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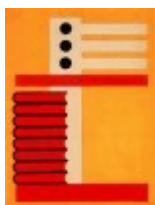
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# Lesia Ukrainka Cassandra

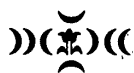
Translated by

Vera Rich

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# LESYA UKRAINKA



*Life and Work*

By CONSTANTINE BIDA

*University of Ottawa, Canada*

*Selected Works*

Translated by VERA RICH

*London, England*

Published for the Women's Council of the  
Ukrainian Canadian Committee by  
University of Toronto Press

# Cassandra

## A DRAMATIC POEM

### *Dramatis personae*

Cassandra, daughter of King Priam of Troy, a prophetess and priestess of Apollo

Polyxena, her sister, a young girl

Deiphobus, her eldest brother, the war leader

Helenus, another of her brothers, a seer and priest

Paris, her youngest brother

Helen, wife of King Menelaus of Sparta; she has eloped with Paris to Troy

Andromache, the wife of Hector, Cassandra's brother

Leuké

Chrysé

Aethra

Creusa

} slave women of Andromache

An old slave woman of Polyxena

Dolon, a young Trojan, formerly betrothed to Cassandra

Onomaus, King of Lydia, Cassandra's suitor

1st Watchman

2nd Watchman

3rd Watchman

4th Watchman

} of the Guard of the Citadel of Ilium in Troy

Flautist

Citharist

Sinon, a Hellene spy

Agamemnon Atreides, King of Argos, Supreme Commander of the Achæan army

Menelaus Atreides, his brother, King of Sparta

Odysseus, King of Ithaca

Diomedes

Ajax

} subordinate leaders of the Achæan army

Trojans, Trojan women, slaves, slave girls, Trojan and Greek warriors

The action takes place during the Trojan War in the Citadel of Ilium in Troy.

### ACT I

A room in the gynæceum (women's half) of the palace of Priam. Helen is sitting on a low, carved stool, spinning purple wool on a golden spindle;

she is richly dressed, and a circular silver mirror hangs from her girdle. Cassandra comes into the room, wrapped in thought, looking straight in front of her; her glance falls upon Helen, as if appraising her, and as if seeing around her something further. Looking at her thus, Cassandra stops short in the middle of the room and stands there without speaking.

HELEN: Sister, good day to you!

CASSANDRA: A good day, Helen,  
Because we are *not* sisters.

HELEN: Yes, I know  
Too well you find me hateful as death's self.

CASSANDRA: You and death, truly, are a pair of sisters.

HELEN: Cassandra!

CASSANDRA: Yes, call me by that name, Helen,  
Not "sister."

HELEN (*offended*): I shall never, never call you  
"Sister" again. Only, why do you not  
Call your own self "death's sister," for, indeed,  
There's far more likeness to death in your face.  
Yes, far more likeness there.

CASSANDRA: Take out your mirror!

HELEN: What is all this about?

CASSANDRA: Take out your mirror!  
(*Helen involuntarily does as she says, and holds out the mirror in her hand.*)

CASSANDRA: Look: there you are, and I—and there is no  
Likeness between us.

HELEN: Why, what are you saying?

CASSANDRA: If it were really true I look like death,  
Then I would look like you.

HELEN: Be off! Away!  
Why are you trying to call death upon me?

CASSANDRA: Why, is a sister forced to kill her sister?  
More often sister gives a sister aid.

HELEN: Is this the reason you have come to me,  
To rail and scold? Go on, then, burn and strike.  
It is your only pleasure, when I weep!

(*Cassandra takes the mirror from her hand and holds it up to Helen's face. Helen knits her brow, but she does not weep nor turn away. Gradually her face becomes less gloomy.*)

CASSANDRA: And so, like death, you have no power to weep.

Look there: your countenance is calm again,  
Once more that power is shining in your eyes,  
That mighty power—all men must yield to it,  
All mortal folk, and with them too, Cassandra.

(*She lets the mirror fall.*)

You walk—and all those old and worthy men  
Will bow before you in a deep obeisance,  
And solemnly will hail you: "Goddess-like!"  
You glance—and mighty men are turned to stone,  
And softly murmur: "The unconquerable!"  
You kiss—at once the gaze will grow bedimmed  
Of him, the youngest of all Priam's sons,  
And the blood surges, strikes with a strong wave  
Against the heart; both heart and speech are dumb,  
And memory grows pale, and face grows pale,  
He is yours wholly, there is nothing more  
For him, not mother, father, dearest kin,  
Nor native land. . . . Women of Troy, lament!  
For Paris, the young prince is dead, has perished!

HELEN: Do you foretell the death of your own brother?

CASSANDRA: Long since, I ceased to reckon him as living.

HELEN: You hateful thing! I know that from his birth  
You've been an enemy to Paris.

CASSANDRA: I

Loved him from birth.

HELEN: So why, then, did you tell  
Father and Mother they should not receive him  
Into their Court, when first he came back home  
From the poor shepherd folk who hid him safe  
Against the persecuting oracle?

CASSANDRA: It was no persecuting oracle.  
To die or live among the shepherd folk  
Would be the only happiness for Paris.

HELEN: Why should that be? Why can Deiphobus,  
And Hector and Helenus, all your brothers  
And all your sisters, and you too, Cassandra,  
Live in the palace, whereas Paris must  
Pine away in a shepherd's smoky hut?

CASSANDRA: And is it better to pine in a palace,

As Paris here with you in the women's bower?  
Deiphobus and Hector and Helenus  
Live, do not pine: Deiphobus in council,  
Hector at war, Helenus in the temple,  
Body and soul they live. But as for Paris?  
He only lived when there he played his pipe  
Among the flocks. Paris is quiet in council,  
And arms himself as if he put on fetters,  
The gods will never come to talk with him.

HELEN: But Aphrodite talks with him!

CASSANDRA: O no!

He is her slave, and no one talks with slaves,  
She orders, he obeys, and that is all.

HELEN: It's only you who fights against the gods,  
And that is why they punish you.

CASSANDRA: Indeed!

Their power's in punishment and mine's in fight.

HELEN: Was it for this you fought the Cyprian,  
When she persuaded Paris he should sail  
To me in Sparta? Well, you see, Cassandra,  
The Cyprian has the victory over you.

CASSANDRA: Me, Helen? O no! Over you and Paris.

HELEN: But Paris did not listen to your words.

CASSANDRA: The deaf hear not—what victory is that?

HELEN: And who would listen to your prophecies?  
You never mentioned from what signs you knew  
The outcome of that journey.

CASSANDRA: I can know

Nothing besides the thing that I can see.

HELEN: And what were you able to see that day?

CASSANDRA: I saw him as a handsome youth set sail  
With a joyful heart, to foreign lands,  
Not a wise-minded envoy from the nation,  
Not as a warrior in arms, nor merchant;  
His shepherd's love locks and his carefree brow  
Bore beauty and no mischief. And I cried:  
"Ah, Trojan manhood, forge strong helmets now!  
Threefold and fourfold lay the gleaming bronze!"  
And after. . . O, that was an hour of doom,  
When he returned, and with him you came, Helen,

And I beheld you give to him that dread  
Death-dealing kiss. . . .

HELEN: Cassandra! That's a lie!  
For I did not kiss Paris then at all!

CASSANDRA: Nevertheless, I clearly saw it then,  
That kiss, I saw it at the very moment  
When on our native soil was lightly pressed  
That fair white foot in its fine scarlet shoe,  
Your foot, Helen. You wounded our poor soil.

HELEN: And you cried out against me: "Blood and death!"  
And I shall not forget you for that, ever.

