HECUBA
by Euripides

translated by
Jay Kardan and Laura-Gray Street

Script copyright Jay Kardan and Laura-Gray Street.
Apply to the authors for performance permissions.

Working Script for
The 2010 Randolph College Greek Play
directed by Amy R. Cohen

POLYDORUS
HECUBA
CHORUS OF CAPTIVE TROJAN WOMEN
POLYXENA
ODYSSEUS
TALTHYBIUS
THERAPAINA
AGAMEMNON
POLYMESTOR
SONS OF POLYMESTOR
SOLDIERS
GUARDS
SERVANTS

Notes on the text:

• You will find no stage directions here. Most are implied if you take cues from the text, and the rest we’ll sort out in blocking. If you have a particular question, email Cohen.
• Text in italics will be sung, and may change somewhat by the time the songs are fully written.
• In Chorus speeches, this symbol— » » —means a change of speaker or speakers within the Chorus.
• The line numbers in parentheses on the right margin correspond to the original Greek.
• The scene numbers are our own breakdown of scenes.
• “Strophe,” “Antistrophe,” and “Epode” correspond to the matching stanzas and the codas of the original Greek.
Scene 1

POLYDORUS I come from bleakest darkness, where corpses lurk and Hades lives apart from other gods. I am Polydorus, youngest son of Hecuba and Priam. My father, worried Troy might fall to Greek offensives, sent me here, to Thrace, my mother’s father’s home and land of his friend Polymestor, who controls with his spear this rich plain of the Chersonese and its people. My father sent a large stash of gold with me, to insure that, if Ilium’s walls indeed were toppled, I’d be provided for. He did all this because I was too young to wear armor, my arms too gangly to carry a lance. As long as the towers of Troy remained intact, and the stones that marked our boundaries stood upright, and my brother Hector was lucky with his spear, I thrived living here with my father’s Thracian friend, like some hapless sapling. But once Troy was shattered—Hector dead, our home eviscerated, and my father himself slaughtered on Apollo’s altar by Achilles’ murderous son—then Polymester killed me. This “friend” tossed me dead into the ocean for the sake of gold, so he could keep Priam’s wealth for himself. My lifeless body washes ashore and washes back to sea with the waves’ endless ebb and flow, and remains unmourned, unburied. Disembodied, I hover now above Hecuba, my dear mother, as I have for the three days since she and the other women were brought here, captives on their way to Greece. But however eager for home, the Greeks must wait here on the coast of Thrace, sails slack because Achilles stilled the winds. Appearing above his tomb, he demands my sister Polyxena as a sacrifice to appease his wounded honor. He’ll get it, too. His men won’t dare refuse him. So fate leads my sister to her death today. And my mother will see two corpses of two children: mine and Polyxena’s. My body will wash up in the surf so she can bury me properly. I begged this crumb of Hades, and it was granted. But for now I’ll get out of the way. See how Hecuba stumbles from the doorway of Agamemnon’s tent, upset by nightmares and visions of my ghost. Alas! Old mother, your royal palaces are reduced to meager corners in another ruler’s tents. How poorly you fare—as poorly as you once fared well. To balance out your past prosperity, some god has ruined you.
HECUBA

I am old. I am plagued
by bad dreams. Once your queen,
I am frail, a worn hag
you must lead from the huts.
My dear friends, sister slaves,
help me walk, hold my hand,
let me lean on your arms
like a staff. Bear me up.
My own legs are too weak
to support me. O lightning
of Zeus, tell me why
I am snatched from my sleep
by these specters of dread.
Goddess Earth, from whose womb
these nocturnal invasions
emerge like the stirring
of bats, I recoil
from these nightmares
O you underworld gods,
please protect Polydorus,
my anchor and last
of my house, who abides
in this Thracian domain,
in the home of a friend.
Oh the horrors I dreamed—
I still shudder with fear!
Find Cassandra or Helenus—
Ask them to read
these phantasms and explain
the young doe that was torn
from my lap and destroyed
by a wolf with bloody jaws.

CHORUS

I am here—I arrived—
Hecuba— just as fast
as I could—from the tent
of my master—where my lot
is now cast—where command
made me slave—I was caught
like an animal, marched
out of Troy at the point
of a Greek spear.

I bring news
It’s not good—I regret
I must say—I’ve been told—
the Greek army convened—
they have voted—your daughter,
Polyxena—she
is the one—it’s decided—
that she will be sacrificed.

To Achilles.

His ghost, reappeared at his tomb,
as you know, in a blaze
of gold armor and rage.
The Greek sails were unfurled,
all aboard for the launch,
when the warrior’s ghost intervened.

“Do you think
you can leave,” the wraith howled,
“without honoring me?”

Then rough waves of dispute
overran the composure
of captain and crew—
and the Greeks were now split
between those who would kill
a young girl—your daughter—
to appease fierce Achilles
and those who disagreed

to your cause spoke that chief
in command, Agamemnon,
master of Cassandra.
The sons of Theseus rebutted,
exclaiming the tomb of Achilles
deserved the girl’s blood;
that Cassandra’s bed must defer
to the warrior’s brave spear.
There things stood, at a stand-off,
an intractable draw.
Then that wily Odysseus spoke.
He festooned
and perfumed his appeal
the air thick with his words—
Scene 2b

till his audience swooned at his feet as he crooned, “Who could suffer the dead telling tales down in Hades about Greeks who deserted the soldiers who died for Hellas on the fields of war?”

Every soldier agreed that to slight brave Achilles was sacrilege.

Sacrifice carried the day.

And Odysseus is coming—

At any moment—

He will tear the sweet foal from your breast—

You must go—

He will wrench your Polyxena out of your hands—

To the ships—

To the altars—

At the knees of Agamemnon—

Pray—

Ask the gods of heaven—

And Hades—

If your prayers convey—

Then your daughter is saved—

If they fail, you must see your own child put to death—

Her throat cut—

And the flow of red blood from her gold-bearing neck—
HECUBA

What howl, what lament?
Forlorn now and old.
Enslaved. It's too hard,
too much to be borne.
No one to protect me.
No family. No house.
Alas, all is gone—
my husband, my lambs.
What road should I take?
What god can I trust?
What guide can avail?
O bearers of grief,
I no longer care
for life in the light.

Feet, lead me—step right,
left—lead this old crone
to the tent.

My child! O Polyxena!
Come out and attend
your mother. Come out,
hear me!

POLYXENA

The distress in your voice,
your sharp cries of dismay,
dearest mother, have flushed me
from the tent like a bird
What on earth is your news?

HECUBA

O my child, my own lamb—

POLYXENA

Why this chill in your tone?

HECUBA

I am afraid—

POLYXENA

Don't stop now—
no, now I am afraid.
I hear such fear in your voice.

