection in everything. (*approaches the castle*)

*Chorus leader* Don't enter the castle, Cassandra!

*Cassandra* I have to. My lord is calling for me.

*Chorus leader* Is it your god or king Agamemnon?

*Cassandra* Both. But most of all I am called by your gentle mother, Electra.

*Electra* What could she want with you?

*Cassandra* Only the same she wants with everybody. To hell with them!

*Chorus leader* Cassandra, don't enter the castle!

*Cassandra* I have to. I have no choice. Your father, Electra, ravished me by his destiny. I must now follow his way.

*Chorus leader* You are the last daughter of the royal house of Ilion!

*Cassandra* That's why I go to be crowned again here in Argo in your own royal house. I am just consistent.

*Chorus leader* Try to stop the poor girl, Electra!

*Electra* I am totally out of arguments.

*Cassandra* Yes, Electra, that's your wisest way. Carry on like that.

*Chorus leader (stops her by force)* You must not go!

*Cassandra* No gods can stop me!

*Chorus leader* I can and will!

*Cassandra* Let me go!

*Chorus leader* Never in my life! Come and help me, Electra! She must not go!

*Cassandra* Would I not go to the graves of my father's house? You executed my entire tribe! And you butchered Hector and desecrated his corpse without reason although he was more sacred and noble in his death than every living Greek in all Hellas! You murdered my own father, a decrepit old man, and burned down all our homes just in the lust of destruction! Even your Ulysses was ashamed of how you handled Troy! And your father, Electra, the glorious mighty king Agamemnon, was the head of all responsibility! Would I then not follow him in his last bath?

*Chorus leader (releases her)* She is mad.

*Cassandra* Yes, let me be mad then! That's my sacred profession! (*rushes up to the castle*)

*Chorus leader (helpless)* Stop her!

*Electra* It is too late.

(*Cassandra breaks into the gate and rushes inside. It is immediately shut behind her.*)

*Agamemnon (brawling from inside)* Murder! It is murder, you miserable cursed false and outrageous damned witch! Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah! (*roars*)

*Chorus leader* It is your father, Electra.

*Electra* Someone is murdering him.

*Old men* Interfere, before it is too late!

*Clytaemnestra (from inside)* Die, you accursed witch!

*Electra* It is already too late.

*Old men* This is intolerable.

*Ladies* Something terrible is going on in there.

*Old men* What the hell shall we do? We can't just stand here.

*Guard 1 (rises on the wall)* What are you waiting for? How long will you just stand there and waver?

*Old men* But we have no weapons!

*Guard 1* Arm yourselves then! And storm the palace!

*Guard 2 (has risen)* Get the murderers! Lynch them in public!

*Old men* But we don't know who has murdered who or if anyone has been murdered at all!

*Guard 1* Then you sure have a dilemma. What will you do about it?

*Chorus leader* Don't just stand there and pull our legs! Do something instead!

*Guard 1* What the devil shall we do? We are just plain guards.

*Guard 2* We are only here for obeying orders, either from the king or the queen.

*Chorus leader* You are just plain cowards, who blindly obey orders without bothering about what is happening!

*Guard 2* Yes, but what is happening?

*Guard 1* Yes – what is actually going on?

*Chorus leader* All Argo knows that! Isn't it so, Electra?

*Electra* Why do you think I have dressed in sackcloth like a nun, and not bothered much about how I look? Do you think I always walk barefoot just for my own pleasure?

*Old men* All Argo thinks that you were in some kind of disgrace.

*Electra* I probably will be, if it goes on as it has started, but so far I have only voluntarily by mortification and penance sought grace with the gods for my family's difficult burdens of heavy crimes.

*Chorus leader* Yes, that's our pious Electra.

*Women* What shall we do then? Shall we sing out our respect for Electra while terrible horrors are taking place in the castle, where young Cassandra has disappeared, the innocent prophetess?

*Chorus leader* The least thing we can do, I think, is to demand an explanation of the queen. What do you say, dear Electra?

