

# KING PRIAM

## ACT ONE

### Scene 1

*(A point of light on a cradle. A nurse comes to quieten the child...Hecuba enters)*

**Hecuba:**

What is it, Nurse?

**Nurse:**

The child is restless and will not, will not be still.

**Hecuba:**

Nor have I the peace of mind to mother him.  
Where is King Priam?

*(Priam comes)*

**Priam:**

You've called me, Hecuba.  
You are unlike yourself and strangely worried.  
Is it the child?

**Hecuba:**

O I am restless and unsure.  
And now the baby has caught my mood.  
My dream disturbs me. What has come to Hecuba, the proud and fearless true wife for you in these troubled times? For I am suddenly afraid. I fear the meaning of my dream.

**Priam:**

Our wise old man comes now to read it and advise. This mood of fear will pass.  
Though I'm yet young I've found that once the unknown is known, the way ahead is clear.  
You will be strong and sure again. You will see.

**Hecuba:**

Your shining, shining confidence on which all Troy depends.  
It's good to hear it spoken

**Priam:**

Even the child responds.

*(Old Man enters)*

Old Man of Troy, you're welcome.  
The Queen is troubled by her dream. It will not leave her.  
Is there a hidden meaning there? That is her fear: fear of the unknown:

for I cannot read the messages from dreams.

We turn to you. Yours is the cool head where knowledge and advice are stored like honey in the comb. Wise Man, unravel the Queen's dream.

**Old Man:**

The dream means that Paris, this child, will cause, as by an inexorable fate, his father's death.

**Hecuba:**

Then am I no longer mother to this child. Troy and the city's King are sacred. How could I have been so weak before? Now am I strong, am strong again; and I know I shall never fail you further.

As Priam's mate I bore already Hector, and can swear I shall bear Priam many sons, many sons.

Ah, ah, harsh though it is, I say let this child be killed.

**Old Man:**

What says King Priam?

**Priam:**

A father and a King.

So was I once a baby, born without choice.

So might I, his father have been rejected by my parents to be killed.

But then this child would not have been born.

He is born because I lived. Shall he die that I may live? A father and a King.

O child who cannot choose to live or die,

I choose for you.

The Queen is right.

Let the child be killed, be killed.

*(Priam signs for a Young Guard to take the child. Priam and Hecuba leave as the royal pair. The Young Guard goes to the cradle, takes the child and goes).*

**Chorus – Nurse and Old Man**

*(The Old Man and Nurse, by a simple change of dress, or by mask, or gesture, become, from time to time, a chorus)*

Thus shall a story begin.

A child is born without choice. From its parents alone it lives, As now from its parents it dies

**Young Guard**

That is a crime.

**Nurse:**

Ah!

**Old Man:**

What is a crime?

**Young Guard:**

To kill one's own child is a crime.

**Old Man:**

It may be a duty.

Nature has many children for a man. Priam is young and lusty, Hecuba healthy.

What means one child when the choice involves the whole city?

**Young Guard:**

How could a young man know enough to dare to make such a choice?

**Old Man:**

After the wise man read the dream, Priam knew all.

He made the choice that a King would have to.

Husband to Hecuba and King of Troy, how other could he act?

**Nurse:**

There are things left out of your science.

I had other apprehensions when the dream was read.

**Chorus – Young Guard and Old Man:**

Time, time alone will tell.

We shall judge, shall judge from the story.

**Nurse and Young Guard:**

For life is a story from birth to death.

**Nurse, Young Guard and Old Man:**

Scene will change into scene before you.

Time rolling with each scene away. Thus we follow the story.

**Old Man:**

And the story of Priam shows that the father-king

who made the bitter choice to destroy a son,

was favoured at first in home and land.

Hector grew to a fine lad, and now there are other sons.

The city calm and flourishing; occasion for hunting and the arts of peace.

## **Scene 2**

*(Priam and Hector – as a youth – enter with a few Huntsmen)*

**1<sup>st</sup> Huntsman:**

The bull is away over there but the hounds will hold it.

**Hector:**

Father, you stay here while I show you my skill.

*(Hector runs out. Priam and the others watch his movements)*

**Priam:**

Troy will one day be proud of Hector.

**1<sup>st</sup> Huntsman:**

Look there! He has called the hounds to heel and will meet the bull head on.

**2<sup>nd</sup> and 3rd Huntsmen:**

Give him a cheer.

**1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3rd Huntsmen:**

Ohe, ohe, ohe.

**Priam:**

The bull is swerving,  
Hector, Hector, take care

**2<sup>nd</sup> Huntsman:**

But there's another boy there.

**3rd Huntsman:**

Sprung from nowhere,

**2<sup>nd</sup> Huntsman:**

Look there!

**3rd Huntsman:**

Jumped on the bull's back ...

**1st Huntsman:**

And is riding away with the hounds after him.

**Priam:**

Fetch that boy to me. All of you.

**Hector (returning):**

How did that happen? Could you see?

**Priam:**

There was a god or devil in that boy. No boy unaided surpasses Hector.