HECUBA

My child—child
of a wretched mother!

POLYXENA

And why do you say this? Tell me!
HECUBA Because they have voted—
  the Greeks—to kill you
on the tomb of Achilles. (190)

POLYXENA Alas, that you utter
unspeakable woes!

HECUBA I must speak the unspeakable,
child, though it tears
me to pieces. You must know.

POLYXENA *Sad mother of mine,*
  *what more can you take?*
  *Such outrage and woe.*
  *Condemned. It’s too much.*
  *I cannot defend you;*
  *Defenseless myself,*
  *Alas, I must die—*
  *be slain like a lamb.*
  *And so you will watch*
  *as I’m snatched away.*
  *My torment will end.*
  *I’ll lie with the dead.*
  *O mother, for you,*
  *I weep and lament.* (200)

CHORUS And here comes Odysseus now, Hecuba,
hurrying to tell you something.

ODYSSEUS Hecuba, I think you know the army’s will
and verdict. I’ll state it anyway: The Greeks have voted
 to offer up your daughter on Achilles’ tomb.
They’ve authorized me to be her guard and escort.
Neoptolemus will preside over the rites of sacrifice.
Now, be sensible about this. Don’t make us drag you off
by force or come to blows. The state of affairs is difficult,
I know, but accept your lot. Hard luck is best met
with levelheadedness and expediency. (220)

HECUBA Oh dear gods, here it comes: a pitched battle
thick with groans and anything but dry of tears.
I didn’t die when and where I should have.
But in my suffering, mighty Zeus spares me yet,
miserable as I am, to live—and suffer more. (230)
If a slave may ask a free man some harmless questions—nothing out of hand, I assure you, nothing with teeth—then you, Odysseus, should be free to answer, and I to hear what you have to say. Within these parameters, may I speak?

**ODYSSEUS** Permission granted. Ask away.

**HECUBA** Remember how you came to Ilium, a spy cloaked in beggar’s rags, with blood from self-inflicted wounds blurring your eyes, masking your face, staining you Trojan?

**ODYSSEUS** I do. The memory cuts deep.

**HECUBA** How when Helen spotted you, she told me alone?

**ODYSSEUS** I thought I was sunk, a goner.

**HECUBA** Remember the beggar you were then? How you grabbed my knees?

**ODYSSEUS** My hands grew numb holding your robes in that death grip.

**HECUBA** And I spared you, *freed* you.

**ODYSSEUS** I see the sun today because of you.

**HECUBA** When you were *my* slave, remember how you said—

**ODYSSEUS** Hecuba, *I said* whatever it took to stay alive.

**HECUBA** Aren’t you shameless in this conduct of yours? You yourself just admitted the mercy you got from me and now you do me such evil in return? O gods save us from politicians and demagogues like you who don’t care what harm you do as long as the multitudes are pleased and the applause is loud. But tell me, what counseled *expediency* led them to cast their ballots in favor of killing my child? What in your so-called necessity requires this brutal murder at a tomb where, by custom, oxen ought to die? Does the ghost’s thirst for revenge justify his demand for human slaughter? Polyxena has done no harm to Achilles. Rather, he should’ve asked for Helen’s sacrifice, since *she* destroyed him by steering him to Troy. Or if beauty is prerequisite in this tribute, logic still exempts *us* and points to Helen: she’s the epitome, after all, the absolute knockout, the stunner, the dazzling mantrap who wronged Achilles far more than we.
And thus,
my case for justice against the ghost's. Now hear my claim on your gratitude. As you yourself have readily confirmed, when our positions were reversed in Troy, you fell at my feet, begging for your life. You clasped my hand and touched my aging cheek, here. But now it's my turn to fall, clasping your hand, touching your cheek, just so. To ask that you return the favor and spare my child. Please, I beg you. Don’t take my daughter from me. Let her live. Haven't enough died already?
All I’ve lost lives on in her. She is my solace.
She is my staff, my nurse, my guide. She is my Troy. Those with power should use that power carefully. Those in luck should not assume that luck will hold, as I well know. Once, I was powerful and lucky, a queen—but no more. A day obliterated all.
Odysseus, I implore you, by your bearded chin, have pity on me. Reconvene the army, persuade them it’s wrong to kill the very women you spared—because you pitied them—in Troy. Remind your men that Greek laws pertaining to murder protect enslaved and free alike, without distinction. You have the power—the authority and the lucky eloquence. But even if you babble or stutter, your esteemed reputation, like a steady wind, will swell the sail of your words, carrying them farther than those of blowhards and other lesser men.

CHORUS
Who could be so calloused as to remain unmoved, hearing your sad complaints and mournful refrains of abundant woe?

ODYSSEUS
A prefatory caveat, Hecuba: Just because I make political speeches doesn’t mean that I must therefore be your enemy, so don’t in anger misconstrue me so.
First off, I acknowledge, unconditionally, your claim on my gratitude. You saved my life, and, by the gods, I owe you. I stand ready to honor my debt by saving your life. But my public vow to the Greek troops I must also stand by, and that is to reward our best warrior with Polyxena, your daughter. It’s an invalid premise, you see, to think that these two lives—yours, hers—can be interchanged.
Furthermore, our cities
will fail if noble and devoted soldiers earn
no greater returns than do lesser men. Achilles
deserves honor and tribute more than anyone:
He died for Greece, and by the gods we owe him.
What conduct is more shameless than enlisting
a man’s good and faithful service while he lives,
only to throw him to the dogs when he’s dead?
Well, then. And if we had to go to war again,
would we have troops ready and willing to deploy
Or would men think, “Why bother? Better to lie
low and save my own skin.” Imagine what
adverse effects dishonoring the dead would have on
recruiting efforts, on public perception, on morale.
For me, a few essential crumbs will suffice
while I’m alive. But I want the full-out display
of honors and commemorations when I die,
a worthy tomb to make this life worthwhile. That’s
the thing that lasts.

Third, you complain how you’ve suffered.
Well, we Greeks have suffered, too. Our old women
and our old men are no less wretched than yours.
Our young brides are likewise widowed of fine grooms
who sleep in Trojan dust instead their marriage beds.
Just as we endure these hardships, so can you.
And if you think I’m wrong to honor the legacy
of a great warrior like Achilles, then go ahead
and call me callous. You foreigners, feel free—
don’t keep your friends friends and don’t
respect the dead. That way Greece stays on top,
and you get the barbarous fate that you deserve.

CHORUS  Witness here how the violence of war enslaves,
forcing its captives to endure the unendurable.

HECUBA  O daughter, all my arguments against your murder
were useless, feeble puffs of air accomplishing nothing.
If you have more skill than your mother, use it now.
Like the nightingale, sing out all your notes, or you
will lose your life. Fall prostrate at this man’s knee
and persuade him. He has children, too, I know.
You may yet move him to pity.