CASSANDRA: I did not cry these words against *you*, Helen.  
I at that moment was a new-born child  
And with a cry of pain met a new world.  
I saw: Paris to us gave not a glance,  
Greeting the Trojans only with his lips.  
I saw, indeed, how in his every thought  
That sandal of fine scarlet set its tread.  
I cried out: "Bear the barley and the salt,  
Behind the High Priest walks the destined victim!"  
The wind was ruffling through the golden locks  
Of your hair. "See, Insatiate Ares speeds,  
Led by the Cyprian, like a stallion  
Hot with desire. Prepare the hecatomb!"  
I shouted, and I saw: upon the sea  
Already the black warships with their prows  
Cleaving the russet wave, the sails were straining . . .  
Upon the helms of the Achaean soldiers  
Dreadly the plumes were tossing . . .

HELEN: You're demented!  
Did the Achaeans really sail that day?  
We lived in peace for more than a whole year!

CASSANDRA: That day I saw the host of the Achaeans.  
And now I see that Menelaus takes  
You by the hand . . .

HELEN: Away from me, wild creature!  
It is a lie! A lie! And it shall never  
Be so! I'd rather dash myself to pieces,  
Falling from the steep tower upon sharp stone.

CASSANDRA (*with conviction*):

Your husband comes and takes you by the hand,  
And, hardly *takes*, now it is you who leads him.  
You go ahead, he follows in your path . . .  
And foreign seas and foreign lands your ship  
Passes, bearing you homeward once again . . .  
The fires are dead on the remains of Troy,  
The smoke from Ilium vanished in the heavens . . .  
And you sit on your throne, a mighty queen,  
Spin for yourself upon your golden spindle  
With purple wool and with a crimson thread,  
Twisting it, twisting ever . . .

HELEN: It's a lie!

CASSANDRA: O goddess-like! O thou unconquerable!  
Daughter of Epimetheus!

HELEN: What's this now?  
What new stupidity is this? How can you  
Call me "Daughter of Epimetheus"?

CASSANDRA: Prometheus and Epimetheus were  
Sons of the one father and the one mother,  
Life and fire gave Prometheus to mankind,  
And he *knew* tortures must await him for it,  
Foreseeing tortures, he did not turn back—  
Of all the sons of Proto-Mother Earth,  
Moirā brought down worst punishments on him.  
But Epimetheus nothing knew. His thought  
Was always chasing to catch up with action.  
He took to wife Pandora, the self-same  
Who gave to mankind death and bitter woe,  
And he was happy with her; nevermore  
Did anyone see him to be unhappy.  
Sons of the one father and the one mother,  
These Titans from the first were never brothers.  
And yet it was your wish Cassandra should  
Speak of you as her sister! Helen, no!  
I am not able thus to speak in lies.

HELEN: You only have to speak and it is lies!

CASSANDRA: So Epimetheus told Prometheus once,  
And he was happy. Mighty queen, good day.

(Exit.)



## ACT II

Cassandra's room. Cassandra is writing a "sibylline book" on a long parchment scroll. Beside her there is a large tripod with incense burning.

POLYXENA (*dressed in white, with red ribbons and pomegranate flowers in her hair*):

Cassandra, sister, dearest, you don't know  
How happy I am! He's so very handsome,  
My own Achilles, my betrothed! So often  
I have seen from the walls how he would come  
Into the field, like glorious Helios shining.  
He's disagreed with the Atreidae, he  
Wants to make a firm peace with our father.  
Our marriage will be fruitful from the start—  
So say the Trojans and the Myrmidons—  
For from it strength and concord will be born,  
And so our holy Troia will not perish,  
Nor will the folk of mighty Priam die!

CASSANDRA: Forgive me, little sister, but I cannot  
Speak to you just now. Do you not see  
I have to write my scroll. I must be ready  
To hear the message of the bright-haired god.

POLYXENA: You shouldn't scold your sister so, Cassandra!  
I'm not to blame that it was I Achilles  
Chose, and not you, out of all us princesses,  
A maiden cannot choose herself a husband,  
The husband chooses her. I'm not to blame  
That you are not the darling of the Cyprian.

CASSANDRA: No, I'm not scolding you, Polyxena!  
(*She covers her face with her veil.*)

POLYXENA: Forgive me, darling, now I have upset you.  
In my own happiness, I quite forgot  
That the word "wedding" to my dear Cassandra  
Is harsh and bitter, since the time that Dolon  
Faithlessly jilted her.

CASSANDRA: Polyxena,  
Why are you talking about that! I knew  
Quite well that I should never be his wife.

POLYXENA: Why then did you accept his bridal gifts?

CASSANDRA: Because I loved him dearly. And those gifts  
Were all that Dolon could give to Cassandra.  
What have I to reproach myself in this?  
He gave them quite sincerely. I received them  
To have a memory of a moment's joy,  
For I knew there would be but few of them.  
Observe then, how the golden serpent on  
My right arm twines, circling it round and round,  
Just so does memory twist about my heart.  
*(She shows the bracelet on her arm, above the elbow.)*  
Dolon was not to blame. It is these eyes  
That are to blame; they would not say "I love you!"  
Although the heart pulsated with that love.  
And Dolon feared them. He himself once said  
That these two eyes had slain our happiness,  
Striking it down with hard and chilly swords.  
They were indifferent, unchangeable,  
Before the gods and before love. And Dolon  
No dole of victory won against those eyes.  
He did not know how he should turn their gaze  
From mysteries to living happiness.  
But I knew that in these two eyes of mine  
Lay my misfortune, but what could I do?  
Should I have blinded them? For where do men  
Take as bird-oracles the glance of love  
Of the cooing dove?  
*(Polyxena looks her in the eyes.)*

Polyxena!

You must not gaze so deeply in my eyes,  
You must not speak to me, nor ask me questions,  
No, not the smallest question. You know well  
That you are dearest to me of all sisters.  
You must not speak to me!

POLYXENA: No, my Cassandra,  
You must not think that I'm your enemy  
Like all the rest. You're not to blame you're ill,  
And that the god has so befogged your thoughts  
That you can see evil in all around you  
Where there is not even a sign of it,  
And poison joy both for yourself and others.  
I'm very, very sorry, darling, for you.

*(She sits down on a stool at Cassandra's feet.)*

Please, dearest sister, comb my hair for me!

Mother told me that I must comb it out,

You see, it is unplaited, but I can't

Manage to get the flowers out at all.

*(She takes from her girdle a golden comb and a small round mirror.)*

Here is a comb

*(She gives the comb to Cassandra, who takes it obediently, and begins to unwind the ribbons and take the flowers from Polyxena's hair. Polyxena looks in the mirror.)*

CASSANDRA *(whispering)*:

How fair she is, this dear

Sister of mine! The vengeful gods have chosen

The best of all to be their sacrifice.

Far better if I now should take the blade

Of sacrifice, cut off her life straightway,

While she has still not learned of bitter grief.

POLYXENA *(catching sight of Cassandra's eyes in the mirror)*:

Cassandra, I am frightened of your eyes!

What do you see? What are you whispering?

CASSANDRA: Nothing at all, no, nothing! You just said

That I am ill. Yes, maybe it is true,

Surely I'm ill, pay no attention to me. . . .

I was remembering about our Troilus,

He was so very like you in his looks, . . .

Too much so, when he lay, slain by the sword . . .

Peaceful, quiet, handsome. . . . Ah, Polyxena,

Have you forgotten who it was that drove

His sword into our brother Troilus' breast?

POLYXENA: Cassandra, why poison with memories,

That was in war.

CASSANDRA: Oh yes, that was in war!

To kill the brother, then to get betrothed

To the sister. . . .

POLYXENA: Our brother died long ago,

I hardly can remember him at all,

And, after all, Achilles did not know

Whom he had killed.

CASSANDRA: Nevertheless, we know.