They have caught the bull and lost the boy.

Stay here while I go.

*(Paris, a beautiful boy, younger than Hector, enters)*

**Paris:**

They have taken my bull.

**Hector:**

We want it for the games.

**Paris:**

He was my best friend.

**Hector:**

You are friends with a bull?

**Paris:**

I have no playmates. I live alone with my shepherd father.

**Hector:**

Did he give you the bull and teach you that skill in riding?

**Paris:**

I've always ridden so. The bull is mine because I ride him. On his back one day I'll ride out into the wide world.

**Hector:**

Where will you go?

**Paris:**

I shall go first to Troy,  
to take my place with the young heroes.

**Hector:**

To do that you must learn to drive horses and chariots; but I could teach you.

**Paris:**

Who are you then?

**Hector:**

I am from Troy.

**Paris:**

Are you a young hero?

**Hector:**

O yes.

**Paris:**

And I will be a hero too. Can I go back with you to Troy?

**Hector:**

That depends on your father.

**Paris:**

He will let me go, I know, if you'll take me.

**Hector:**

Then we must ask my father.

**Paris:**

Who is your father?

**Hector:**

He comes now. He is King Priam.

Father, he's a shepherd boy.

He wants to come to Troy to be a young hero.

I should like to have him with us.

**Priam:**

Beloved Hector, If you want him - and Troy has need of heroes.

But does his father wish it?

He's not of age to go without consent.

**Paris:**

O my father will consent. That's what he promised.

**Priam:**

Do you really choose to leave your father and this country life? To live in barracks and be trained in fighting?

**Paris:**

I love my father and my home. But I want adventure.

I choose, I choose the life in Troy. For I belong to Troy, I know.

**Priam**

What is your name, boy?

**Paris:**

Paris

*(Priam's mind goes back to the scene by the cradle. The others draw apart and he muses alone.)*

**Priam:**

So I'd hoped it might be; that accident or god reversed the choice, sometime between my order to the guard and its fulfilment. So indeed it must be; for my heart knows here is my second son. What now? ... What now? I have a deepening anguish, If it was a crime those years ago, to crush the natural life, the father's love, because one is a King, ... what now? ...

What now?

Do I now with my own hands that failed to kill a child, kill the boy:

because he chooses with the certainty of youth to come to Troy

because he may fulfil the augury, because he is my son?

I have a deepening anguish.

Where are the shadows from the past who haunt my dreams, who know there was a real dream of Hecuba's that cannot be undreamt?

*(The Old Man, Nurse and Young Guard are present)*

You nursed the child for Hecuba, too troubled by her dream.

You read the dream's meaning and foretold my fate.

You took the child to kill it, but in sudden pity gave it to a shepherd.

Actors indissolubly bound with me to play a crucial scene.

Now it has come again, now I must choose afresh, now, in the moment of recognition now with Zeus's help, now you shall see a less ignoble man.

For I accept the trick of fate that saved my son,

and what he, Paris, chooses I uphold,

let it mean my death.

**Old Man:**

Do you speak for Troy, as for yourself?

**Priam:**

Yes! I speak for Troy as well.

*(Priam and the Huntsmen leave with Hector and Paris)*

SECOND INTERLUDE

**Chorus – Nurse, Young Guard and Old Man**

Ah, but life, life is a bitter charade.

We go from birth to death, but nothing is plain. Perhaps at the end a glimmering of sense, at the end a residue of meaning.

We shall see from the story.

But on the way there, the way there, ah, ... life, life is a bitter charade, without and within a complex knot that never unties, though sometimes cut with a rending sound, the orators drowned by a scream of pain. Ah, life, life is a bitter charade.

Now the role will change from boy to youth...

'The force that through the green fuse drives the flower, ... .. boy to youth.  
... ah, drives the flower?' Body draws body to a destined bed. Yet we act in a dream.  
Ah, ... but life, life is a bitter charade.

**Chorus – Wedding Guests:**

There, look there! We could have guessed it. Oh, look there! We could have guessed it.  
Droning yourselves into a coma. Too fussed with meanings and morals to live for the  
moment like us.

And what you've missed in Troy! Yes, Hector's sumptuous wedding to Andromache.  
The bride, pure and beautiful in white. Very dignified, every inch a princess. Hector in  
a green embroidered tunic with golden buckles.

The band of young heroes on parade. Hector the bravest of them all, Hector, Troy's  
champion! Yet a man for a home; a woman 's ideal.

**Young Guard:**

And how did young Paris take the wedding?

**Wedding Guests:**

He did not like it at all.

The truth is, once they knew they were brothers, Hector and Paris never got on.  
Upsetting to Priam, but it's only natural.

**Old Man:**

And so?

**Wedding Guests:**

So Paris has now left Troy, scorning his father, and sailed to Greece,  
where Menelaus keeps open house at Sparta with his wife, daughter of Zeus Queen  
Helen

*(Helen and Paris come from an inner room)*

**Paris:**

Helen!

**Helen:**

Paris.

**Paris:**

Are you woman or witch , that you enchant me so?