*Electra* I say that is the least thing we all can do.

*Chorus leader* Then I will dare to do it. (*advances towards the castle.*

*Then the gates are opened and Clytaemnestra appears in splendour.*)

*Clytaemnestra* Rejoice, you people of Mycenae and Argo, for justice is accomplished!

*All choruses* What has happened then?

*Clytaemnestra* Aegisthos, come forward and explain!

*All choruses* Aegisthos!

*Women* The cursed son of Thyestes!

*Aegisthos* Not any longer. I have been exonerated.

*Electra* My mother, what have you done?

*Clytaemnestra* My Electra, just be calm. Aegisthos has killed Agamemnon, and thereby the family vendetta has been concluded. Everyone is satisfied now, and we preach reconciliation with everybody.

*Electra* "We"?

*Clytaemnestra* Yes, I and Aegisthos. And did you think then, poor simple naïve and pious girl, that I would live here dried out alone for ten years while your father at Troy just wallowed in concubines? And have you forgotten how he took the life of your own sister, the purest Iphigeneia, my loveliest most darling daughter?

*Electra* They say she was saved at last from the altar.

*Clytaemnestra* But it was my own husband's political wish and will and intention to sacrifice my loveliest girl! Only that intention was enough to make me the most bitter of all his enemies!

*Electra* And since then you have lived in fornication with your husband's cousin Aegisthos.

*Clytaemnestra* Don't worry. Our coup is perfect. The whole weapon supply and army is in our hands. There is no one who can avenge the ruffian's death, unless his own children turn against their mother.

*Chorus leader* And poor Cassandra?

*Clytaemnestra* The crazy girl? The mistress he raped to death? The confused concubine from Troy? She came running into the palace herself just like by order and asked for his rapist, the goat in the bath. We brought her directly to the bathroom where she could see the damned blackguard axed in his head and bathing in his own blood, a most magnificent corpse but in a rather awkward situation, naked in the bathtub. There I struck down the prostitute priestess and prophetess as soon as she

caught sight of Agamemnon's position. There the whore got what she deserved for having herself let her blood to my at last punished husband's damned released self-indulgent desire and lust!

*Chorus leader* So she has murdered Apollo's priestess. That bodes no good.

*Clytaemnestra* I have slaughtered my husband in his bath, the most glorious king in Hellas ever, just as he arrived home from his war in resplendent triumph! And you admonish me for having dealt with his crazy mistress, a raped prisoner of war?

*Chorus leader* She was a consecrated priestess and wore the god's ribbons in her hair. She was not married to Agamemnon. She only belonged to Apollo. How king Agamemnon used her has therefore no bearing on the case and no importance.

*Clytaemnestra* Sister, I overlook your considerations. You may say what you please. It doesn't concern me. We have the power, and it is established. Not even Menelaos, if he still is alive and ever comes back, could do anything about the situation. What do you say, dear Aegisthos? (*takes his hand*)

*Aegisthos* It is as you say. Clytaemnestra is perfectly right. All are ruled by us, the entire army is in our hands, this coup has been carefully planned since a long time, Clytaemnestra rules as before, and I support my queen and wife.

*Chorus leader (shocked)* Are you already married?

*Aegisthos* Biologically we have been so for years. But now her husband is dead, so now we can immediately make it legal. Come, Clytaemnestra, my queen. You had prepared a festive banquet for your famous husband. Let's at last start in on it, as we now just have even more to celebrate. (*leads courteously Clytaemnestra into the castle*)

*Chorus leader* That's the supreme scandal of impertinence!

*Electra (mumbles)* "Unless his own children turn against their mother."

*Chorus leader* What are you mumbling, Electra?

*Electra* My brother is abroad. He will never be able to get over this.

*Chorus leader* No, indeed!

*Electra* All my hope is for him. I can do nothing alone, but if Orestes had been here today our mother would never have been able to accomplish the murder. She knows that I am powerless alone. But then one day when Orestes is here there will be an entirely new situation.

*Chorus leader* And what do you intend to do?