POLYXENA  I see you, Odysseus, how you’ve hidden your right
hand in your cloak and turned your face away so I can’t touch your hand or beard in supplication.
But you have nothing to worry about. I’ll follow you to Achilles’ tomb, both out of necessity and because I wish to. I want to die. If I didn’t I could be called a lowly coward of a woman.
Why should I live? My father was king of Troy, ruler of all Phrygians. I was born royalty, and I was reared to expect I’d marry my choice of kings, exciting rivalry over whose home and hearth I’d grace as bride. I was mistress of the Idaeans, center of their attention, godlike —except in my mortality. Now that I’m a slave, I am infatuated with death. Imagine: some cruel-minded master could buy me for money—me, the daughter of Priam, sister of Hector and many others—and take me to his house, force me to cook for him, to sweep and tend the shuttle, to work day after day while my bed, once thought fit for rulers, is polluted by some bought slave. No, it will not happen.
That life is inconceivable. While the light in my eyes is still free, I yield it up, giving my body to Hades. So lead me, Odysseus; take me to my death. I see no reason to hope for or believe in anything better. And, Mother, don’t interfere.
Help me instead. I would rather die than suffer the shame of wearing slavery’s yoke around my neck.

CHORUS The signs of good breeding are always impressive. But nobility is even more noble when it’s deserved.

HECUBA You’re spoken well, daughter, but there is pain in that good speaking. Odysseus, I understand that Peleus’s son must be granted his sacrifice and that your reputation must be preserved. Here’s how to accomplish both without killing this girl: Lead me to the pyre and appease the ghost by killing me. Indeed, I—who gave birth to Paris who with his bow slew the great Achilles—should not be spared.

ODYSSEUS Achilles didn’t ask for your death, old woman, but for hers.

HECUBA Then slaughter me with my daughter. That gives the earth and Achilles’ corpse twice as much blood to drink.
ODYSSEUS

That’s unnecessary. Your daughter’s death is enough. Believe me when I say I wish this one death didn’t have to be.

HECUBA

Then I must die with her.

ODYSSEUS

Excuse me? I’m not aware that I was taking orders.

HECUBA

I’ll cling to her like ivy.

ODYSSEUS

Not if you obey those wiser than you.

HECUBA

She’s my daughter. I won’t let go.

ODYSSEUS

And I won’t go away. So take your leave of her.

POLYXENA

Mother, do as I say—wait, Odysseus, have some patience with a parent’s understandable fury—Mother, listen to me, don’t try to fight those who have you in their power. Do you want to be shoved around, to have your fragile aged skin scraped and torn when you fall to the ground? To risk losing your dignity being dragged off by some young soldier? No, Mother, it would be unseemly. Instead, dear unhappy one, give me your sweet hand and lay your cheek to mine. Now for the very last time, I see the brilliant circle of the sun. Now I say my final words to you, O one who carried me in her womb and bore me. And now I go . . .

HECUBA

Dear child, how I, still leashed to daylight, will mourn for you.

POLYXENA

. . . unmarried, not royally wed as I should have been!

HECUBA

You’re pitiful, child, and I’m a wretched woman.

POLYXENA

In Hades’ darkness I will lie apart from you.

HECUBA

O gods! What shall I do? Where turn to end my life?

POLYXENA

I, born in freedom, to die a slave.

HECUBA

And I, bereft of fifty children.

POLYXENA

Mother, what do you want me to tell my brother Hector, and Priam, my father, your husband?

HECUBA

Tell them how wretched I am.

POLYXENA

O breasts that suckled me!
Scene 3

HECUBA O daughter who grieves me with an untimely, unhappy fate!

POLYXENA Farewell, Mother, and say farewell to Cassandra for me . . .

HECUBA Others may fare well, but not your mother. (430)

POLYXENA Now lead me away, Odysseus, with a veil shrouding my head. My mother's grief has melted my heart, and I have melted hers.

O sunlight! I will savor you in the short time left between this moment and the sword at Achilles' tomb.

HECUBA Aah! I faint. My legs dissolve. Polyxena, stay with me! Reach out your hand, grab hold of mine. Don't go, daughter, don't leave me childless! Let me die, my friends. (440)
CHORUS

O sea-breeze
that carries
ships across heaving waves,
Oh, where are you
taking me now?
In what home will I be slave?

Will I be
goods for Argos?
goods for Sparta or Phthia?
Or in Delos,
sent by sea-oar,
In what land will I be slave?

Shall I, there
with Delian maidens,
praise the bow of Artemis,
golden garment in the temple,
In what land will I be slave?

Or in Athens?
There, shall I sew
on Athena’s bright new robe?
Or perhaps there
weave in Titans.
In what land will I be slave?

Alas for my children,
alas for the fathers,
alas for our native land
now leveled and slashed by Argive spears
to ash-heaps and smoke and tears.

And so I am taken
so far from my Asia,
to Europe, to be a slave.
In what foreign land does death’s dark escape
condemn me to slavery and rape?
Scene 5

TALTHYBIUS Women of Troy, I’d thank you to tell me where I may find Hecuba, she who once was Queen of Ilium Troy.

CHORUS She’s there on the ground, Talthybius. The one wrapped in her robes with her head down.

TALTHYBIUS O Zeus, how can I say you care for humans now? Or that you oversee the fortune of all mortal affairs? Was not this woman once the queen of gold-rich Phrygia and wife of Priam? Now that lively city is a spear-gutted carcass, And Hecuba herself is a ragged slave, bereft and sunk to the ground. What a pity. I’m an old man, but I’d rather die than live this shame. Stand up, Hecuba. Pick yourself up from the dirt. Push that gray hair out of your eyes. I know you hear me.

HECUBA Go away and leave me alone. Why are you here? Who are you anyway? Just let me lie here. Don’t disturb my dusty grief.

TALTHYBIUS I’m Talthybius, herald from the Greeks.

HECUBA Are you kind, then? A friend? Come to tell me the Greeks want my death, too? If so, you bring good news. Let’s hurry along. Lead me, old man.

TALTHYBIUS To say you may now bury your dead child, ma’am, that’s the reason I’ve come to you. The news I was sent to tell you.

HECUBA What? No merciful death? Just more woe? And so you’re dead, my child, commandeered from life, from me, more childless now, having lost you. Who could carry all this grief? How was my daughter handled, sir? Did your people execute her with respect? Or did you kill her like a slave and an enemy? Tell me the truth, old man, however shocking or painful.