And certainly Achilles did not know

At the time when he sent ambassadors  
Hither to seek your hand in marriage for him,  
That Hector, your own brother, had himself  
Counselled the firing of the Achaean ships!  
At the same time that you wove in your tresses  
These pomegranate flowers, our own Hector  
With his war helm was arming his wise head.

POLYXENA: And so? He won't engage the Myrmidons,  
So it will make no difference to Achilles,  
Just as to me.

ANDROMACHE (*enters, running*): Sisters, have you heard?  
My Hector, so they say, cut down Patroclus,  
The great Achilles held Patroclus dear,  
First of his friends . . .

CASSANDRA: O sorrow, blood and vengeance!  
Hapless Polyxena, that is your bridal.  
(*Takes a pair of scissors from behind the tripod and cuts off  
Polyxena's hair.*)

POLYXENA: O-oh!

CASSANDRA: Where are your mourning robes, Polyxena?

ANDROMACHE: What have you done, mad girl?

CASSANDRA (*in a prophetic trance*): Andromache,  
A sister must wear mourning for her brother,  
A widow for her spouse wear deeper weeds,  
An orphan child in swaddling bands shall perish!

ANDROMACHE: You prophetess of doom, may you grow dumb!

POLYXENA: Why did you not tell me at once that some  
Sorrow was near? Maybe I could have gone  
Then, and warned Hector.

CASSANDRA: O Polyxena,  
Always I can hear sorrow, can see sorrow,  
But I cannot express it. I can never  
Say: "It is here!" or "It is over there!"  
I only know that it already is,  
And there is no one now who can avert it,  
No one, no, no one! If I only could,  
Then I myself straight would avert this sorrow.

POLYXENA: But you could have done if you'd only told  
Hector, today: do not go out to battle.

ANDROMACHE: You knew it then. So why did you not tell him?

CASSANDRA: If I had told him, who would have believed me?

ANDROMACHE: And how can they believe you, when you always  
Prophesy out of place and out of season.

POLYXENA: You always are predicting sorrow, but  
How and from whom it comes, you never say!

CASSANDRA: Because I do not know, Polyxena.

ANDROMACHE: Well then, how are we to believe your words?

CASSANDRA: It is not words, my sisters, I can see  
All that I tell you. I see: Troy is falling.

ANDROMACHE: How? At whose hands? Who is destroying it?  
The Atreids? Achilles?

CASSANDRA: I don't know,  
Sisters, I only see: Troy falls in ruins,  
And Priam's daughter's wedding to Achilles  
Is reddened with the blood of men of Troy.  
That shameful wedding feast will not save Troy.  
The quick prepare the wine to grace the bridal,  
The dead are crying out: "Blood, give us blood!"  
Oh, what abundance of black blood I see!  
And our own father clasps the knees of his  
Own children's murderer. . . . I hear a cry,  
Lamenting, weeping, howling, wailing, wailing. . . .  
Our mother! . . . I can recognize her voice! . . .

ANDROMACHE: O Gods omnipotent, avert her words.

*(Cassandra clasps her head and stares, terrified, into space.  
Polyxena falls weeping into Andromache's arms.)*

### ACT III

Andromache's gynaeceum. Slave women are spinning and weaving, some are embroidering and sewing. Andromache is weaving a large white sheet, walking around a high loom.

ANDROMACHE *(to the slave women)*:

Go to the gateway now, Leuké and Chrysé,  
You go too, Aethra, and come back in turn  
When you've looked on the battlefield and asked  
How Hector fares; and bring the news to me.

*(Exeunt slave women.)*

CLYMENE *(an old slave woman)*:

But why do you not go yourself, my lady?  
You would not feel so sad if you could watch  
Your hero making war upon the foe.

ANDROMACHE: I cannot go, Clymene. I'm afraid  
 Of neighing horses and the clash of swords,  
 The dust, the war cries and—the worst of all—  
 That dread, death-dealing singing of the arrows.  
 All that I hear and see, it seems to me,  
 Must have arisen from *primaeval* chaos,  
 When there were yet no human folk, nor gods,  
 But only death reigning supreme, alone.  
 But when I do not look upon fierce war,  
 Then I am not afraid; then I believe  
 No one can have the victory over Hector;  
 He is the hero far above all heroes.

CREUSA (*a young slave girl*):  
 My lady, that is true! Happy the wife  
 Who can speak thus about her wedded lord  
 And tell the truth . .

CASSANDRA (*appearing suddenly*): The truth and happiness!  
 How easily you couple them, Creusa!

ANDROMACHE (*with unexpressed fear*):  
 Cassandra, what's the matter? You forgot,  
 It seems, your spindle, yesterday, with me?  
 Find it, Creusa . .

CASSANDRA: Sister, there's no need.  
 I have not come for spinning nor for weaving,  
 I have my mourning robes. As for the shroud  
 Of death, you span the thread long since, yourself,  
 I only wonder: will you get it woven?

ANDROMACHE: Why do you speak like that? I'm only making  
 A nice new sheet to go on Hector's bed.

CASSANDRA: That's what I said.

AETHRA (*entering*): Our lord, out in the field,  
 Met with Achilles.

ANDROMACHE: Oh! What happened then?

AETHRA: It seems that he has won a victory.

ANDROMACHE: Which of them won?

AETHRA: Our lord, against Achilles.  
 Polyxena quite fainted in the gateway  
 When she saw how it went against Achilles.

ANDROMACHE: The shameless wretch! She did not watch her brother,  
 Only the Myrmidon?

CASSANDRA:                               Andromache,  
Moirá has laid her hand on her. You are not  
The most unhappy woman in the world,  
So judge not the unhappy. There are widows  
In plenty, but not often must a woman  
Choose between love and brother.

ANDROMACHE:                               What was that?  
As if you're tipsy, you've mixed up completely  
The truth with some inventions . . .

CASSANDRA:                               Wine and water  
Mixed up together make a single drink.  
(*Leuké enters and stops short in silence.*)

ANDROMACHE: Well, Leuké?

LEUKÉ:                               Please don't send me to the gate,  
My lady . . .

ANDROMACHE:                               Well then, tell me what has happened!

LEUKÉ: Nothing has happened yet. . . . I cannot, no . . .  
Oh, mighty Ares too would turn in flight,  
Not only a mere mortal . . .

ANDROMACHE:                               What's this babbling?  
Who is it that's in flight?

LEUKÉ:                               Our lord . . . your husband . . .

ANDROMACHE (*threatening her with the shuttle*):  
It isn't true! How dare you? . . .

CASSANDRA:                               Your hand cannot  
Prevail against the strong right arm of Moira.

ANDROMACHE: Go, go, you prophetess of doom! It's you,  
You are to blame, if what she says is true!  
From Hector you have stolen all his nerve,  
You broke his spirit with your words of doom,  
You killed his faith and certainty. For never  
Did my dear Hector flee the battlefield—  
He carried hope, he bore forth victory  
And glory. But now you have killed his hope  
With your accursed words: "Vengeance and death!"  
Then bear the shame and infamy yourself  
That your unhappy brother won in battle!

CASSANDRA: If he won only them, I'd bid them welcome!  
(*She shudders and, unable to remain on her feet,*  
*she sits down on the nearest unoccupied stool.*)

Andromache, I wish with all my heart  
These words of mine had had no truth in them.

ANDROMACHE: If only you had never spoken them,  
And had not poisoned us, it would not be  
An evil truth. His nerve would not have gone.

CASSANDRA: Andromache, I spurn, I spurn away  
These words of doom.

ANDROMACHE: It is too late, Cassandra,  
His nerve is gone.