*Electra* My duty. Today has given us two martyrs to mourn and bury with honour, the first a king, the greatest, my father, and the second a sacred priestess and royal princess of the house of Priam. They deserve equal honours. So, sisters and all citizens of Argo, we are now to dress in black and cry and wail and mourn for weeks, for months, for several years and for the rest of our lives for the sake of the disaster intentionally brought on us by my mother, which is the worst scandal in the history of Hellas. We can always start by piously burying them and cry our hearts out, until we no longer have any tears or even eyes left to cry out our eternity of despair with. Horrendous unbearably dire palace, open up your gates and let the whole world behold your atrocious misfortune!

*(Some windows are opened displaying the murdered Agamemnon in his bath and below him in front, the butchered Cassandra in a pool of blood.)*

Now defend your work if you can, mother Clytaemnestra! It will only appear the more hair-raising by the fact that, a woman and a queen at that, are responsible for it! You will necessarily need a clever attorney, for no one in the world can see this and acquit you from the crime! Only the villain Aegisthos can take sides with you, and he is even worse as an accomplice than you are as a criminal. Bewail your fate, o Hellas! Bury your delights in the eternal complaint of sorrows, for we shall never in eternity be able to look away from or be free from this outrageously cruel sight. We are brandished with it forever.

*Chorus leader (to the girls)* Do as she says. Change your white joyous gowns of festivity to black veils and black frocks to cover you entirely. Then collect flowers again but not for the celebration of a victor's homecoming, but sad flowers of tears and pain to cover the dismal grave of eternal unrest for a king unjustly forced by reckless cruelty much too early to an end of the most outrageous possible injustice.

*Old men (bending their necks)* Yes, let us all mourn and with a vengeance to then see what we could do about the situation.

*Guard 1* We now lay down our weapons and helmets with the whole army just to grieve for our king in peace. *(The guards remove their helmets and lay down their weapons.)*

*Guard 2* Thus is this day of victory suddenly turned into terrible disaster, the misery of which no one can see or guess any end of.

*Guard 1* Just its beginning is more than enough and worse than all evil that ever happened in our country.

*Electra* We shall grieve and cry until the tears in their desperate affluence change colour into the purest reddest blood, which is cried out directly from the heart.

*Chorus leader* You virgins and women of Argo, we shall all change colour from the purest gayest white to the most solemn and darkest black.

*Ladies* We obey, o chorus leader.

Our voices are already broken by the weight of sorrow,  
but that is just the beginning of our tragedy.

Never shall Argo recover from what has happened,  
and never shall any woman in Hellas cease to cry any more.

*Old men* For king Agamemnon is dead in the very moment of truth  
when he deserved the highest of all possible rewards  
and instead received the coldest ingratitude from criminal death.

Never did any king deserve a higher reward and honour,  
and never did anyone so deserving receive a more outrageous disgrace.

*Ladies* Our Hellas is finished, for king Agamemnon is dead!

*Old men* Our future is abolished and destroyed, for king Agamemnon is dead!

Scene 2. Carthage.