**Helen:**

I am Helen.

**Paris:**

And I am Paris: young and strong with desire when you are near.



**Helen:**

I must go.

**Paris:**

Go?

**Helen:**

To Menelaus.

**Paris:**

Helen, after such love with me, can you go now to lie with Menelaus?

**Helen:**

He is my husband.

**Paris:**

What does that mean: you fear to refuse him though you've ceased to love him?

**Helen:**

He is my husband. I may not deny him.

**Paris:**

Then I must share you? ... No! You must choose, choose between us, Helen: come with me to Troy or stay with him. Which shall it be?

**Helen:**

How can I choose? I must stay with him ... or go with you. I cannot tell.

**Paris:**

If I'm forced to sail away, will you come with me?

**Helen:**

You will be forced to sail away at dawn.

**Paris:**

At dawn! Forced? By whom?

**Helen:**

Menelaus.

**Paris:**

Then, Helen, will you come with me? Helen!

**Helen:**

Paris.

**Paris:**

Will you come with me?

**Helen:**

If you fetch me, I will come.

*(Helen leaves)*

**Paris:**

If I fetch her. she will come ...

Oh Helen, you leave me to the moment so desired and feared ...

Carried on the wind of love ...if I carry you away ... another 's wife! ...

a city's Queen! ... Who will escape the avenging war?

O Helen, Helen, can we choose that? You will answer. Helen:

do we choose at all, when our divided bodies rush together as the halves of one?

We love, ... we love. O Gods, why give us bodies with such power of love

If love's a crime? Is there a choice at all? ... Is there a choice at all?

Answer, answer, father Zeus, divine lover! Answer!

*(Hermes appears)*

**Hermes:**

Divine go-between, that's who I am:

Hermes the messenger.

I run errands for the Gods and Goddesses.

I bring a message from Zeus to Paris, the most beautiful man alive. You are to choose between three Graces. Athene, Hera, Aphrodite.

You shall give this apple to the most beautiful.

*(The Goddesses appear. All are young)*

**Paris:**

I dream, I dream ... They are all beautiful, how can I choose between them?

**Hermes:**

Yet you must choose, by Zeus' command.

**Paris:**

How shall I give the apple to one and escape the wrath of the others?

**Hermes:**

You will not escape. That is the law of life.

**Paris:**

What shall I do then?

**Hermes:**

Go forward as a man must. Ask what they offer you, should you honour them.

**Paris:**

Lady Athene , if I honour you, what is my fate?

**Athene:**

Handsome are you, Paris, and you are brave.

I will inspire you on the battlefield.

Troy will be grateful if you honour me.

**Paris:**

You speak like my mother, Hecuba.

Lady Hera, if I honour you, what is my reward?

**Hera:**

You are brave, Paris, and you are good. You cannot live always on the battlefield. I will give that warmth and trust within the marriage bond that is man's reward,

if you honour me.

**Paris:**

You speak like my brother's wife, Andromache.

They have nothing to offer.

**Hermes:**

There is still a third.

**Paris:**

Aphrodite, if I honour you,

what will you promise me? ... Well? ... Will you not speak , O Goddess of all love that is desire?

**Aphrodite:**

Paris

**Paris:**

Helen!

**Aphrodite:**

Paris!

**Paris:**

O Aphrodite, shall I honour you?

**Hera:**

Stay, Paris, stay.

For if you steal another's wife, then I will curse you.

**Athene:**

Consider Sparta's hurt pride. If you dishonour Hera,  
there will come war that pities no man.

**Aphrodite:**

Paris

*(Paris gives Aphrodite the apple)*

**Athene and Hera:**

Accursed! Accursed!

**Paris:**

You are phantoms. I

**Athene and Hera:**

Accursed! ...

**Paris:**

... will fetch Helen, ...

**Athene and Hera:**

Accursed!

**Paris:**

... and she will come. To Troy!

**Hermes:**

To Troy!

## **ACT TWO**

### **Scene 1**

*(Hector, in armour, on the walls of Troy with Paris, unarmed)*

**Hector:**

So you've given up fighting!

I'm not surprised.

You're mad about women, you pretty boy; and for myself, I wish you'd never lived.

What can the Greeks think we are, when the second son of Troy,

Prince handsome, Paris. turns coward?

Is really this the man who stole a wife from Menelaus?

You had a chance, an hour back in battle with the avenging Greeks, to meet the

husband face to face. You failed it, as you did at Sparta; turned the back and ran away.

Where to? What for? To go to Helen!

**Paris:**

Hector, you may be right to call me names.  
Yet I wish you were not so like a living hammer.  
You tire me. And once for all my good looks are my birthright,  
to be envied, not despised.  
I ran away from Menelaus, I know; and Helen is angry.  
But I fight as well as any Trojan after you.

**Hector:**

Then fight! ... or must we wait till Helen taunts you,  
you woman struck seducer?