CASSANDRA (*involuntarily*): Ah! his life too is gone!  
Ah woe! What must be done? I see it now!  
I see: Achilles, the swift footed, charges,  
And Hector falls . . . sharp fear it is, and shame  
That laid him low, and not Achilles' sword.

ANDROMACHE: No, you yourself are guilty of all this,  
It was not fear, nor shame nor sword, but you,  
You poisoner, when you proclaimed the truth! . . .  
Oh, why do they not come? I can no longer  
Wait for their news. . . . I shall go there myself. . . .

CASSANDRA (*restraining her*):  
I cannot tell you, I can tell you nothing,  
I shall not prophesy . . . I only see!  
Go blind, you doom-foretelling eyes!

CHRYSE (*running in*): Oh, woe!  
Our lord has perished on Achilles' sword!  
(*Andromache falls in a faint. The slave women cluster  
round her, wailing.*)

CASSANDRA (*distraught with grief, she speaks as if in a trance*):  
It was not fear, nor shame, nor sword, but I  
Who with the truth I spoke destroyed my brother!  
(*She covers her face with her veil.*)

## ACT IV

Part of a square near the Scaean Gate, enclosed by the wall. On the right, a little in the background, stands a temple; on the left, the Gate. It is growing dark. Long shadows stretch across the square. A small group of Trojans in the centre between the Gate and the temple are whispering together in counsel about something. In the middle of the group is Dolon, formerly betrothed to Cassandra; it is to him that most of those giving counsel turn. Cassandra and Polyxena are crossing the square from the temple; both are wearing black robes of mourning, Polyxena with her hair



shorn and her head uncovered, Cassandra with a fillet round her head and a long black veil.

CASSANDRA (*restrains Polyxena and stands motionless*):

Behold, behold, see what uncertain people

Have gathered here. . . .

POLYXENA: But why are they "uncertain?"

Agenor's there, Deiphobus, Helenus,

And in the middle, Dolon!

CASSANDRA: Also Dolon!

POLYXENA: Why did you sigh and moan so bitterly?

CASSANDRA: It's nothing, no . . .

POLYXENA: You still cannot forget

That he was your . . .

CASSANDRA: Polyxena, my dear,

Now I give no thought to myself at all.

POLYXENA: To what, then?

CASSANDRA: (*clasps her hands entreatingly towards her*):

O my dearest, dearest sister,

I beg you, I entreat you, do not ask,

Do not force me to speak! Perhaps, indeed,

It is the truth my words are poisonous,

And that my eyes murder the strength of men!

Would I had blinded them, had plucked them out . . .

Ah, that would be great happiness indeed!

POLYXENA: Cassandra, calm yourself! Where is the person

Who would enjoy deformity, or wish it?

CASSANDRA: Here is one, standing right beside you.

POLYXENA: Sister,

Let's go away from here!

CASSANDRA: No, I'll not go,

I must stay here, for I must look on Dolon,

Because no, never mind . . . just look on him.

I shall not go . . . I cannot . . . but you go,

However, where you like.

POLYXENA: I'll stay with you.

Something might happen to you by yourself.

CASSANDRA: Cassandra has no care if something happens

To her, or not—she only has to do

Whatever fate assigned to her.

(*Meanwhile the group has finished giving counsel and has*

*broken up. Dolon, left without companions, approaches the two princesses)*

DOLON: Princesses,

I greet you. (*Wishes to proceed.*)

CASSANDRA: Dolon, stay!

DOLON: What does the gracious Princess say to me?

CASSANDRA (*embarrassed, seeks for what she is to ask. The whole time she is speaking to Dolon, she keeps her veil drawn low over her eyes, so that her face is hardly visible*):

I . . . really, I wanted . . .

To ask you . . . did they meet with your approval,

The gifts of honour from our ceremonies

In Hector's memory? . . .

DOLON: (*somewhat surprised*): Yes, I am very grateful  
For this favour and honour.

CASSANDRA: Why are you . . .

Why are you not wearing the shield tonight?

DOLON: What do I need a shield for? Prophetess,  
Do you see something?

CASSANDRA: (*frightened*): No, no, Dolon, no!

DOLON: (*thoughtfully*): It's true, I walk on an uncertain path,

Yet shield is but a hindrance to a scout . . .

And I must go by stealth into the camp

Of the Achaeans, spy out all by night,

Eavesdrop upon the councils, and return

Likewise, by stealth.

POLYXENA: Forgive me, it's not fitting

For maidens to intrude upon affairs

Of State—but I must ask, why did the senior

Officers choose such a young man as you?

DOLON: Because a young man has a suppler step,  
Treads lighter and (*smiling*), can run away more quickly!

CASSANDRA (*in an undertone, to herself*):

If he *can* run away!

DOLON: What's that you said?

(*Cassandra is silent.*)

I know that I in no way have deserved

That you should waste your words on my affairs. . . .

I only wanted. . . . No, I have no right. . . .

Princesses, greetings to you. . . .

(*He bows, preparing to go.*)

CASSANDRA: Stay a moment

What did you want?

DOLON: To ask you . . .

CASSANDRA: Ah, to ask!

No, do not ask, I have no love for questions!

DOLON: Then I shall go my way . . .

CASSANDRA: Ask on, ask on,

I shall reply.

DOLON: Then tell me, Prophetess,

If I shall come back living from this venture?

CASSANDRA: Why do you think I am the one to ask?

Go ask Helenus, have we such a lack

Of seers here in Troy?

DOLON: It's too late now

To go and seek them out.

CASSANDRA: But what do you

Want with my prophecies? Cassandra is

A byword throughout Troy. Who will believe her?

No one at all!

DOLON: I do not know myself

Why, but all the same I'd like to hear

Cassandra's own answer upon this matter.

CASSANDRA: You would believe her?

DOLON: Maybe I'd believe.

CASSANDRA (*bitterly*): But only "maybe?"

DOLON: I've offended you?

CASSANDRA: Oh no, I'm used to always being doubted!

DOLON: But they all listen to your prophecies.

CASSANDRA: To pity!

DOLON: But I want to listen to them.

CASSANDRA: And if, suppose, I were to tell you this—

I do not tell you, it is just "suppose"—

That you must not go on reconnaissance,

Would you obey me?

DOLON: No, I'll tell you truly,

It would not be possible to obey,

Although you prophesied clear death for me,

For it would be dishonour to go back

In secret on my public resolution  
Which I made, uncompelled, of my free will.

CASSANDRA: But you still want to know what will befall you?

DOLON: Yes, for I like to look fate in the eyes.

CASSANDRA: No, Dolon, that is not a thing you like,  
You never liked it. You are speaking vainly,  
You are too much a child to meet such eyes.

DOLON: A child? Princess, I am a man mature,  
Welcomed in council, fit and apt for war,  
I'm long past boyhood now.

CASSANDRA: Nevertheless,  
To bear fate's glances, your maturity  
Is still too little.

DOLON: I can see, Princess,  
That you have no desire to answer me,  
And I am only wasting time in vain,  
And there's no longer much time left to me.

CASSANDRA: (*shudders at his words*):  
Who told you that?

DOLON: We all agreed that I  
Must be back safe before the moon has risen.

CASSANDRA: The moon will rise early indeed tonight!

DOLON: Then all the more I have no time to lose,  
I seem to have wasted a lot already!

POLYXENA: You should have waited for a moonless night.

DOLON: War does not wait, Princess—and if we were  
To wait until we had a moonless night,  
Maybe the moon would shine upon the ruins  
Of holy Troy. Princesses, I must go,  
Farewell to you!  
(*He goes to the gate without looking back, and disappears through it. Cassandra silently waves him goodbye, and when he has disappeared, she falls on Polyxena's shoulder, weeping bitterly.*)

POLYXENA: What are you weeping for?