*Dido* Belinda, I have got a problem.  
*Belinda* Tell me, dear sister.  
*Dido* I have fallen victim to a deep unhappy love.  
*Belinda* No love must be unhappy. The whole world already knows that you love Aeneas. What's wrong with that?  
*Dido* He intends to leave me.  
*Belinda* How do you know?  
*Dido* I know it by my spies. Secretly at night Aeneas tries to prepare departure for his ship and his men.  
*Belinda* You know that for certain?  
*Dido* Yes, it is absolutely certain.  
*Belinda* But that is preposterous! It is utterly against all common sense! He has been happy here, hasn't he? He could impossibly find any better future!  
*Dido* I have also tortured myself with your very questions. He is not in his right mind if he leaves.  
*Belinda* What have you done about it?  
*Dido* I have asked for an explanation. Aeneas will be here now at any moment.  
*Belinda* That's the only thing you can do, speaking out about it at length is always the best thing to do. But what will you do if he really goes away?  
*Dido* I would rather not think of it. Then my love is as infinitely unhappy as it is true.  
*Belinda* I hear him coming.  
*Dido (a queen again)* Welcome, noble Aeneas!  
*Aeneas (enters)* You called for me, my queen.  
*Dido* What is it I hear? You prepare your departure in secret without offering me the slightest explanation!  
*Aeneas* My queen, I have no choice.  
*Dido* What compels you?  
*Aeneas* I have to answer for my men and their future. They are restless and can't find happiness here. They wish to go on.  
*Dido* I heard the contrary to this. Many of them like it here and wish to remain.  
*Aeneas* Some but not all.  
*Dido* Have you then had a Hellenic so called democratic vote?  
*Aeneas* No.  
*Dido* How do you know then that a majority wants to go on? (*Aeneas is silent.*) You want to go on yourself, but why?  
*Aeneas* I have no choice.  
*Dido* That is no answer. Are you then afraid of me? Are you afraid of happiness? What is it you wish that I can't give you?  
*Aeneas* You can't give Creusa back to me, my departed wife.

*Dido* Could you then find her corpse in the sea?

*Aeneas* My queen, insults are not worthy of you.

*Dido* I am sorry. I apologise and ask your forgiveness. But as a woman I can't accept that a dead person stands between us. She doesn't show you the way to your life but only her own death and the way to yours. She should let go of you.

*Aeneas* But I can't let her go.

*Dido* Aeneas, you behave like a fool. If you go it's just an escape from happiness and sense, and I thought you were a sensible man. Isn't it obvious that the most sensible thing for you to do is to stay here and share my future in unavoidable felicity?

*Aeneas* Yes.

*Dido* And still you want to go?

*Aeneas* It is not the will. It is destiny. There are forces more powerful than any human will.

*Dido* I can't stop you. I can only warn you, and I will not be responsible for the consequences, if you go.

*Aeneas* I regret, my queen, that I have no choice. (*leaves*)

*Dido (after him)* So run away then from yourself, you poor fool, if you think it's possible! There is nothing that man cannot escape, there is no prison to lock up and keep his fleeting spirit, there is only one thing he never can escape from although he always tried and tried most of all: to escape from himself. By trying through all times, he only found more difficult problems with the ego he wanted to dispose of. Escapes from problems are only escapes to problems. So run away, vain fool, like all the world in its perpetual incurable folly, which usually finds a terrible end in suicide or madness!

(*Aeneas is gone.*)

*Belinda* That harangue was a bit hard.

*Dido* But just.

*Belinda* What do you plan to do?

*Dido* As I said: I shall not be responsible for the consequences.

### Scene 3. Argo.

*Menelaos* It is as if all the evils of Pandora had been let loose over Greece after the fall of Troy, as if we carried them away from Troy to infect all Greece with the most horrible tragedies. Aias' suicide, which we felt as the last trial by Troy, was just a prologue to incessant and constantly exacerbated chain reactions of catastrophes. What was I met with when I came home? Agamemnon murdered by his wife and prime minister Aegisthos, who on their turn already have been murdered by Agamemnon's son Orestes, who in his turn has gone mad. Only Electra has kept her self control, although she was the one who most of all made Orestes murder their own mother. And now she is haunting him, and he has lost all contact with reality.

Well, Electra, how is our poor maniac doing today?

*Electra* He constantly shifts between crying despair and the gravest fever, which so ravages his mind that I have every difficulty in the world to keep him from committing suicide.

*Menelaos* He is impossible as Agamemnon's successor.

*Electra* He is too good for politics.

*Menelaos* The best thing would be if you could get him out of the country.

*Electra* Argo is his home! You have no right to exile him from his home! His father was your sovereign king!

*Menelaos* But he is a scandal to all the country.

*Electra* He is still a man and deserves as such some human treatment!

*Menelaos* Of course, but...

*Orestes (behind stage)* Electra!

*Electra* He needs me.

