

Euripides, Troades (Trojan women), 98-140, 308-340, 634-681, 914-942

**Hekabe**

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

Stretch out your neck!

*She sees the smoke raising behind the walls*

Look! Look!

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

Hold tight, Hekabe. Stay strong while Fate changes her way. 100

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

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

Fate will steer your life's ship.

O! The grief!

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

Everything. My country, my children, my husband!

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

What words am I forbidden to utter? What words am I forced say? 110

What should I mourn?

How heavy is my Fate!

*She tries to get up*

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

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

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

Ouch!

*She finally manages to get up*

Endless tears, endless groans, endless grief!

A lullaby for the unfortunate! 120

A dirge without a dance to mourn misfortune.

*She walks to SL and looks into the distance*

Prows of swift ships!

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

O, I still hear it!

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

You came and hooped your Egyptian plaited ropes onto Troy's harbours. What for? 130

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

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

That woman who hurled so much black misery upon me!

Me, Hekabe! Queen of fabulous Troy!

Queen no more!

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

Torn from my palace, my hair shorn in utter grief, I am now an old woman, an old slave!  
Part of the conquerors' miserable plunder. 140

*She turns towards the two smaller huts and calls out*

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

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

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

**Cassandra**

Lord, god of marriage, Hymenaeus! Lord Hymenaeus!

*Hands a torch to Chorus.*

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

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

*Cassandra stands in front of the altar, praying.*

Lord, god of the wedding bed, Hymenaeus, I bring you light with the fire of the torch!  
310

I bring light to this holy temple!

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

Hymen, Hymen, Hymenaeus!

*Turns to Hekabe*

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

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

Here, Hymen! I bring you bright light! 320

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

*To the chorus:*

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

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

O, what a divine dance!

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

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

God, Hymenaeus, Lord of the wedding bed! 330

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

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

Join my happy dance!

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

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

Celebrate my happiness!

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

o Talthybius

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

I shall marry my husband in Hades!

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

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

Evil, since you are evil yourself.

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

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

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

Me, the priestess of Apollo!

She takes the ribbons off. 451

And you, my sacred ribbons?

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

She throws them up in the air

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

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

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

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

Turning to Talthybius

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

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

Me! One of the three Spirits of Vengeance!

To Hekabe

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

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

All of you now are beneath your own soil!

Soon you will receive me, too! 460

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

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### **Andromache**

Come, mother! Mother of many children!

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

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

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

Her soul seeks the joys of the past.

And so, it is the same with Polyxene now. 641

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

As if she had never seen the light of day. She knows nothing now of her misfortune.

I, on the other hand, mother, I have seen and known joy!

I have always dreamt of achieving a good name and there I hit the mark. I had tasted joy!

But now, mother, now my Fate has turned and I have fallen into misfortune.

In Hector's house, I have been a good example of a virtuous woman, behaving in every way like a modest, virtuous woman should behave.

Whatever it is that people would expect from a married woman, I did.

I stayed inside the house because I know that the gossiping tongues chatter idly against a woman who ventures outside her home.

I had put aside all such desire.

Nor did I let those women with the subtle gossip enter my home to tell me about the world outside. I simply listened to my own mind. 651

It's a good mind, it's a good enough teacher for me.

As for my own tongue, I kept it quiet. And I've kept a lowered eye before my husband because I knew well when I should win an argument and when I should give him the victory of it.

And it was the fame of this virtue that spread throughout the Greek camp and which destroyed me because, the moment the captured me, Achilles' son wanted to make me his wife!

And so I'll be the servant in a murderer's house. 660

If, then, I were to put Hector out of my mind and put my new husband in my heart, I would be disloyal to the man who died, yet if I show my revulsion towards my new husband, my master, I will be hated by him.

They say that one night in a man's bed erases all revulsion towards him.

No! I think no woman is worse than the woman who, having lost her husband, puts all memory of him aside and turns to love the bed of another.

Not even a little pony, a mare, an animal, with no speech or reason, a beast whose nature is much inferior to ours; not even a young mare, would feel happy after losing her partner and she will find it difficult to put her head through the yoke again. 670

O, Hector! My beloved Hector! You were enough for me! A strong mind, a strong heart, a wealthy house!

I was an innocent girl when you took me from my father's house and you were the first to unite with me in my maiden bed. But now, my Hector, now you are dead and I am now a captive and taken aboard a ship to Greece, to work the yoke of slavery.

So, Hekabe, is Polyxene's death, a death for which you've spilled so many tears, a more miserable fate than mine? Because, for me, mother, for me, even hope, that thing which every other human being has, even that, even hope has escaped me. 680

Nor do I allow hope to deceive me. I know full well that I have no hope of ever seeing better days. Though even such deceptions can be pleasant.

chorus

You are in the same plight as I; your lamentations [685] for yourself remind me of my own sad case. [...]

### **Helen To Menelaos**

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

### *Indicating Hekabe*

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

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

The destruction of Troy -and of my own- came about because of Priam, her husband, who should have killed Paris. He should have done that when Paris was a baby. 920

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

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

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

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

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

So, now listen to what happened after that. 931

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

And it was you, you despicable man, you who let Paris come into our palace and then left him there while you went off to Crete! 942

Never mind!

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

What got over me?

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

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

Come, are you strong enough to do that?

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

Go on! Punish him and pardon me!

This is where you could make some wise comments: You could say that since Paris was killed and hurled into the underworld and my god-driven marriage dissolved, I should have left my marriage home and come to the Greek ships. 951

But that's exactly what I wanted to do!

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

Well then, my husband? After all my efforts to come to you, should you not be giving me an award for bravery instead of killing me? Another man has taken me into his home and made me his slave. Would not the award rather than the death be more just? 961

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

Bibliography

<https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/Greekhome.php#Euripides>