TALTHYBIUS You’re doubling the steep cost of sorrow, woman, by asking me to retell these troubles. My eyes are wet a second time. I paid in tears once already at the grave when she died. But you will hear. In full force the Greeks gathered at the tomb for your girl’s death. Achilles’ son led your daughter by the hand to the top
of the mound. I was standing nearby. A designated corps of young guards followed, on hand to restrain any rearing or bolting of your calf. Neoptolemus took a gold cup, filled it with wine, and lifted it in honor of his dead father. He nodded to me, and on that cue, I raised my voice over the chatter gusting around me and said, “Silence in the ranks. All soldiers hereby stand at attention until further orders.” Thus I becalmed the entire army. They stood hushed and breathless as Neoptolemus prayed, “O Achilles, father and warrior, accept this cup that the army and I offer you as a gift. Let this libation entice your ghost to appear and drink the maiden’s blood, dark and pure. In return, grant us winds, strong and favorable. Free the prows and bridling ropes of our ships, and fill our sails for safe passage home.” Then, seizing his double-gilt sword by the hilt, he drew it from its sheath and motioned to the guards to seize Polyxena. Your daughter, when she saw this, gave this proud speech: “O Greeks who sacked my city, know that I die willingly. Let no man touch me. I will bare the nape of my own neck to the sword. For the gods’ sakes, let me be free of fetters when you kill me so that I may die free, and among the dead I won’t have to be ashamed, being a queen, to be called a slave.” The troops roared their approval, and, when Agamemnon ordered the guards to release the maiden, they did so immediately. And immediately Polyxena grabbed the fabric at her neckline with both hands and ripped her dress open, exposing her breasts, her torso smooth and perfect as a statue’s. Nude to the waist, she dropped on one knee before her executioner and said, “Behold, young man—if it’s my breast you want to strike, strike here; if here beneath the neck, my throat is ready.” Neoptolemus both unwillingly and willingly cut her throat at the windpipe. His steel sword sliced deep, and her blood gushed out. Even as she died, your courageous daughter took care to fall decently, modestly covering what must be hid from men’s eyes. When she was fully dead, the soldiers busied themselves with the tasks of death. Some scattered leaves over the body, while others piled the pyre with pine logs. Those working reprimanded anyone idle: “Do you stand there, cur, doing nothing, holding neither gown nor ornament? Won’t you go find something to give
to the bravest and most noble of maidens?” That’s how the solders
spoke of your dead daughter, Hecuba. Now you’ve heard
the whole story. Having witnessed it myself,
I see you: the luckiest—and most unlucky—of mothers.

CHORUS

This sorrow boils up and overruns the house of Priam
and Troy, my city, so the gods want it.

HECUBA

Polyxena, dear, I don’t know which ordeal to face
first with so many rolling in. There is a vast
sea of pain out there. If I brace against one, another
upends me, then another again. Wave upon wave
of pain. And now I can’t sponge away all you suffered
in dying or keep myself from groaning. But I’m glad
to know you died well, to have at least that bleak comfort.

Strange to think how barren ground can,
with care—or chance, perhaps—bear fruit; while fertile land
neglected goes to seed, or worse. With people, though,
the worthless are never anything but. The noble,
likewise. Character doesn’t change with life’s conditions.
But what am I saying? These thoughts are arrows shot in vain.

A moment, Talthybius. Go tell the Greeks
something for me. Tell them: No one touches my daughter.
Keep everyone away until I get there.

Armies—any large crowd of men—can’t be predicted.
Inflamed sailors, like fires, run wild. Things spin out
of control: even good men get singed with badness.

Old woman, take this pitcher to the beach. Fill it
with sea water. Carry it back to me without
spilling any. I need it all to give my child
her last washing. A bride unwedded; a virgin
bedded by death. I must bathe and lay her out
as she deserves. But how? With what treasures? I
have nothing left. So now what? Think, Hecuba.

My women, captives like me, but maybe
they smuggled out a few pretty trinkets. I’ll go see.

Oh, how much greatness gone!
My home, my Priam, our palace and fortune,
our children—gone now, stripped to the bone. How pointless, all
that boasting of wealth and fame. The richest are those who live
uneventfully, day after day after day.
CHORUS  I was tied to this fate, this sorrow,
when Paris first cut the pine
on Mt. Ida to carve a ship’s beam
to sail across the ocean’s brine
to anchor the bed of Helen,
that sun-kissed, golden girl.

Necessity, all entangled—
Suffering encircled by worse.
The folly that launched on Ilium
A host of woes and curse
Began when the Idaean herdsman
Judged the three bickering gods.

Spear and slaughter and shame:
A widowed bride in Sparta
Groans while a mother in Troy
tears at her grey thinning hair
and claws and claws
and claws at her red childless cheeks.
Scene 7a

THERAPAINA Where is the queen? Hecuba, who wears so many woes no one will ever take that crown from her? [Scene 7a] (660)

CHORUS What is it now? Does it never end?

THERAPAINA I bring this pain for Hecuba. It’s hard to speak, and hard to keep silent.

CHORUS Here comes Hecuba now, in time for your announcement.

THERAPAINA O queen of woes—more wretched than you imagine— I bring you news: you’re dead and gone from light to darkness, childless, widowed, exiled, quite destroyed.

HECUBA How is this called news? (670)
You tell me what I already know.
But what is this? Why do you bring Polyxena’s corpse here? I’d made burial arrangements with the Greeks.

THERAPAINA She doesn’t see, so caught up in mourning Polyxena she doesn’t recognize the new pain set before her.

HECUBA O gods, don’t tell me it’s Cassandra you’ve brought?

THERAPAINA It’s not Cassandra; she’s alive. Prepare yourself.
I’ll unwrap the corpse so you see the one you mourn. (680)

HECUBA Aah! It’s my son! My youngest son, dead! He was supposed to be safe with the Thracian king. O Polydorus! I’m truly dead. This sight annihilates me utterly.

O child, O my child—
I start now the song—
The song for your death—
from deep in the heart—

THERAPAINA You recognize your son now.

HECUBA Stunningly new;
newly stunning, what I see here. I see all now. (690)

Now wave after wave—
And blow after blow—
On day after day—
The sighs and the groans—

CHORUS It’s terrible, wretched lady, the terrible ills we suffer.

HECUBA My own precious child—
Your full-wretched mother—
What fate? — Oh what hand? —
What doom brought you here? —

THERAPAINA  I do not know, my queen. I found him on the beach.

HECUBA  Did he drown? Or was he killed there on the sand? (700)

THERAPAINA  It seemed to me the waves had washed him up on shore.

HECUBA  *The nightmares winged black
They told me the truth—
My son, dead in dreams—
My son, dead in life—*

CHORUS  Who killed him then? Did your dreams show you that?

HECUBA  I tell you friends, a friend and ally murdered him. (710)
The king of Thrace. To whom my careful husband sent
our son—and his future wealth—for safekeeping.

CHORUS  You’re saying Polymestor killed your son for gold?