**Priam:**

Stop wrangling, sons  
Let the Greeks quarrel, but not Troy.  
I chide as father and command as King. The camp of Greeks is split wide open: wrath  
of Achilles against King Agamemnon for a girl.  
So sharp the quarrel, Achilles has now  
drawn apart with all his men and will not fight.  
Troy should instantly attack

**Hector:**

Agreed. And would my brother fight, we'd drive the Greeks into the sea.

**Priam:**

Go, Paris, now and arm. Hector will wait here.

**Hector:**

I tell you, father. but I'm filled with shame. He may be man enough to man a woman  
- his good looks see to that -  
but he's not man enough to fight.  
He ran away from Menelaus there in front of all.  
I wish you'd never got him, or had strangled him at birth.

**Priam:**

Calm yourself, Hector,  
those are words I will not hear. We need now every son I have. Turn your anger to the  
Greeks. Let Paris be.

**Hector:**

Do you reproach me that I love the Greeks, Troy's enemies? O father!  
But Menelaus, enemy, commands more honour than Paris, brother.  
Where is he now?  
I say no more.

*(Hector leaves)*

**Chorus:**

War! War! War! War! War!

tl

**Priam:**

So Trojans honour Menelaus more than Paris.

As many Greeks set Hector now  
above Achilles. Do I pretend?

O vain to vex the mind in time of war.

Vital alone that Paris learns to fight before Achilles regains his manhood.

Paris! Paris!

*(Paris comes in armour)*

**Paris:**

Has Hector gone already?

Yet I'm swift enough to catch him.

**Chorus:**

War! War! War! War!

**Priam:**

My sons united! Let them be ruthless! ...

**Chorus:**

... War! War!

**Priam:**

But O, Apollo, bring beloved Hector back to me triumphant, and may the Greeks stay broken.

**FIRST INTERLUDE****Chorus:**

War! War!

**Old Man:**

Hermes! Hermes, with the winged feet  
come quick!

*(Hermes enters)*

**Hermes:**

Old phantom tied to Troy, what d'you need from the god who's tied to nothing?

**Old Man:**

When I first knew the avenging Greeks would come, Agamemnon and dazzling Achilles, my heart failed me.

Now my heart exults.

Take me, Hermes, through the Greek camp, to spy into that tent and gloat for Troy upon Achilles sulking.

**Hermes:**

Gloat not too soon. Dazzling Achilles has a heart that one man reaches.

You shall truly see into that tent, when we have crossed the plain, deaf to the din of battle.

*(They cross the plain towards the Greek ships)*

**Chorus:**

War! War!

## Scene 2

*(Achilles in the tent with Patroclus)*

**Achilles** *(accompanying himself on guitar):*

O rich-soiled land, O land of Phthia,

where we grew to manhood, you and I, Patroclus.

Shall we tread, after the war, the homeland again?

O there still lives my father, with Neoptolemus, my son. You loved him, Patroclus.

Shall we kiss, after the war, my tall son again?

Why are you weeping, Patroclus, like a little girl needing her nurse?

**Patroclus:**

Your song made me weep;

to think of your father, our home

and your son.

**Achilles:**

Forget the song. It was sad.

**Patroclus:**

O I wept too for our comrades here before Troy,

those who are wounded or dead and for the waste of your manhood in this war.

**Achilles:**

Do not provoke me, Patroclus.

**Patroclus:**

Hard-hearted Achilles,

from your insensate pride the Greeks will soon go down in defeat.

**Achilles:**

Aha! So they now see what it is to misuse me.

When we fought against Thebe, I was the first to enter the town.  
I killed Andromache's father with all his sons.  
I was given a girl as my prize till Agamemnon stole her (no other word) and the craven  
Greeks applauded.  
Is that fair dealings for Achilles?

**Patroclus:**

You live for your quarrel.  
Soon men may forget you can fight. 'Is Achilles really a hero?', they'll say.

**Achilles:**

Patroclus, they would not dare.  
Look on that shining armour; bronze and silver which I keep ready till the Greeks  
come begging to Achilles, as they will. They cannot take Troy without me.

**Chorus:**

War! War!

**Patroclus:**

They may never take Troy. Hector has reached our ships, and if he burns them,  
we may never see Greece again.

**Achilles:**

Ah no! A check to the Greeks, but not defeat.

**Chorus:**

War! War!

**Achilles:**

The danger is grave,

**Chorus:**

... War!

**Achilles:**

... yet I cannot give way.

**Patroclus:**

Then let your armour go to fight.

**Achilles:**

Meaning?

**Patroclus:**

I am not you, Achilles,  
but disguise me in your shining armour; set me in your chariot with the immortal  
horses,  
I shall be you in all but body,



and under your plume (though you stay here) can drive back the Trojans across the plain.

**Achilles:**

Patroclus, you shall.

The scheme is worthy of my fertile brain. Arm yourself, Patroclus, now as me.

**Chorus:**

War! War! War!

*(Achilles helps Patroclus put on the armour then looks outside the tent for a moment)*

**Achilles:**

Hector has fired the ships. We act in the nick of time.

More than my armour, I'll lend you strength,

Shouting my war cry when the moment comes.

You will drive all before you.

But go no further than the open plain. I must be first to enter Troy.