CASSANDRA: That was the last time I shall speak with him!  
What did I say to him? They were all cold  
Words, and unwelcome, they were like the hostile  
Swords that so soon will stab away the life  
Of my only, my beloved Dolon! . . .

Why did I not fall down before his feet?  
Why did I not implore the Olympian gods  
That he should not go on this evil path?  
Why did I not say: "Go not, you will perish!"  
Why did I not restrain him with my glance?  
He might take warning from ill-boding eyes  
And maybe he . . . maybe he would believe me—  
He said, himself, that maybe he would heed.  
He is a child before the eyes of fate,  
He would not dare to go into their fires,  
If once he surely looked upon clear death.  
Ah, even now. . . . My only happiness  
Is dying there! . . .

POLYXENA: Cassandra! Recollect!

He is alive! What are you wailing for  
So doomfully, indeed! It is not fit,  
Someone might overhear you! Let's go home!

CASSANDRA: Let all the wide world hear! There is no force  
Would keep me quiet. . . . Ah, you have yet to learn  
How hard it is to lose your dearest love!

POLYXENA: Cassandra, that's enough! What are you saying?  
Let's go, it's dark and eerie! I'm afraid!  
It's late now. . . .

CASSANDRA: Late . . . the moon will swiftly rise  
And light the field. . . . Out in the field my Dolon  
Is all alone there like a cypress tree  
Beside the crossroads . . . and he is so gentle,  
So young and sensitive, he is not fit  
For arms, but for the cithera and lyre,  
And for the songs of spring. . . . O that these hands  
Could aid him now against the heavy swords  
That are raised over him. . . . Save him!

POLYXENA: Take heed!  
Have you gone mad? You'll fetch everyone out!  
That would put the Achaeans on their guard!

CASSANDRA: The Achaeans? . . . I'll be silent. . . . I shall not . . .

*(A long silence. Cassandra trembles violently, at first covering her face completely with her veil and standing motionless; then she unveils herself and speaks in a whisper, clasping both Polyxena's hands.)*

Let us go to the gate. . . . Please come with me. . . .  
It's hard for me. . . . I am afraid of fate. . . .

POLYXENA: How can we go? It's dark upon the steps.

CASSANDRA: It is not dark enough, I can see all.

*(She stretches out her hands into space.)*

O Artemis, O sister of Apollo,  
O shining goddess, quench that torch of thine  
Just for tonight, just for this single night!  
Let the young lovers lose their dreams awhile,  
They have their happiness. Is it for them,  
For happy folk to dream more blissfully,  
That you will take from my unhappiness  
This last despairing dream of mine, the dream  
That somewhere in this world my love walks still,  
My love, my only love, though fate forbids!  
If it is true, as people say of thee,  
That thou thyself hast also known true love,  
O by the name of that chaste love of thine,  
Look on me, I beseech thee!

POLYXENA (*trembling*): Dear, enough!

CASSANDRA (*stops short, then speaks in a changed voice*):

Yes, it is true, enough, what use are prayers?  
What good are all the gods against stern fate?  
They too are bound by the eternal laws,  
They, just as mortals—sun and moon and stars  
Are torches in the mighty fane of Moira,  
Gods, goddesses, are servants in that fane,  
Only the slaves of that unyielding Empress.  
And to implore *Her*, that is work in vain,  
She knows no pity, she can know no grace;  
Deaf she is, and blind, as primal Chaos.  
And to implore her slaves—that too is vain,  
Degrading; and to be the slave of slaves  
I have no wish!

POLYXENA: Control yourself, poor sister!  
Would you enrage the gods at such a time?  
Have they not punished you enough already  
For your audacity? Do you want still  
More punishment?

CASSANDRA: What more? The slave of fate,  
The gentle Artemis can have no power

To light the moon a moment earlier,  
 Nor to snuff out the moonlight in the heavens,  
 But by the laws which fate assigned to her  
 When time first was. I fear no punishment!  
 Let us go to the gate!

*(They go together up the steps in the wall by the gate; while they are going up silently in the darkness, the horizon beyond the wall, the sky becomes slightly red.)*

POLYXENA: What's that? Is it a fire?

Has Dolon set the Achaean tents alight?

CASSANDRA *(on top of the wall)*:

No, no. . . . It's not a fire. . . .

POLYXENA: What is it?

CASSANDRA: Wait!

Quiet!

*(A long silence. The sky grows steadily brighter, and the full moon appears above the horizon. Cassandra covers her face with her hands and stands as if turned to stone.)*

POLYXENA *(clasping Cassandra to her)*:

Oh, dearest! . . .

CASSANDRA: I'm afraid of fate. . . .

She's looking down upon us with so great,  
 So white an eye . . . *(pointing to the moon)*

Oh, she sees everything!

Nowhere is there a hiding place, nowhere!

Yet still I cannot see! O where is Dolon?

POLYXENA: He's down there, crawling across the ramparts slowly.

*(The two princesses stand motionless for a while, their black figures sharply defined in the moonlight.)*

POLYXENA: Now he's got up . . . he's gone into the camp.

CASSANDRA: O woe, they come!

POLYXENA: Who? Where?

CASSANDRA: There's two of them,

They come, they come. . . .

POLYXENA: No, no, the moon's gone in

Behind the cloud, Dolon's dropped down again,

They do not see him.

CASSANDRA: But I do, I see! *(shrieks loudly)*

Dolon!

POLYXENA: You fool! He's heard you! Now he's up

And started running! Now they're after him. . . .

*(Cassandra tries to jump down from the wall; her sister holds her back. They struggle.)*

CASSANDRA: Let go of me! Let go of me! Let go!

I must go to him and. . . . Let go!

POLYXENA *(shouts with all her might)*: Help, help!

Everyone, help! Come here! Guards! Help! Come here!

*(The watchmen come and help Polyxena to restrain Cassandra.)*

CASSANDRA: Leave me be! Him, it's him you have to help!

1ST WATCHMAN: Who?

CASSANDRA: Dolon! They are murdering him out there!

2ND WATCHMAN: Where?

CASSANDRA: Out there, in the field. O help him, Trojans!

Run quickly!

1ST WATCHMAN: But, Princess, we cannot help,

There are but two of us. To run into

The enemy's camp would be our sure destruction.

CASSANDRA: But where are all the Trojans? Are they hiding?

Or dead? Hey, Trojans! Trojans! Where are you?

*(The Trojans begin to run into the square.)*

POLYXENA: Here come the people.

CASSANDRA: Let me go!

*(She struggles desperately, then draws back worn out with the struggle and defeated by terror.)*

Too late!

DEIPHOBUS AND HELENUS *(Cassandra's brothers. They come forward from the crowd and, taking her hands, try to drag Cassandra from the gate.)*

Sister, let us go home!

CASSANDRA *(thrusting them off)*: Away, away!

It is you that have killed him. *(Suddenly dropping her voice and speaking in a tone of utter defeat.)*

No, it is I. . . .

*(Humbly she allows herself to be led, and goes, hardly able to walk, so that she is more carried than led. The moon hides behind a cloud, and the dark group of people leading Cassandra down from the wall is hardly more than a shadow and melts into the deeper shadows below the temple.)*



Cassandra's room. It is empty.

DEIPHOBUS (*entering*):

Cassandra! Sister! Where are you? Hey, slaves!  
(*Claps his hands and calls.*)

Slaves!

(*From the neighbouring room an elderly slave woman enters.*)

SLAVE WOMAN: What is it, my lord?

DEIPHOBUS: What's going on?

Hasn't my sister any serving maids  
That there's no answer when one calls?

SLAVE WOMAN: Exactly!

The Prophetess sent all her slaves away,  
Saying: "Enough already of royal habits,  
Time now to learn to labour without slaves,  
For soon it will be needed."