HECUBA  *Unbearable ghost
Unspeakable death
A monstrous bad host—
A murdered young guest—

His poor broken limbs—
His sweet mangled flesh—
The traitor’s damned sword—
No pity—None—*

CHORUS  The gods have loaded you with more pain than you

»» But look, I see Lord Agamemnon coming.
»» Let’s be quiet now.

AGAMEMNON  Hecuba, why on earth haven’t you buried your daughter? [Scene 7b]
I got your message from Talthybius. You said none
of us should touch her, and so, as you directed, we’ve
left her alone, not laying a hand on her. But you,
you take your time in a way that makes me wonder.
I’ve come to hurry you along. We Greeks take pride
in doing things well, if such things be worth doing.
Hold on, what corpse is this I see before the tents?
A Trojan? Those are no familiar Greek wrappings.
HECUBA                  O you unfortunate (and I mean me by saying "you"), Hecuba! What should I do? Do I beg at his knees for mercy, or bite my tongue in silence?

AGAMEMNON             Why are you turning your back to me, Hecuba? What has happened here? Tell me about this body. (740)

HECUBA                  If to him I’m nothing but a contemptible enemy and slave, he’ll push me from his knees. I couldn’t bear that.

AGAMEMNON             I can’t read minds, you know. I can’t help unless you speak.

HECUBA                  But maybe I’m seeing him as an enemy, when, really, he isn’t?

AGAMEMNON             Still nothing? Suit yourself then. If you don’t want me to know, I don’t want to hear.

HECUBA                  I can’t do what I need to do without his help. Why do I waste time debating? Win or lose, he’s my only hope of avenging my children. Agamemnon, hear my supplication. I beg you by your knees, your chin, and your happy right hand. (750)

AGAMEMNON             What are you asking for, Hecuba? For your freedom? That’s easy enough.

HECUBA                  Sir, not what you expect. Do you see this corpse I’m crying over? (760)

AGAMEMNON             Of course I see it. I’ve been trying to get you to tell me about it.

HECUBA                  This is the body of my son. I carried him in my womb. I gave birth to him.

AGAMEMNON             I see. Which son, poor woman?

HECUBA                  Not one of those who died defending Troy.

AGAMEMNON             You had another?

HECUBA                  I did, in vain. You see him here.

AGAMEMNON             But where was he when Troy fell?

HECUBA                  To save his young life, his father sent him away.

AGAMEMNON             Sent him where?

HECUBA                  To this very country in which he now lies dead. (770)
AGAMEMNON He sent his son to Polymestor?
HECUBA Yes, and sent with him a sum of bitter gold.
AGAMEMNON But how did your son die? Who killed him?
AGAMEMNON How shameful! Was it lust for gold?
HECUBA Yes, Polymestor killed for it the minute he learned Troy had fallen.
AGAMEMNON Where was your son found? Who brought him here?
HECUBA This old servant. She found his body tumbling in the surf.
AGAMEMNON Was she looking for him?
HECUBA No, she went to fetch sea water to wash Polyxena’s body.
AGAMEMNON Polymestor must have killed him and then thrown him in the sea.
HECUBA Hacked up, pounded by waves. Look at the lacerations on his skin.
AGAMEMNON You are indeed a wretched woman.
HECUBA I’m already dead, Agamemnon. I’m past suffering.
AGAMEMNON Alas! Is there a woman more unfortunate?
HECUBA None, except Misfortune herself. But listen to my request, my supplication. See if you think my hardships are justified. If so, that’s it; I won’t bother you further. But if not, then please help me. Help me get revenge on that deceitful friend, that fiendish and malignant host. I can’t count the number of times he sat at my table, an honored guest. In thanks, he kills my son? He’s a calculated, cold-blooded murderer. I know I’m nothing but a powerless slave, but the gods have power—as does the underlying law that governs them. It is by virtue of this law—this basic moral code—that the gods and our belief in them exists, and we know right from wrong, good from evil. If you corrupt this law, allowing those who murder guests and violate the gods to go unpunished, you poison the root of our humanity. Justice withers and dies.
Preserve us, then, and pity me.
Step back like an artist and see the whole picture of me.
Behold a woman royal once upon a time
but now your slave; once rich in children but now
impoverished and childless; exiled, deserted, a prisoner
of war, the most wretched of humans—

No, don’t go.

Agamemnon! Why do you turn away? O gods,
can I accomplish nothing? Why do we work so hard
to learn unnecessary things, when what we need
to know is how to persuade. Without the polished
art of persuasion, we can’t get what we want.

It’s hopeless.
I’ve watched my husband and all my children die; I’m now
a slave; on the horizon, smoke still spirals up
from Troy’s smoldering ashes, haunting me.
All but Cassandra.
No point invoking bonds of love, as if
caresses could be called to testify—but still,
why not?

My daughter shares your bed. She sleeps beside you, and you
enjoy her favors. What are they worth to you, these nights
of love? What thanks are due to Cassandra? To me, my lord?
Think of this and hear me: Do you see this corpse,
this dead boy who is Cassandra’s brother? By doing
good to him, you do the same for her, the one
who shares your bed. But let me speak a little more!
If I could, I’d grow tongues in my arms and hands
and hair, in the soles of my feet—a thousand tongues
all talking, all crying together, in one voice clinging
to your knees, begging you, imploring you: O lord,
O greatest light of Hellas, lend your avenging hand
to this old woman, even though she’s nothing. Help her
anyway. Do your duty. Mete out justice.
Punish this heinous crime against gods and man.

CHORUS
Strange how our lives ebb and flow, defined
by circumstance and necessity, making
friends our worst enemies and making foes
our inadvertent friends.
AGAMEMNON  I truly pity you and your son, Hecuba, and I’m genuinely moved by your request. I tell you, nothing would please me more than seeing justice served. But I’m in an awkward position with the army. Any part I might play in helping you exact revenge would be seen as motivated by my love for Cassandra. The army thinks of Polymestor as an ally, and of your murdered son as an enemy. You love your son, of course, but that means nothing to the Greek troops. So know that if I can, I’ll help—but not if the army starts to grumble.

HECUBA  Then no one is free in this world. He’s chained to money, or to luck, or to majority opinion, or to law. Any way you look at it, he’s still a slave. And so, because your fears constrain you, hold you hostage to the mob, let a captive set you free. Be aware of my plans to get revenge, but don’t be party to them. Don’t seem to act for me, but restrain the Greeks if they respond to Polymestor’s distress. Just look the other way. That’s all you need to do. I’ll take care of the rest.

AGAMEMNON  But how? With what? Do you believe your shaking hands can lift a heavy sword? Or do you plan to use poison? And who will be your accomplice in all this?

HECUBA  Remember, there are women hidden in these tents.

AGAMEMNON  The women we took captive? The Trojan prisoners?

HECUBA  Yes, they will help me get revenge.