All-powerful Zeus, I pray that Patroclus may drive off the Trojans.

And come back safe to me here.

**Patroclus:**

Achilles, dear Lord Achilles, good-bye.

**Achilles:**

Much loved Patroclus, good-bye.

## **SECOND INTERLUDE**

**Old Man:**

O, O, what a threat to Troy.

Hermes, Hermes, what's to be done?

**Hermes:**

Why ask me? I am not tied to Troy.

The gods rejoice when a hero like Achilles chooses at last to redeem his virtue.

**Old Man:**

I have no life beyond the bounds of Troy. Help from the gods means help for Troy.

Return, Hermes, now at once and bring the news to Priam.

**Hermes:**

The messenger is instantaneous

when the news is feared.

Priam will have guessed.

But yet, since you ask, I will go again across the field of battle.

**Chorus:**  
War! War!

### Scene 3

*(Priam appears on the walls of Troy. Hermes enters as a messenger, short of breath from running)*

**Hermes:**  
A hero in Achilles' armour perhaps Patroclus ...  
rushed headlong from the ships driving all before him.

**Priam:**  
So had I feared. It is Patroclus.  
He alone could touch Achilles' heart.

**Hermes:**  
But Hector and Paris have rallied all your sons,  
and Hector fights Patroclus man to man.

**Paris:**  
Father, have you heard the news?

**Priam:**  
That Hector fights Patroclus, while you run back!

**Paris:**  
O, but Hector has already killed him. Stripped the body. You shall see  
Hector come resplendent in Achilles' armour.

*(Hector enters in Achilles' armour. Hermes has gone)*

**Hector:**  
All Trojans, all fought bravely and together till Achilles sent Patroclus into battle.  
but with Apollo's help I, Hector,  
killed Achilles' comrade and wear Achilles'  
armour now as mine.

**Hector:**  
Father Priam, and you too, brother Paris,  
before I go to greet Andromache  
and kiss my son,  
let us give thanks to Zeus.

**Hector, Priam and Paris:**

O Zeus, King of all gods and goddesses, high on Olympus  
You have bowed your head for death to the Greek hero, to Patroclus, glorious victory to  
Hector and to Troy. And, O Apollo, who fights for us, when the goddesses and gods  
besiege Zeus' ear, speak first and loudest to ensure  
the Olympian head bows once again to uphold our walls,  
and twice to destroy their ships.

*(Achilles stands in front of the tent to deliver his war-cry. Hector, Priam and Paris  
stand motionless, Hector as though transfixed.)*

**Achilles and Chorus:**

Oi, o, o, o, oi, oi, oi,

*(The Old Man between the walls and the tent, gloating over the naked body of  
Patroclus)*

**Old Man:**

Achilles' war-cry!

**Achilles and Chorus:**

Oi, o, o, o, oi, oi,

**Priam:**

O Hector!

**Old Man:**

O Troy!

**Achilles and Chorus:**

Oi, o, o, o, oi, oi, oi,

**ACT THREE**

**Scene 1**

*(Andromache alone. A serving woman comes. Other serving women wait by a  
cauldron)*

**Serving Woman:**

Lady Andromache, should we not light the fire?

**Andromache:**

Yes, Prince Hector will want his bath the moment he comes from fighting Do I deceive  
myself?

Ah, there is foreboding in the heart and in the home  
as on the day Achilles killed my father and my brothers.

Was that not enough that now today he wants my husband?  
Husbands are worth more than comrades,  
yet Achilles claims my Hector for Patroclus: death for death;  
in which equation the most brutal wins. Rouse Achilles, he becomes a brute insatiate.  
Out of range of human frailty or human pity.  
Hector remains to the end ...  
... to the end, ah, ah! ... but a man.  
Ah, my love is open,  
ah, while I mask my fear.

**Hecuba:**

Daughter Andromache,  
you must go out now on the walls  
to plead with Hector to come inside the city;  
for he is there alone to fight Achilles.

Deaf to Priam, he will attend to you.  
Hector must be brought within  
for the sake of Troy.

**Andromache:**

For the sake of Troy!  
O gods, is there no other sake? What of Hector my husband? What of Hector our son's  
father? Intolerable!  
I will not beg my husband from the walls of Troy.  
My place is here in my home.

**Hecuba:**

And what will be your home if Troy is taken?  
When Hector and all our men are dead, you will be given, stubborn as you are, as slave  
to a Greek.  
That is the price of pride that will not appeal to Hector in a public street.

**Andromache:**

Are you not stubborn too?  
Go now to your husband, to Priam, and beg him deliver Helen to the avenging Greeks.  
Then Troy and Hector will be safe on the instant.

**Hecuba:**

Daughter, you are a fool. No war is fought for a woman.  
If, because of Helen, the Greeks landed from their thousand ships, it is Troy they want,  
not Helen.

*(Helen enters)*

**Andromache:**

Did you hear? The war is not for you at all.  
You are wanted neither here nor there.