DEIPHOBUS: Now new fancies!

Whose are you?

SLAVE WOMAN: I'm Princess Polyxena's.

DEIPHOBUS: Well, all the same, you go and call my sister!

SLAVE WOMAN: Which, sir? Polyxena?

DEIPHOBUS: No, no, Cassandra!

But quickly!

SLAVE WOMAN (*goes, grumbling*):

Quickly! Not a bit of patience!

My legs are old, so what's the good of "quickly!"  
(*on the threshold*)

And there she is, herself. Princess, come quickly!

Your brother's waiting for you! (*Exit.*)

CASSANDRA (*with a distaff stuck through her girdle and a spindle in her hand enters spinning*): Greetings, brother!

DEIPHOBUS: And now what fancy have you dreamed up, sister?

You have sent all your slaves away, but you  
Yourself still ply the distaff.

CASSANDRA: It is better,

Brother, to grow accustomed in good time  
To the inevitable.

DEIPHOBUS: That's slaves' talk!

A princess never in her life should speak so.

CASSANDRA: And what does she say, then?

DEIPHOBUS: "Either to rule,  
Or else to perish!"

CASSANDRA: All of us will perish,  
And without ruling!

DEIPHOBUS: Sister, please be quiet,  
And do not vex me with your prophecies.  
This is real grief: brother a prophet, sister  
A prophetess, and nowhere to escape  
In one's own house from kinsfolk's prophecies.  
But you took up the distaff, that is good!  
To tell the truth, it is more fit by far  
For girls to spin than utter prophecies.  
So spin, and do not prophesy.

CASSANDRA: I, brother,  
Myself would rather spin the snowy wool  
Than prophesy black fate for all of us.

DEIPHOBUS: Spin on, spin on—a betrothed maiden needs  
Plenty of white wool for the wedding feast:  
For bridal raiment and as gift for guests.

CASSANDRA: Brother, you too, I see, have joined the prophets,  
Alas, untimely and without true sense.  
(*She turns away, offended.*)

DEIPHOBUS: Timely and with true sense. Dear sister, it  
Is not my custom to waste words in vain.  
So, if I speak, that means it's worth the hearing;  
And, though a prophetess, it's clear that you  
Yourself cannot foresee your destiny,  
So I shall tell it you: we have betrothed  
You, just a while ago, to Onomaus,  
The King of Lydia.

CASSANDRA: Too quickly, brother,  
You say to me that "We have just betrothed you,"  
For I am not a slave woman as yet,  
And I have my free will.

DEIPHOBUS: Not so, Cassandra,  
For every maiden, whether slave woman  
Or a princess, has to obey her kin.

CASSANDRA: Brother, I am no slave, nor a princess,  
For I am less and greater than them both.

DEIPHOBUS: I did not come in here for guessing games,  
 Nor yet for empty chatter. I say, plainly,  
 That you have been betrothed. King Onomaus  
 Demands you as reward for his alliance,  
 And for his aid against the enemy.  
 He boasts that he'll make war this very day,  
 With all the men of Lydia besides,  
 And that before the sun sets, he'll hew down  
 The forest of the armies of the foe.  
 "If this be true," we said to him, "Tomorrow  
 You shall lead home Cassandra to your tent."

CASSANDRA: And what of that! "If this be true." . . . Of course  
 It is not true!

DEIPHOBUS: I'd never have expected  
 That you, a Trojan girl, and Priam's daughter,  
 Could have so selfishly refused to give  
 Salvation both to Troy and to your kin.  
 The daughter of Atrides was far greater,  
 It is not worthless to compare the Hellene  
 Maidens as finer than our Trojan girls,  
 For from the former came Iphigeneia,  
 Far-famed, who gladly paid her maiden life  
 To win her people glory.

CASSANDRA: Brother, you  
 Know not the price of women's sacrifices,  
 But I will tell you: of all woman kind  
 Far-famed Iphigeneia did not make  
 The greatest and the hardest sacrifice.  
 So many harder sacrifices, though  
 Unfamed, are made by women who leave not  
 Even a name to them! If you had wished  
 That I should give my life in sacrifice,  
 Surely I would have offered it, but this—  
 I cannot, brother, I'm no heroine.

DEIPHOBUS: Yes, I can see it. You are sister to  
 Paris, yet not to Hector. Hector could  
 Lay down his life, leaving his spouse and making  
 His son an orphan to bring Troy salvation,  
 Or bring her honour. Paris, though, was ready  
 For Helen's sake to let his native land

Go to destruction. Such are you, Cassandra,  
For the sake of that languid shade of your  
Dolon, although indeed he had betrayed you,  
You're ready to let us be drowned.

CASSANDRA: My brother!

Do not offend the shade of the departed!  
You say Dolon was languid, he betrayed me?  
Was it a languid man went forth to doom,  
Forth to clear death, when not a single one  
Of all my hero brothers dared to go?  
Perhaps now Hector's dead, Deiphobus  
Can show his bravery in words alone.

DEIPHOBUS: I am too old for spying. You, Cassandra,  
However, are too young to judge your elders.

CASSANDRA: But truth is older than all elders, brother.

DEIPHOBUS: Leave it! The dead don't rise. That's not the point!  
The point is surely what you're bound to do  
For Troy's salvation and her happiness.

CASSANDRA: How do you know that this will bring salvation?

DEIPHOBUS: I know this is the only thing which can.

If you will bring salvation is unknown,  
But you are bound to make this last attempt.  
If they should kill the Lydian, folk will say:  
"It was not fated, then!" If you refuse,  
They all will say that you brought us destruction.  
King Onomaus is coming to you now,  
So that you yourself will say the word,  
The single word "Agreed!"—and straightway,  
Arrayed for war, the Lydians will march.

CASSANDRA: My brother, that would be threefold betrayal,  
Of self, of truth and of the Lydians,  
For in one word, one single word, I would  
Have sent forth a whole army to its ruin.

DEIPHOBUS: Are foreigners dearer than your own land?

CASSANDRA: Why should they perish for us, though, in vain.  
Hector, the god-like, could not bring salvation,  
So what good is this Lydian?

DEIPHOBUS: Cassandra,  
You forget that Achilles was here then,  
And, more than god-like, he was goddess-born,  
But now he is not here.

Penthesilea, the fair Amazon,  
Who for Troy's sake perished before her time.

DEIPHOBUS: Penthesilea! She was just a woman!

It's not for women to bring Troy salvation.

CASSANDRA: That's right, my brother, it's not for Cassandra.

DEIPHOBUS (*angry*):

Don't be so literal!

SLAVE WOMAN (*entering*): That foreigner

Keeps on demanding why he's not called in.

CASSANDRA: Go, tell him to come in; and you, my brother,  
Please leave us here alone.

DEIPHOBUS: What will you say?

CASSANDRA: What the god shall ordain.

DEIPHOBUS: Well, but remember,  
If he ordains that you say "Not agreed,"  
Then you will have the name of a foul traitress,  
Now and for evermore.

CASSANDRA: Deiphobus!

DEIPHOBUS: I'll be the first to call you by that name,  
In public, on the square. Remember, then! (*Exit.*)

ONOMAUS (*enters and stops short on the threshold. Silence*):  
Greetings, Princess!  
(*Cassandra is silent.*)

I have a high regard  
Indeed, for modesty, nevertheless  
I should be wishful to hear that word spoken,  
That one word which, indeed, belongs to me.

CASSANDRA: You are quite sure that it belongs to you?

ONOMAUS: Your father and your brother have assured me  
That word is mine.

CASSANDRA: Then from them you have heard it,  
But I do not assure you of that word;  
You have not asked it and you have not sought it,  
You simply want to take it as your right.