*(enter Orestes reeling and tottering on the point of collapse)*

*Orestes* Stop persecuting me!

*Electra* Come, Orestes! I will protect you against the terrible furies of revenge!

*Orestes* No mortal can be spared the wrath of a murdered soul against her murderer!

*Electra* You killed in self defense! Or else she would have killed you! She knew from Cassandra that you would kill her!

*Orestes* Still I am a murderer.

*Menelaos* Spare us your phantoms.

*Orestes* No, my uncle, spare me your impossible request. If a man is ill and has to be cared for by his close ones, they must feel the sufferings of his illness. It is quite natural and impossible to evade, unless you hasten the patient's death and leave him cruelly alone with his pains.

*Electra* I will never leave you, Orestes, for having fulfilled human justice in a right cause and your duty as a citizen.

*Menelaos* To murder his own mother?

*Electra* Yes, if she with her lover had deceived and executed her husband, the king of the realm!

*Menelaos* She was never given a lawful trial.

*Electra* Since the law was not enough, since she put herself far above it. That compelled Orestes to take the law in his own hands.

*Menelaos* It is criminal according to the law!

*Electra* Yes, that's how bureaucrats reason, formalists and unreasonable pedants! But in this case it was more criminal to allow Clytaemnestra and Aegisthos to get away with their crime! On top of that they also killed a priestess of Apollo!

*Menelaos* She was just a confused and worthless slave girl.

*Orestes* Come, Electra. I can't bear it any longer. I can't stay here in the lodges of power, for I am completely allergic to all power and riches. You conquered Troy, Menelaos, but at the same time you devastated the good city without any reason,



which has led into a vicious circle of all imaginable evils that a position of power could imply for all Hellas. You now control the Dardanelles and can found Byzantium by the Bospjorus, which will give the Hellenes free access and monopoly on all shores around the Euxinian sea. This power and control over the key to all Asia is like a curse to all Greece, and I want no part of it. You expressed yourself your wish that I would go into exile. I will do so gladly, not just to atone for my crime but also all the crimes of Hellas against Ilion and Asia. I see no meaning with my life more than to constructively sacrifice myself as an atonement for our crime against Asia and Troy. Will you follow me, Electra?

*Electra* Most willingly. I am responsible for you.

*Menelaos* But where will you go then?

*Orestes* Pyrrhus appears to have been murdered recently by his own reckless intrigues, and his price from Troy, Andromakhe, is now alone again. I will try to find her, and if she can give me a sincere pardon for both my crimes and Agamemnon's crimes against Troy, I have done something good in life, if though it is but an ignominious trifle and the only one.

*Menelaos* Come back if you succeed, nephew.

*Orestes* I can't promise that. Ulysses of Ithaca appears to still be lost at sea and suffering from insufferable ordeals and may never come home again for his part in the fall of Troy. His destiny appears attractive to me, and if I can make some atonement for Hellas, I will gladly spend the rest of my life in exile.

*Electra* And I will follow you.

*Menelaos* If there is anything I can do for you...

*Orestes* Stay home, Menelaos. Take care of your state, and don't lose your queen again. That's all you can do.

*Menelaos* I am positive that also our Helena will wish you all the best for such a hard and difficult prospect...

*Orestes* Farewell, my uncle. I don't think we'll see each other again. I am leaving, Electra. Are you coming?

*Electra* Without hesitation. *(they leave)*

*Menelaos* Thus power always ends up in loneliness. It's constant toil is a continuously increased and accelerated development, but it can never be executed at the cost of others and innocents. The more unlimited and supreme the power is, the lonelier it becomes. I still have my Helena, but that is all, except this constantly heavier and more insupportable burden of the inhuman responsibility which power over other people always means.

Who is then happier – I, the only survivor among the warriors of power and conquerors of Troy, or the mad Orestes, who wants to transform his life into a sacrifice of atonement for the new Greek position of power by the accursed sack of Troy? As a realistic king and politician I am unfortunately unable to see the intentions and case of Orestes as anything else than supreme naïvety. *(leaves)*

Scene 4. Carthage.