**Helen:**

Your words are meaningless to me. if bitter.  
My husband, Paris, wishes me to visit you. He says –

**Andromache:**

'My husband, Paris', - Listen to that! Your husband Menelaus.  
That is where you belong.  
What of your marriage vows to Menelaus? Did you not feel the sacred ties of home? O  
but you cannot.  
A wife is other than a whore.  
Not love drew you to Paris, but lust. Where did he learn his lover's tricks? From other  
whores before you.

**Hecuba:**

Control yourself, Andromache. Insults are out of place.

**Andromache:**

Let me finish!  
Go back to Greece, adultress,  
and let this war be stopped.

**Helen:**

It will not stop.  
Calm yourself and know your duty.  
Let her rave. I, Helen, am untouched. She cannot know me, what I am.  
Once as I came along the walls,  
the old men spoke of me, for so I heard:  
'No wonder Greeks and Trojans go to war  
for such a woman.' And they spoke well,  
For I am Zeus' daughter, conceived when the great wings beat above Leda.  
Women like you, wives and mothers cannot know  
what men may feel with me.  
You talk of lust and whoring; your words glance off such truth of love, whose tempest  
carried Ganymede into the sky  
What, what. what can it be, that throbs, throbs in every nerve, beats, beats in the blood  
and bone, down through the feet into the earth, then echoed by the stars?  
Intolerable desire, burning ecstasy.  
All prices paid, all honour lost  
in this bewilderment  
Immortal, incommensurable  
Love such as this stretches up to heaven, for it reaches down to hell.

**Hecuba:**

O that my ears should hear impiety so gross!  
Must Troy become a burning hell to salve your vanity?  
Why was I once so weakened by a dream? Had I but smothered Paris at birth, you  
would not be here in Troy.

**Andromache:**

O Hector. our few years of home end in a cruel, bitter fate unwilled by us.  
Husband, take my loving with you to the grave.

**Hecuba:**

Woman to Goddess, I to you, Athene, ...

**Andromache:**

Woman to Goddess, I to you, O Hera, ...

**Hecuba:**

... woman, I to you Athene,

**Helen:**

Woman to Goddess, I to Aphrodite, ...

**Hecuba:**

... Athene, Athene, ...

**Andromache:**

... O Hera, ...

**Hecuba:**

... pray for strength  
that heroes may endure, the city stand.

**Andromache:**

... pray for wives, for wives and husbands and the home where children grow.

**Helen:**

pray for lovers, lovers, and the divine madness ..... of insatiable desire .

**Hecuba:**

And to my man, King Priam,  
King Priam of towered Troy, ...

**Andromache:**

And to my man, horse-taming Hector, horse-taming Hector with the flashing plume

**Helen:**

And to my man, beautiful Paris,  
Paris, envied of all

**Andromache, Hecuba and Helen:**

... grant balm of comfort ...

**Hecuba:**

... from the steadfast mate.

**Andromache:**

... that his life was pure.

**Helen:**

... that he lay with Helen.

**Andromache, Hecuba and Helen:**

For death, for death draws near. Goddess to me, woman, grant, grant but this!

**Andromache:**

Now you shall go.

I have forewarning from within, quicker than the fastest runner running here.

Hector is dead. Now you shall go.

**Hecuba:**

O Troy, O Priam.

*(Hecuba and Helen leave)*

**Serving Woman:**

The bath is hot. Will the Lord Hector come?

**Andromache:**

Yes ...Yes ... Yes.

**FIRST INTERLUDE**

**Chorus – Serving Women:**

No ... No ... No.

We have it from the runner who has reached the house.

We always know. Yet who are we?

Not the names that figure in the drama. Unnamed. Slaves. Yes. Slaves.

To whom the fate of towered Troy is but a change of masters. What else? Rape! Death!

Are these Greek or Trojan?

Yet we could tell the story too,

the pathetic story of our masters.

Viewed from the corridor.

**Chorus:**

Ah! Ah! Ah!

**Serving Women:**

All the commotion now.

Would you know what that is? News. News of Hector's shocking death spreads like plague through Troy,

From the slave to the heroes, Priam's sons, and to the Queen.

Only King Priam does not know.  
For who shall tell him?  
This news may break his heart or turn his mind.  
Troy will crumble.  
Who will tell him, as he rages,  
rages, in an inner room? Look! There! He comes.

*(The serving women go as Priam is seen alone)*

**Chorus:**

Ah! Ah!

**Scene 2**

**Priam:**

What is happening?  
Am I no longer King?  
Forced from the walls by my people. Locked in my room.  
Hecuba refusing to speak.  
Something is known that I have not been told. O Gods! Let me out! Let me out!

**Chorus:**

Oi-o-o. Oi-o-o.

**Paris:**

Unhand me, mother Hecuba.  
I will see him.  
Father ...

**Priam:**

Son.

**Paris:**

Prepare yourself, for you must know.

**Priam:**

Yes, I must know.

**Paris:**

All are afraid,  
so I have come to tell you.

**Priam:**

What?

**Paris:**

Your first and dearest son,



the hero Hector, ...

**Priam:**

Ah!