ONOMAUS: Forgive me, Princess, I know that young maidens  
Love pretty speeches; I, alas, am not  
Skilled in these matters. My cause is but brief;  
You have not sought my hand, I have sought yours,  
That means, quite clearly, that you took my fancy.  
And so, therefore, I want you for my wife.

CASSANDRA: However can you want me for your wife?  
For you can see I'll not be yours in spirit.

ONOMAUS: If I can have that figure and those eyes,  
Those lips, and all the proud grace of that form,  
How can the spirit run away from it?  
And therefore I shall have the spirit too.

CASSANDRA: Not more so than the spirits of your slave girls!

ONOMAUS: Do not compare yourself to slaves, Cassandra!  
For you shall be a queen, as is befitting  
To one who is my wife and Priam's daughter.

CASSANDRA: To live in slavery befits her not,  
Though as a queen.

ONOMAUS: I shall not bear you off  
In hostile arms; in freedom you shall come,  
I could have joined forces with the Achaeans,  
Brought Troy into destruction, led you off  
Into captivity, but I prefer  
To take you honourably from your father,  
Having won you by mighty deeds.

CASSANDRA: You wish,  
Then, King, to buy me?

ONOMAUS: Every hero buys,  
Even the greatest hero buys his wife  
In such a way.

CASSANDRA: That is not heroism,  
A hero never seeks for his own gain.

ONOMAUS: Heroism must have its due reward,  
Both gods and people recognize this fact.

CASSANDRA: Is glory not enough, then?

ONOMAUS: I have glory,  
Enough, Princess, and more, but still I have not  
Taken a wife, and so I shall take you.

CASSANDRA: Take me, already? I have not consented.

ONOMAUS: Princess, to tell the truth, I wished to pay you  
Due honour, by thus asking, for you are  
A priestess of the gods, a Trojan princess.  
But it is not our way in Lydia  
To ask the maid, once father gives consent.

CASSANDRA: Know, Onomaus, that such a marriage cannot  
Be happy with Cassandra.

To scare me, Prophetess, with prophecies!  
For I believe that fortune loves the strong  
The resolute and daring; every woman  
Ought to love them, but if she does not,  
Why, then, she must be made to love them.

CASSANDRA:

King,

You do not know me, if you speak that way.

ONOMAUS: I know enough of women!

CASSANDRA:

But Cassandra

Was not among them.

ONOMAUS:

For that very reason

I want her.

CASSANDRA:

It will be the worse for you!

I do not love you.

ONOMAUS:

You will love me!

CASSANDRA:

Never

Could I love one who seeks his own advantage  
By cheating our misfortune.

ONOMAUS:

Who with glory

Has saved your country?

CASSANDRA:

Not so quickly, King,

That is still lying on the lap of Zeus.

ONOMAUS: But if it comes to pass?

CASSANDRA:

Then I should give

Honour and thanks to our defender, if  
He would refrain from seeking as reward  
Myself . . .

ONOMAUS:

I see that you are wise, Princess!

"Honour and thanks"—that is the sole reward.

But if I were to give to a poor beggar  
Meat from my table, he would give to me  
Honour and thanks enough.

CASSANDRA:

And have you seen

How liberated folk praise their defender?

ONOMAUS: Not only once or twice. I tell you, Princess,

It is no different to the way that vanquished  
Folk praise the conqueror. I have heard both,  
And both have equal value, for always  
The powerless will praise power. But as for wasting

One's power for such a thing—it would be madness!  
 I am not without sense. To risk one's neck,  
 To lose an army just for "thanks and honour"  
 Said in the Trojan manner? I can hear it  
 Said by our women folk at home, in Lydian,  
 When I lead back the army without war.

(*silence*)

Well then, Princess?

(*He prepares to go. Cassandra is silent but seems to be struggling with herself. Onomaus notices this and lingers.*)

DEIPHOBUS (*enters. He sees the two motionless figures and looks at Cassandra penetratingly and fiercely*):

Agreed sister?

CASSANDRA:

Agreed!

ONOMAUS: In all sincerity?

CASSANDRA:

If you are ready

To risk your neck and lose an army simply  
 That I should say: "Indeed, these lips are yours,  
 This figure and these eyes"—well then, agreed.  
 And if your people are prepared to leave  
 Their wives as widows, so that they may win  
 A bride to wed their King—well then, agreed.  
 In all sincerity I say it!

ONOMAUS:

Strange

Is your sincerity, Cassandra. Well,  
 Enough of arguing with words. It's time  
 To go and win with deeds my due reward.

CASSANDRA: As are the deeds, so the reward shall be!

Farewell then, Onomaus!

ONOMAUS:

Goodbye to you.

(*Exit Onomaus and Deiphobus. From without is heard the dull lamentation of a great crowd.*)

POLYXENA (*enters, running*):

Cassandra, tell me, what is it you've done?

CASSANDRA: Dear sister, I was forced to say the word.

POLYXENA: You have said yes? You mean it isn't true?

CASSANDRA (*coldly*):

Polyxena, you're acting foolishly,  
 You know not why it is you blame and praise.



POLYXENA: I praise the fact that you obeyed the will  
Of father, brother, and of all your kin.

CASSANDRA: That means your will as well?

POLYXENA: As for that, sister,  
Clear death is terrible.

CASSANDRA: But for salvation  
Isn't it worth mourning at least a sister?

POLYXENA: But everything will be well for you, dearest,  
For you will be Queen of rich Lydia,  
A land, they say, that has no lack of gold.

CASSANDRA: Cassandra is not envious of gold,  
A single bracelet is enough for her.  
(*She looks at Dolon's bracelet on her right arm.*)

POLYXENA (*embracing her*):  
I know well how hard it is to forget  
Your love, dear sister, but what do the dead  
Need but shorn hair and blood and sacrifices.  
You can give Dolon a whole hecatomb  
As to a god, for Lydia is richer  
By far than Troy, once you become the Queen.

CASSANDRA: Of one I love not?

POLYXENA: What can you do, sister?  
Are there so many women who can marry  
Guided by their free choice and love? It is  
A woman's lot to listen not to heart  
But to her kin. And lucky if it's kin,  
For very often a proud conqueror  
Compels a captive maid to be his wife.  
Why, when Deiphobus wed Anthea  
She was not willing, but nevertheless  
Now she is a true wife to him, a tender  
Mother to his babes.

CASSANDRA: Polyxena,  
Suppose that they betrothed you once again,  
After Achilles, to another man?

POLYXENA: Well, but . . . I know there cannot be another  
Such as Achilles, but I do not wish  
To live a maiden to the end of time.  
I'd marry him, if he were a good match.  
If not my husband, I would love my children,

If not true love, then at least wifely duty,  
Obedience and fidelity I'd bring  
As dowry to my husband.

CASSANDRA: And suppose  
That you had nothing besides hate and curses,  
What would you have to bring your "husband" then?

POLYXENA: You terrify me when you speak this way!  
Cassandra, then admit that it is true,  
That you called down, prophesied doom for him  
And for the Lydians?

CASSANDRA: How do you know?

POLYXENA (*somewhat embarrassed*):  
My slave women were underneath the window,  
Drying the wool. They chanced to overhear  
What you were saying. But I do not know  
Who took the message to the Lydians.  
D'you hear the noise? The Lydian army rose:  
"King, we shall not go forth to meet our doom!  
Cassandra cursed us! We are going home!  
So let Troy fall if it is fated so!"  
And three whole legions have set off already.

CASSANDRA (*involuntarily*):  
Thanks to the gods!

POLYXENA: Cassandra, You are shameless!

CASSANDRA: But why should they all perish so in vain,  
For my betrothal is to be their death!

POLYXENA: Why did you say the word, then, to the King?