*Dido (sitting on her throne, still a sovereign queen)* So you intend to leave?

*Aeneas* My queen, it is inevitable.

*Dido* Why?

*Aeneas* The men can't help the unrest that possesses their souls, which not even the lust and grace of woman can soothe or satisfy.

*Dido* It is man's duty though with his superior sense to allow his sense to subdue his unrest, which is only uncontrolled unsoundness.

*Aeneas* My queen, no human sense can withstand the capriciousness of natural forces. With all his superior sense, man is like a withered leaf of nought but exposed impotence against any whim of nature, which will bring the leaf wherever it pleases with the force of a whirlwind by the slightest puff to where it doesn't want to go.

*Dido* So you would rather stay here?

*Aeneas* My will is nothing to that of my men's. We undertook a democratic vote, like you yourself suggested, and the outcome was almost uniform. Most of them wanted to go.

*Dido* Have you been bored in Carthage? Have you grown so weak, Aeneas, by my unlimited spoiling generosity that you couldn't persuade your men to stay here according to all common sense?

*Aeneas* My queen, the vote is cast and cannot be undone.

*Dido* Then go, Aeneas, and never come back, not even if second thoughts would bring you to some regret. That's all I ask of you as a condition for your departure. Or else you will never get my permission.

*Aeneas* My queen, if granting this wish offers you any satisfaction, it will be my last great pleasure to honour my association with you by the compliance with such a plain request.

*Dido* The greatest of virtues is unpretentiousness, the most applicable of all human virtues for human cooperation, and by that I have tried to rule well and succeeded. I have no more claims on you, prince Aeneas, if you go; but to ask you never to return is rather a warning than any humble prayer.

*Aeneas* And to honour you, the warning shall be heeded.

*Dido* Good. I hate exaggerated sentimental farewells. Just leave and don't look back. Farewell, Aeneas. Happy journey.

*Aeneas* Thank you, my queen. (*kneels to her, bends his neck and bows respectfully, rises and leaves without looking at her any more.*)

*Dido (when he has left)* What a coward! (*rises*) Belinda!

*Belinda* Yes.

*Dido* Is the pyre ready?

*Belinda* Yes.

*Dido* I succeeded in finding out Aeneas' departure plans, but he never bothered to even try to search Dido's plans, and that is my life's triumph.

*Belinda* I know it is a vain effort to try to make you give up your terrible and destructive plan, but your so called triumph gives more than anything else an impression of abominable malicious joy.

*Dido* That's all the joy I have left, and its flames shall blaze high in view of all the world forever! Wasn't it also just malicious joy that was left with the last surviving anachronisms of Troy, when they saw how one great Greek marshal after another quickly followed each other in a chain reaction of perditions only directed by destiny? Aeneas was a weakling, a despicable bloodless zero, an empty useless spectator without character who never did anything himself. He just resigned and watched. And therefore he is running away in an effort to vainly escape from his completely failed life, his lack of male initiative, his lack of ambition and courage. He is a coward lackey whom the Greeks at Troy spared since he wasn't good for anything anyway.

*Belinda* Still you loved him.

*Dido* And he turned me down. I can never for my life forgive him that nor get over it.

*Belinda* They are in a hurry. All his Trojans are on board their ship already. He is the last one to walk on board.

*Dido* Then it's time for this proud queen, who never could take a no as anything else than the most base and unjust insult, to ascend the pyre.

*Belinda* Consider for god's sake one last time! It is never honourable to commit an unnatural suicide! It is just cowardice worse than that of your Aeneas!

*Dido* It would be even worse to remain alive with that scoundrel still living. I was willing to give him everything, and the whole world was mine!

*Belinda* Sisters, come and help me trying to convert our queen from the disaster she has planned!

*(The stage turns slightly. The pyre becomes visible. The chorus stand around it all dressed in black in burkhas and veils.)*

*Chorus* We are just widows and childless mothers. We can only mourn, complain, cry and accompany the tragedies of man, which the male history only consists of.