**Paris:**

... Achilles has killed him and shamefully misused him.

**Priam:**

Say that again.

**Paris:**

Achilles has killed him and shamefully misused him.

**Priam:**

And you have dared to come and tell me.

Courageous to tell a stricken father truth, afraid to fight.

Hector was a hero. You 're but a playboy.

Why did you not kill Patroclus? Why did you not fight Achilles?

O, I could have spared you well for Hector; for Hector my son.

Are you my son? No. Or if you are, would that I had strangled you at birth as the Old Man told me.

**Paris:**

What horror! What injustice!

You are mad for grief.

I am your son. I am no coward.

You will not see me more till I have killed Achilles and avenged my brother.

**Priam:**

Oh ... Oh ... Oh ... Oh.

A father and a King.

My death they said, but never Hector's. Had they said Hector's,

I would have killed the other in the cradle.

O yes I would. No doubt of it.

*(Young Guard and Old Man appear)*

**Young Guard:**

A crime.

**Old Man:**

A duty.

**Priam:**

Phantoms! Phantoms from the fatal hour.

Is not the present harsh enough

that you should come to mock me from the past?

**Young Guard:**

Think on the present then.

What have you done to your son, Paris. now?

**Priam:**

I have no son Paris.

I had a son, Hector. But he is dead.

O Gods!

**Young Guard:**

You engendered Paris.

That cannot be shuffled off.

**Priam:**

Let him avenge his brother then.

**Young Guard:**

What is this vengeance? Recount.

Who killed Patroclus?

**Priam:**

Great Hector, defending the city.

**Young Guard:**

Who avenged Patroclus, killing Hector?

**Priam:**

Barbaric Achilles. Curse him!

**Young Guard:**

Who kills Achilles?

**Priam:**

Paris, my son.

**Young Guard:**

Who will kill Paris?

**Priam:**

O Gods!

**Old Man and Chorus:**

Agamemnon , Agamemnon .

**Young Guard:**

What then is this vengeance that you want?

**Priam:**

I do not want these deaths. I want my own.  
There was no truth in what the Old Man said.  
O bitter disillusion! Twisted around his finger,  
had he no pity for a young man's ignorance?  
Your reading of the dream was false.

**Old Man:**

No.

**Priam:**

Hector's death, not mine.

**Old Man:**

No.

**Priam:**

You told me lies.

**Old Man:**

I told you truth so far I knew it.

**Priam:**

Why, why, why, should this truth entrap us?  
Toys, dupes, decoys of fate.  
Never, never, never masters in the house.  
Why? Answer. Why?

**Nurse:**

The soul will answer from where the pain is quickest.

**Priam:**

Where the pain is quickest. O Hector, my son, my son!

**Nurse:**

Where did Hector's death begin?

**Priam:**

Where did Hector's death begin?  
Not at conception, for I loved my wife and loved my child.  
His death began at that fatal flaw of pity that you sensed in me.  
I should have been hard like Hecuba. Like this old man.  
Then Hector would be here.

**Nurse:**

One son to live only by another's death. Is that the law of life you favour?

**Priam:**

I favour nothing.  
But I answer yes. Yes. Yes.

**Nurse:**

Listen to your soul's echo.

**Chorus (in the distance):**

No, No, No.

**Priam:**

These things are tricks.  
I will hear no more.  
I curse my parents that they got me. I curse this life that has no meaning.  
I curse my soul that will not let me rest. Who dares to judge Priam, King of Troy? Who dares to judge Priam, father of Hector, father, and of that other son?  
None would dare judge me If my own soul were still. Therefore I curse the soul.  
And I curse you phantoms. O, O, I curse, I curse!

**Young Guard and Old Man:**

Lie there and judge yourself ...

**Young Guard:**

... father ...

**Old Man:**

... and King!

**Nurse:**

Measure him time with mercy.

**SECOND INTERLUDE**

*(The figures of Priam and the Chorus fade away and darkness is left, and moving shadows. A light grows.)*

**Scene 3**

*(Achilles at night in his tent. The corpse of Hector is covered by a cloth. Achilles sits brooding over the body. Priam enters.)*

**Achilles:**

Priam! Here! What is this?

**Priam:**

Do not call the guards. I am unarmed, alone.  
Led by Hermes I am here; an old man bringing gifts.

A father come to ransom the body of his son.

**Achilles:**

Then you are mad, old man?  
Were you not a father, old as my own father, I would kill you now.  
There is indeed the body of Hector. But cruel as I am,  
I will not force you to uncover it.  
It is mutilated shamefully, and by my own hands.  
For this flesh is Hector's, and not,  
and not, and never  
the living flesh of him I loved, the gentle prince, Patroclus.

*(Priam, in a swift movement kneels before Achilles, clasps Achilles'; knees and kisses his hands.)*

**Priam:**

I clasp your knees, Achilles,  
and kiss your terrible, man-slaying hands. Think on your father, Achilles,  
the lone old man in Greece, waiting for you to return.  
At least he still has you, while I with Hector dead, have nothing.  
Think on your father,  
remember the gods,  
be merciful before the dawn.  
For I have done what no father did before:  
kissed the hands of him who killed my son.