AGAMEMNON  But how? You are women. How will women defeat men?

HECUBA  There is unnerving strength in numbers, especially when you add deceit.

AGAMEMNON  Unnerving maybe. But still, you can’t expect women to have the strength.

HECUBA  Why not? Didn’t women kill Egypt’s sons? Didn’t women murder the men of Lemnos, every last one? We’re wasting time talking. Give this woman leave to run an errand for me. Guarantee her safe passage.
through the Greek encampments.

You, woman, take
this message to Polymestor: “Hecuba, the former
queen of Troy, invites your presence, and that of your
sons, to speak of pressing matters that touch us all.”

One last thing, Agamemnon. Delay
Polyxena’s funeral. I want her and Polydorus
cremated and buried together, joining in one flame
my doubled woes.

AGAMEMNON If that’s what you want, lady, so be it.
If we had wind to sail, I couldn’t grant this. But
we’re still becalmed, with nothing to do but stand by
until the god sends fair weather.

Best of luck.

I hope it all turns out. It’s in the interests of both
states and individuals that evil suffers evil
and good fares well.
Scene 8

CHORUS
You, my hometown Ilium, no longer can you be called un ravished, unspoiled. Such a fog of Greeks enveloped you with honed swords, so many swords!

Your towers crownless, shaved bare, Bruised with black ash and smoke. Wounded Ilium, torn from your shores; I can no longer call you home. 

My ruin struck after midnight. Our bellies were full of rich foods. Mists of sleep soothing our eyes when we had sacrificed and danced.

In our bed, my husband slept soundly—his spear at last retired to its peg—unaware of ships at our shores the Greeks disgorging on Ilium Troy.

I was braiding my hair, absorbed in my sea-deep mirror, ready to sink into bed and join my love in woolen fleeces. But then — shouts, battle orders, Troy impaled by war cries: “Ooh-rab, Greeks! Will you storm these hills with fire, secure your target, and get home?”

Wearing only a thin nightgown a simple girl, I left my love to plead in vain at Artemis’ shrine—My husband dead, I was bound in chains and yanked to sea. my city recedes as the Greeks set sail Severing me forever from home, I sank into fathomless grief.

Helen, lovely but two-faced, and her vile cowhand Paris. Damn them both to hell!

I am ruined, wrenched from my own native land by their foul marriage-defiling bed.

O headwinds, over the black waves shackle the whore at sea. May she never see home.

[Strophe A] [Scene 8]

[Antistrophe A]

(910)

(920)

(930)

(940)

[Epode]

(950)
POLYMESTOR My dearest Hecuba, wife of my late friend

Priam! How I pity you and your ruined Troy.
And now your precious Polyxena—dead—it’s just too much.

   Oh, what can we count on in this life? Nothing, I say!
Not reputation or good fortune. The gods make it all
pitch and yaw, back and forth, until we’re seasick
and confused enough to worship them.
But what help is any of this with your loss?
Are you bothered I haven’t
been to visit you before now? I came here as fast
as I could, Hecuba. It just so happened that I was inland,
seeing about Thracian business, when you arrived here.
As a matter of fact, I was just setting out to see you
when your servant arrived and gave me your message

HECUBA I’m mortified in this state to look on you, Polymestor.
I’ve fallen so low since we last met. I’m too ashamed now
to look you in the eye. So don’t think of it as hostility toward you,
Polymestor. Besides, it’s not customary for a woman to meet
a man’s gaze.

POLYMESTOR Indeed. No offense taken, my dear. Now how can I be of service?
What are the “pressing matters” your message spoke of?

HECUBA I have some information to share with you
and your sons, but it’s private. Would you ask
your attendants to leave us for a while?

POLYMESTOR Go away. I’m safe here.
Hecuba is my friend, and the Greek army
is well disposed to me.

   But tell me:
   How may a fortunate man such as I help
an unfortunate friend?

HECUBA First things first: tell me about the child Priam
and I gave to you for safekeeping. How is he? Does he live?

POLYMESTOR Alive and well, I assure you. In his case anyway, you’re in luck.

HECUBA O dearest friend! Your words speak to your worth!

POLYMESTOR Is there anything else you wish to know?

HECUBA Does he still remember me, his mother?

POLYMESTOR Does he! He even tried to come here secretly to see you.
HECUBA  The gold he brought with him from Troy—is it safe?
POLYMESTOR  Quite safe—under lock and key in my palace.
HECUBA  Guard it well. I hope it isn’t a burdensome temptation.
POLYMESTOR  Not at all. I’m content to enjoy the wealth I already have.
HECUBA  Do you know why I’ve sent for you and your sons?
POLYMESTOR  I don’t. You were just going to tell me.
HECUBA  There are—O friend of old, as dear to me now—. . .
(1000)  POLYMESTOR  Yes, yes, go on. What is it we must know?
HECUBA  . . . ancient vaults, with Priam’s gold.
POLYMESTOR  And you want me to convey this to your son?
HECUBA  That’s it. You are an upright man.
POLYMESTOR  Why do my sons need to be here?
HECUBA  If something happened to you, they would need to know of this.
POLYMESTOR  I see what you mean. Smart thinking.
HECUBA  Do you know Athena’s temple in Troy, where it once stood?
POLYMESTOR  Is that where the gold is? How can it be found now?
HECUBA  Look for sheer outcroppings of black rock.
(1010)  POLYMESTOR  Is there anything else I need to know?
HECUBA  Yes, the treasure I smuggled out of Troy—can you keep it for me?
POLYMESTOR  You have it with you? Where? In your gown, or have you hidden it?
HECUBA  It’s under a pile of plunder in these tents.
POLYMESTOR  Here? But this is the Greek encampment.
HECUBA  Female captives are housed in separate quarters.
POLYMESTOR  Is it safe to go inside? Are there any men around?
HECUBA  No men, only us women. But hurry because the Greeks are restless to weigh anchor and sail for home. Once
(1020)  our business is finished, you can take your sons back to the place you house my son.
Scene 10

CHORUS
» You haven’t yet paid the price, but you will.
» Like a man stumbling into foul bilge-water.
» Or swept from shore and drowning in the undertow.
» As the waves cover your head, you’ll see how your life is just a loan that’s come due.
» Death is the payment the gods demand.
» Where justice and the gods converge, there’s a maelstrom.
» Your greed for gold leads you down the road to hell.
» Hands that never held a sword will cut your life away.

POLYMESTOR
O wretched me, I’m blind! Blinded of my eyes’ light!

CHORUS
Did you hear the Thracian? Why is he screaming, my friends?

POLYMESTOR
O me! My children! You have slaughtered them!

CHORUS
Something new and terrible has been done inside the tent!

POLYMESTOR
Run, will you? But you won’t escape! I will tear this tent down with my bare hands.