*Belinda* But she is our queen, and she is still alive! She can still be saved! Persuade her!

*Dido (has removed her royal insignia)* Is the ship of Aeneas already hoisting sails?

*Belinda* All except one has been hoisted.

*Chorus* Queen Dido knows for certain what she is doing. She protests against all eternity for its ruthless course of injustice running over the vulnerability and sensitivity of us and all poor simple people.

*Belinda* Refrain, Dido, from your terrible purpose! You plunge your Carthage into the hardest misery of unhappiness and tribulation!

*Dido* I wish all my Carthage could blaze flaming in intensive protest against the whole world with its false and failed order! Is the ship weighing anchor?

*Belinda* Yes, she is setting out.

*Dido* Then it's time for me to calmly climb the pyre. Aeneas shall see the flames and the smoke until he no longer can discern anything of our Carthage.

*Belinda* Do you really think such a premeditated revenge could be effective?

*Dido* Aeneas preferred to run away without doing anything to action. I don't want to run away and do nothing. Then it's better to act at least desperately.

*Chorus* May Aeneas suffer deeper in his heart than our queen, for he has committed an unforgivable mistake. Rather than wisely become hers and create the future Carthage with her, he has chosen to discard her and instead choose folly, insecurity and no future.

*Dido (climbs the pyre)* Don't bring any accusations against him. He is only to be pitied.

*Chorus* Our wise and worshipped queen is most to be pitied.

*Belinda* No, most to be pitied is our Carthage. It can never survive a loss like that of Dido.

*Dido* I can see Aeneas setting sail! I am ready! Aeneas is sailing out! He turns his back on me and to all future possibilities! Live, Aeneas, like a miserable refugee without home forever, cursed by the only woman who understood what was good for you!

*Belinda* I beg you, my sister, one last time! Reconsider!

*Dido* Light the pyre!

*Chorus (lights the pyre)* May it flame in protest against all humanity and history with its brutal ruthless course and constant destruction!

*Belinda* Don't light the pyre!

*Dido* It is already set alight, and its flames are wonderfully rising! Go to hell, Aeneas!

*(The flames surround her, and she vanishes.)*

*Chorus* Flame highly like all Troy! Convey the eternal Trojan protest against the world and its constantly destructive politics! May Aeneas behold how Dido and his only love is burning and perishing of regret and terror, tremble of fear in his innermost soul and learn from the terrible lesson!

*Belinda (resigned)* Aeneas was not worthy of our queen's love. It's possible that he doesn't react at all to the sight of the flaming pyre. He was a passive and indifferent milksop. But we shall never know what he is thinking.

*Chorus* If he is a passive and indifferent milksop he will probably be the right person to rebuild destructive empires.

*Belinda* Yes, it's only insensitive automats like Aeneas who are mad enough to build up power positions to in untouchable indifference ruthlessly destroy life for most of us.

*Chorus* Dido is no longer. The last love of all the world died with her.

*Belinda* It is only noble souls, beautiful cities, beauty, goodness and all things honest and sincere that perish, like Dido and the fallen Troy. Those who accomplish the perdition of all that is good, like Aeneas, survive and make sure that the condition of the world continues to constantly worsen.

*Chorus* And we women who see everything, understand everything, see through everything and suffer most of what we see, can do nothing with our insufficiency. We can only bear witness of the eternal and horrible suffering.

*Belinda* Enough! We have fulfilled our last duty to Dido! May we honour her memory and never forget her self-sacrifice as an example!

*Chorus* Yes, that's all we can do: cherish and cultivate the memories of all the good that once was allowed to exist.

*Belinda* So let us go and forget all the evil and never let it overshadow our good memories.

*Chorus* Dido, we shall never forget you! You are the unforgettable queen of Carthage, now and forever! World, remember and never forget Carthage or Troy!

*(They go out one by one in a line in good order with some space between, Belinda last, with lowered head and in the same carriage as the others. Curtain when she has left.)*

*The End.*

(1995-2005)