*(Achilles takes Priam's hands off his knees and raises Priam's head.)*

**Achilles:**

Old man, I am touched. Brutal Achilles has felt pity.  
You shall have the body to take back to Troy.

*(Standing up to pray)*

Patroclus, do not be angry  
when you hear in the dead lands  
that I gave Priam Hector's body back.  
You shall have your proper share of the princely ransom I shall ask. Farewell!  
Come, old father,  
you are tired, you shall stay here the night. Let us drink wine.  
I drink to my death,  
the death of dazzling Achilles. Since I failed Patroclus,  
I want only my death

**Priam:**

I go to a different death, Achilles.

**Achilles:**

I shall die first, and in battle. Which of the Trojans will kill me? Tell me that.

**Priam:**

Paris will kill you, Paris, my son.

**Achilles:**

And who will kill you at the altar, King Priam?

My goddess mother told me.

So I will tell you.

Neoptolemus will kill you at the altar. Neoptolemus, my son.

**THIRD INTERLUDE**

*(Hermes enters as messenger of death)*

**Hermes:**

I come as messenger of death.

For the story will soon end.

A timeless music played in time.

Do not imagine all the secrets of life can be known from a story.

O but feel the pity and the terror as Priam dies.

He already breathes an air as from another planet.

The world where he is going, where he has gone,  
cannot communicate itself through him

(he will speak only to Helen in the end)

- but through the timeless music

O divine music, O stream of sound,

in which the states of soul

flow, surfacing and drowning,

while we sit watching from the bank the mirrored, mirrored world within,  
for 'Mirror upon mirror mirrored is all the show'.

O divine music, melt our hearts, renew our love.

**Scene 4**

*Before an altar*

**Paris:**

Where is my father, where is Priam?

**Priam:**

What is it now?

**Paris:**

I have killed Achilles and avenged Hector. Embrace me, father.

**Priam:**

You ask too much.

**Paris:**

Well then, I offer, for you are still my father: I will take you and Helen;  
leave the doomed city to found another Troy.

**Priam:**

You are not the founding sort.  
Nor will I go.  
Stay to defend me till I am ready. Keep all away.

**Chorus (in the distance):**

Ah, ah! Ah, ah!

**Hecuba:**

The Greeks are in the city.  
All is lost. Why are you not in the fight?

**Paris:**

I obey my father  
to defend him while he prays.

**Hecuba:**

Too late for prayer.  
Let him kiss his wife goodbye.

**Paris:**

Stay here. I will call him.  
It is my mother, and your wife.

**Priam:**

I cannot see her.

**Hecuba:**

Changed and distraught.

**Paris:**

He prays.

**Hecuba:**

Let him pray the Greeks will spare your youngest brother, still a child,  
when all the Trojan men and you are slain. Enslaved in the Greek lands,  
Hecuba will remember proud Troy.

**Chorus:**

Ah, ah! Ah, ah!

**Paris:**

Father, shall I go now to defend my mother?

**Chorus:**

Ah, ah! Ah, ah! Ah, ah! Ah, ah!

**Andromache:**

Out of my way, adulterer, that I may come to Priam.

**Paris:**

I guard him as he prays.

**Andromache:**

You will have need to guard him.

For though you killed Achilles - (too late! too late!) -

Achilles' son is raging through the town swinging my own dead child as club.

**Chorus:**

Ah, ah! Ah, ah! Ah, ah! Ah, ah!

**Paris:**

It is my sister, and your son's wife.

**Priam:**

I cannot see her.

**Chorus:**

Ah, ah!

**Paris:**

Helen.

**Helen:**

Paris

**Paris:**

It is your daughter, and my wife. It is Helen.

**Priam:**

Go, my son, to find a hero's death in burning Troy.

Let Helen come to me.

**Chorus:**

Ah! Ah!

**Priam:**

Mysterious daughter, who are you?

**Helen:**

I am Helen.



**Priam:**

Have I been gentle with you?

**Helen:**

Neither you nor Hector ever by word or deed reproached me.

**Priam:**

Why was that I wonder?

Why do I speak gently now below the screams of the dying?

**Chorus:**

Ah, ah

**Helen:**

I cannot tell. I am Helen.

**Priam:**

You loved Paris? He is already dead.

**Helen:**

Yes.

**Chorus:**

Ah, ah, ah, ...

**Priam:**

You will go back to Greece.

**Helen:**

Yes.

**Priam:**

For you are Helen.

**Chorus:**

Ah, ah! Ah, ah! Ah, ah! Ah, ah!

*(Priam sinks down before the altar and tries to say something but can't be heard. As his lips continue to move soundlessly, Hermes appears as a God. Priam lifts himself up.)*

**Priam:**

I see mirrors, myriad upon myriad ...  
moving ... the dark forms of creation.

*(Hermes descends to Hades. The Greeks burst in. Neoptolemus, Achilles' son, runs his sword through Priam, who dies instantly.)*