CHORUS
» See that? It looks like . . .
» Like something heavy thrown against the tent wall!
» What is all the clatter and commotion?
» Should we rush in?
» What should we do?
» Should we break down the door?
» Crisis calls! Hurry now! Hecuba needs us!

HECUBA
That’s right! Smash it all! Rage and roar! Break down the door: Nothing will bring your sight back, or let you see your sons alive again. I’ve killed them.

CHORUS
Did you really do the things you say, Hecuba? Have you taken down the Thracian?

HECUBA
Just watch.
In a minute you’ll see him come stumbling out, blind and flailing. You’ll see his sons, whom I killed with the help of these excellent Trojan women. He’s paid his debt. I’ve had my revenge. And here he comes, just as I said. I’ll get out of the way of his Thracian fury.

POLYMESTOR
Where go? Where stand? Run? Where?
A beast on all fours. Hard on the trail of my prey Where? Here? This way? That way? To corner those murderous Trojan hags? Where are you,

But where? O gods, to leap, to gorge on their flesh and bones. Rabid for blood, for vengeance. Where now? My children deserted. Torn apart by those Bacchantes of Hell. Slaughtered, a gory meal for dogs. A wild thing thrown out on a mountain. Where can I stand or turn? Where can I go? I'm a ship anchored at sea, my sails furled tight, over the death bed of my sons.

CHORUS Tormented man, in the grip of unbearable suffering brought on by your unbearable deeds. A heavy-handed god weighs you down with punishments.

POLYMESTOR Help me! Aid me! Hear me, you Thracians! Bring spears, you soldiers! Use spurs, you horsemen! Come to me!

Help me! Aid me! Help, I am crying! By the blessed gods, please hear! where are you? I need help!

These women, they've . . . —won't someone help me?— these captive women . . . —won't someone help me?— they've destroyed me!

They have weapons!
My sons are murdered!
They have weapons!
My sons are butchered!
I need help!
O gods, I need wings
  to fly to the heavens
or I must plunge down
  to the black chasms
  in Hades!

CHORUS  Who can blame this man for wanting to die,
for thinking death the cure for so much pain?

AGAMEMNON  I came when I heard shouts. Echo ricocheted off
  the rock, spreading uproar through the army.
If we didn’t know firsthand that Troy’s towers
  had fallen to Greek spears, the commotion
would have caused some concern.

POLYMESTOR  I know that voice!
O my dear friend, Agamemnon!
See what I suffer!

AGAMEMNON  Dear gods! O wretched man, who has ruined you?
Who gouged your eyes and blinded you? Who killed
  your sons? Whoever it was truly hated all of you.

POLYMESTOR  It was Hecuba. She did all of this. She and her women.
They destroyed me. No, worse.

AGAMEMNON  You, Hecuba? Is this true? Did you do these horrible things?

POLYMESTOR  What? Is Hecuba here? Where? Show me so I can
  rip her apart. Tear her flesh into pieces with my very
own hands.

AGAMEMNON  Stop, Polymestor! What’s wrong with you?

POLYMESTOR  For the gods’ sake, let me go. I will shred her
  limb by limb!

AGAMEMNON  Enough! No more savagery.
I will hear your case—and hers—and judge you both fairly.

POLYMESTOR  I’ll speak. There was a boy named Polydorus, Hecuba’s
  youngest son. His father Priam brought him to me
to live when Troy seemed in danger of falling. Yes, I did, I killed Polydorus. I admit it. But I'll tell you why so you'll see that it was well and wisely planned. I reasoned that if this child survived, he would re-gather and re-found Troy. And if the Greeks found out this heir to the Trojan throne still lived, they would set out a second expedition, devastate Thrace in the process, and once again your battles would be ours to bear. But Hecuba, hearing her son was dead, lured me here with reports of treasure hidden in Troy’s ruins. She said we might be overheard, so she coaxed us into the tent, my sons and me. They sat us on a couch. I was surrounded by many hands, some to the left, some to the right. Everyone seemed friendly. Some women sat beside me, exclaiming over my robe. They held the cloth up to the light and praised the craftsmanship of the weave. Others admired my spear and shield, and before I knew it my weapons were gone. Young mothers fussed over my sons, fondling them, bouncing them in their arms, passing them from hand to hand until my boys were out of reach. Then, out of the blue, these placid women, these mothers, pulled daggers from their robes and stabbed my sons to death, while other women pinned me down so that I couldn’t move. I tried to raise my head, but they pulled me down by my hair. I couldn’t free my arms because so many of them pressed against me. And then—O agony!—they pulled off their brooches and pierced my eyes until the blood ran thick. Then they ran away. I sprang up after them like a raging animal, bashing and banging my way along the walls, searching for them; hunting them. These are the things I've suffered in looking out for your interests, Agamemnon; killing your enemy. Let me tell you, if anyone in the past has spoken ill of women, or speaks so now or will speak so in the future, I'll sum it up for him: Neither sea nor land has ever produced a more monstrous creature than woman. I say this for a fact.

CHORUS Don’t blame us all solely on the basis of your woes!

HECUBA Agamemnon, never in the affairs of men Should the tongue have more power than facts,
Rather, when someone acts well, he should speak well,
And if the opposite, his words should be rotten.
Glib rhetoric may win us over for a while,
but in the end the smooth talkers die foully.
So much for my prologue to you, Agamemnon.
Now to deal with him.

You claim that by killing my son
you saved the Greeks from another quagmire of war.
What a lie. Tell me, you scum, what possible help
could a barbarian like you be to the Greeks? Whose
favor were you trying to curry in your zeal? Trying
to marry into a family? To help a relative? I remember:
you said the Greeks were going to trample all over
your country's crops. Who in earth do you think
will believe that? I'll tell you the real reason:
It was the gold. You killed my son so you could
get your hands on his gold. If not, then why is it that
while Troy still flourished, while its towers remained
intact, while Priam lived, and while Hector's spear
thrived—and you really wanted to help out Agamemnon—
how come you didn't kill Polydorus then or at least
turned him over as a threat? Instead, you waited until
you saw the smoke rising from the city that told
you our fortunes had turned for the worse. Only then
did you kill the guest you had taken into your home,
who sat helpless at your hearth. Here's more proof
of your evil: If you really had the interests of the Greeks
at heart as you claim, why didn't you give them the gold
right away—that gold you say isn't yours but Agamemnon's?
They were in desperate need then, exhausted from battle,
just barely scraping by in a foreign land. But no, even now
you're hoarding that treasure. It's locked up and well
guarded in your house, as you told me yourself. And
another thing: If you had taken care of my child,
as you ought to have, and kept him safe, you'd earn
respect and honor and worthy fame. Hard times
prove the honest friendship of good men, while
prosperity always has friends. If at some point you
were in need and Polydorus was doing well,
my child would have been a great treasury for you.
As it is, you have no friend in Agamemnon there.
Your gold is gone, as are your children,
And you must live on as you are.
Agamemnon, if you side with Polymestor, you endorse evil. This man has betrayed all trust. He has broken the laws of man and god. He is faithless, irreverent, and thoroughly corrupt. If you acquit him, what would your actions say about you? No disrespect, sir.

CHORUS Just causes make fertile soil for strong arguments!

AGAMEMNON It pains me to sit in judgment of others’ troubles, but I must. What kind of leader would I be if I pushed this case aside, having agreed to take it up? So here’s my verdict: Polymestor, you are guilty of murder. Clearly, it wasn’t for my sake or the Greeks’ that you killed Polydorus when he was a guest in your home, but for the sake of getting his gold. Your rhetoric exudes the oily panic of a guilty man uncovered. You’ve misconstrued facts to put yourself in a more favorable light. Maybe to you killing a guest is a small matter in the larger scheme of things. But we Greeks think of it as heinous murder. How could I rule you innocent and maintain a shred of credibility? I can’t. You dared to do a brutal crime; be prepared, therefore, to endure a brutal punishment.

POLYMESTOR How can it be? I’m defeated by a woman, a slave! Condemned and punished by my inferior.

HECUBA But isn’t that just, since you committed crimes?

POLYMESTOR Oh my children! Oh my eyes!

HECUBA You’re suffering? What of it? I, too, lost a child.

POLYMESTOR Do you enjoy abusing me, you monster?

HECUBA Shouldn’t I be enjoying my revenge on you?

POLYMESTOR But you won’t be soon, when the sea spray . . .

HECUBA Takes me on a one-way trip to Greece?

POLYMESTOR . . . swallows you up as you fall from the masthead.

HECUBA And who does the honors of pushing me into the salty brink?

POLYMESTOR You yourself will climb the ship’s mast.
HECUBA      Will I grow wings on my back, or what?
POLYMESTOR  You'll be transformed—into a dog, a bitch with fiery eyes.
HECUBA      How do you know of this metamorphosis of mine?
POLYMESTOR  Our Thracian prophet, Dionysus, told me.
HECUBA      Well, he failed to warn you of your own fate.
POLYMESTOR  If he had, you'd never have tricked me.
HECUBA      So, will I live or will I die? (1270)
POLYMESTOR  You'll die, and when you do your tomb will be called . . .
HECUBA      What? Hecuba's doghouse?
POLYMESTOR  . . . Cynossema, the Sign of the Wretched Bitch.
             A bitch's grave for a landmark and warning for sailors.
HECUBA      It makes no difference to me. I've had my revenge.
POLYMESTOR  Your child Cassandra will also die.
HECUBA      That prophecy I spit back in your face! Keep it for yourself.
POLYMESTOR  This man's wife, his bitter housekeeper, will kill her.
HECUBA      May Clytemnestra never be so insane!
POLYMESTOR  She'll kill him, too, lifting her bloody axe again—
AGAMEMNON   Are you out of your mind? Or just asking for trouble? (1280)
POLYMESTOR  Kill me if you like, but a bloody bath still awaits you in Argos.
AGAMEMNON   You, get this man out of my sight!
POLYMESTOR  Did I hit close to home?
AGAMEMNON   And gag him, too.
POLYMESTOR  Go ahead, gag me; I've already spoken.
AGAMEMNON   Remove him immediately. Toss him
             on a desert island where no one has to listen
             to his insolence. Hecuba—
             Hecuba, you go and bury your two dead children.
             The rest of you return
             to the tents of your masters. It's time to cast off.
             See how our sails flap and billow? The wind
             is finally blowing. (1290)
Let us pray for fair weather
and safe passage on our voyage. May this be
the end of our ordeal. May we find all things
well at home. In all our homes.

CHORUS

»» To the harbor now.
»» To the tents.
»» It is time to embark.
»» It is time to board our new lives as slaves.
»» But the taste is bitter.
»» Necessity is hard.
Hecuba - Ode One

Piano

Am  Dm

Dm  Am  Dm  Dm  Am  Am

lorn now and old. En my slaved it's too hard to Which much to be borne. No

E  Dm  Dm Am

one god to pro tect me! What guide can a vail O

Dm  Am  Dm  Dm  E  Dm  Dm Am

bear ers of grief I no longer care for Life in the li ght!
Sad defenseless my mine, what more can you take such

out rage and woe condemned it's too much I can not de fend you!

My torment will end I'll lie with the dead, O mother for

you I weep and la me ent!
Hecuba - Ode One Reprise

C. Cohen

Piano

Dm
Am
Dm
Dm
Am
Am
Am
E

start now my
blow af-ter
song blow on
song for your
day af-ter
day the
death from
deep in my
sighs and the
heart.

Dm
Dm Am
Dm
Am
Dm
Dm
Dm

My own pre-cious
child your full wret-ched

Am
Dm
Dm
E
Dm
Dm Am

mother what fate oh what hand What doom brought you he-ere?
The night-mares winged black They un

told me the bear-a-ble truth

ghost My un

son, dead in dreams, my son dead in life

host A murdered young guest

His poor broken limbs His sweet man-gled flesh

The traitor's damned

sword No pi-ty no one
Hecuba - Ode Two

C. Cohen

Piano

Cm D# F Cm

D# D# Cm Cm D# F Cm Cm

D# D# D# Gm F Cm Cm

Oh where are you
Are the mis
Are the new robe
Are the golden garment

be slave?
be slave?
be slave?
be slave?

And las for my
And las for my
And las for my
And las for my
children taken so far from my Asia to Europe to native land!

Now leveled and slashed by death's capes to ash heaps and smoke and

tears, rape?
Hecuba - Ode 3

C. Cohen

Am Dm 160 Am Am Am C. Cohen

Piano

Am Am Dm E Dm Dm

Am Am Dm E Am Am

G Dm Dm E Am Am

Am E Am Am Dm Am

©
Spear and slaughter and shame

A widowed bride in Sparta

groans while a mother in Troy

tears at her grey thinning hair

and claws and claws and claws at her red
child less cheeks.
torn from your shores the Greeks disgorge on your target in to a call you home! Troy! home?

He len lovely but the two wrenched faced and her vile shackles

the cow hand or ris by their foul mayshe them

both to hell bed home!
Hecuba - Ode Five

C. Cohen

Piano

He lp me aid me! hear me you Thra cians! Bring spears you Sol diers!

Use spurs you Horse men Co ome to me! Help me! Aid me! Help I am

cry ing! Come now you gods! Please hear where are you I need help!

These women they've. Won't some one help me! These captive wo men
Won't someone help me? I am destroyed!

O

gods I need wings to fly to the heavens or I plunge down to the black

Ha des.