CASSANDRA: Don't turn the sword within the burning wound!  
It is dishonour, heavy shame upon  
My head, Polyxena, the word I gave.  
It was compulsion and deep hate that spoke  
The shameful word, it was not I. O sister!  
I hated him with such a fervent hate,  
Him and all his witless, senseless army,  
That horde of slaves. Gladly and most sincerely  
I said the word "Agreed" to their destruction.

POLYXENA: You're terrifying, past belief, Cassandra!

ANDROMACHE (*enters running*):  
Praise to the gods! The Lydians go forth,  
Go forth to war. King Onomaus proclaimed:  
"I have received Cassandra's word 'Agreed.'"

Helenus stated he saw from the birds  
 A lucky sign for victory and marriage;  
 Deiphobus proclaimed it was not true  
 That you had cursed the King and Lydians.  
 Then they grew quiet and went forth to war.

CASSANDRA: Helenus said that he saw from the birds  
 A lucky sign for victory and marriage?  
 Then he is lying!

ANDROMACHE: All the same, Cassandra,  
 Of your truth we have had enough and more,  
 Evil-presaging, evil-bringing, let us  
 Live now in hope, even if it is false.  
 Oh, I am weary with your kind of truth!  
 O sister, at least grant me dreams and visions!  
 Let me for one short day believe my little  
 Son, my Astyanax, at least will live,  
 That he will not perish at hostile hands,  
 But will grow strong and powerful and god-like  
 As was his father, my beloved Hector!  
 O sister, at least grant me dreams and visions!

CASSANDRA: For dreams and visions you would let the army  
 All be destroyed? For shame, Andromache!

ANDROMACHE: It is not shame, no; any mother will  
 Tell you it is not shame. What are these strangers  
 To me? What cause have I to weep for them?  
 And maybe it is true that they will save  
 Troy for us? Maybe it is really true?

CASSANDRA: But only "maybe?"

ANDROMACHE: That is all I need.  
 For hope, Cassandra dear, is always hope!

CASSANDRA: I beg you, dear sister Polyxena,  
 To send your slave woman to fetch Helenus.

POLYXENA: Indeed I will. (*Exit.*)

ANDROMACHE: But why Helenus?

CASSANDRA: I

Wish to ask him. I do not believe  
 Myself. Now you see the god's doom accomplished.  
 Not only others but Cassandra too  
 Mistrusts Cassandra. I do not know whether  
 All this is true or not which now I see.

ANDROMACHE: What do you see?

CASSANDRA: Enough, Andromache,  
You ask me so that you can curse me later,  
And on my head already heavy curses  
Weigh heavy like an iron diadem,  
Upon my forehead stinging words are twisted  
Like serpents on the forehead of Medusa,  
Wrathfully hissing, poisoning the mind. . . .  
Go, gather up your slave girls, let them take  
Cithera and flute, and let them join  
In subtle music, maybe they will call,  
Evoke the dreams and golden visions for  
Your eyes that have grown weary—tired with tears.  
You have a slave girl from Phoenicia  
Who is skilled as a snake charmer, maybe  
She'll lull to sleep the snake of your alarm,  
And you shall sleep and in your sleep shall come  
Nothing of evil nor of war nor death  
Nor terror nor Cassandra.

ANDROMACHE: Do not mock me!  
I still believe the Lydians will come  
With King and victory. Farewell to you. (*Exit.*)

## ACT VI

Again Cassandra's room. Cassandra and Helenus.

CASSANDRA: So, brother, you will tell me truly what  
You have seen in the omens from the birds?  
(*Looks him straight in the eyes. Helenus drops his glance.*)

HELENUS: What of such matters! Both of us are seers,  
And we know well that birds and victims' entrails,  
And blood and sacrificial smoke are only  
Adornments and a veil for naked truth  
Before the public gaze, for truth, you know,  
Is a great lady, noble and esteemed,  
She mustn't walk abroad without a dress. (*Smiles.*)

CASSANDRA: But I too am a woman, therefore I  
Can look on truth even undressed.

HELENUS: My sister,  
Tell me who ever looked on naked truth?

CASSANDRA: Myself I've looked on her, and often, too!

HELENUS: And are you quite sure that truth has not put  
The evil eye upon you? 215

CASSANDRA: You, Helenus,  
Have touched upon a burning sore, but I  
Will bear it bravely, for I wish sincerely  
To take advice with you. You are the wisest  
Of all my brothers, for your understanding  
Is quick and lithe like fire.

HELENUS: Or like a snake?  
Phrygian understanding, sister! We  
Trojans throughout this long siege have learned well  
To crawl around like snakes. What else to do?  
If you had seen just how Deiphobus  
Was crawling to the Lydian, you would say  
A second brother, too, was quick and lithe!

CASSANDRA: Don't talk about the litheness of a reptile,  
For me this is no wisdom, but repulsion.  
Tell me sincerely, as a brother should  
Tell a dear sister, do you really think  
(Whether from birds or simply, it's the same)  
If Troy's salvation lies in this betrothal,  
And if this Lydian will bring salvation?

HELENUS: You have put a hard question to me. Truly:  
Sometimes I thought so, sometimes I did not.

CASSANDRA: How shall I understand this?

HELENUS: Thus. At first  
I was quite certain, when I saw his army,  
Bristling with spears and numerous past counting,  
Fresh in their strength and mighty in their courage,  
That the Hellenes, who are worn out by war  
And weakened by the siege, could not stand firm  
Against a king so eager for the triumph.  
And I am certain that if victory lay  
In Helen's hands or in Polyxena's,  
Andromache's or any other woman's  
You choose—not yours—then it would be for us.

CASSANDRA: Do you then mean that all of our misfortune  
Comes from Cassandra?

HELENUS: Not the whole of it,  
But a great deal.

CASSANDRA: Brother! What are you saying?

HELENUS: You bade me speak sincerely. I am granting  
Your wishes and not mine, my dearest sister.  
But I am not reproaching you, Cassandra,  
You are not guilty of your nature. Surely  
The gods are guilty here who granted you  
To know the truth, but did not add the power  
For you to *guide* the truth. Indeed, you see it,  
Clasping your hands, or wringing them in grief,  
Powerless you stand before the doomful vision  
Of the dread truth, as you were turned to stone;  
As if Medusa cast a glance upon you,  
You can spread naught but horror among people.  
And truth from this becomes more terrible,  
And people lose the last of force and reason,  
Or in despair rush forth into disaster,  
And then you say: "I have foretold it so!"

CASSANDRA: And what would you do, then?

HELENUS: That which I do.

I fight against the truth, in hope that I  
Can conquer it, and guide it on its way,  
Just as the helmsman guides a mighty ship.

CASSANDRA: And Moira, brother, implacable Moira?

It is her will that steers the universe,  
And do you wish to steer her on her way?

HELENUS: Not so, Cassandra, Moira has decreed  
That there should be the world and sea and steersman,  
And ship and storm and time of quiet weather,  
And cliffs and haven, so that there should be  
Struggle and hope and victory and truth  
And also . . . untruth.

CASSANDRA: If so, in that case,  
She wishes there should be Cassandra too.

HELENUS: And that Helenus should fight with Cassandra.

I see the truth, and I contend with it,  
So as to pull the Trojan ship away  
Clear of the shoal where you, Cassandra, have  
Run it in danger with that truth of yours.

CASSANDRA: And can you save the ship with your untruth?

HELENUS: And what is truth? And what is untruth? Lies  
Which then come true are hailed by all as truth.

For instance, once a slave told me a lie,  
 Saying my phial was stolen, simply meaning  
 He did not want to go and seek the phial.  
 But while this slave was idling, then indeed  
 The phial was stolen. So where was the truth.  
 In that, and where the lie? The thinnest line  
 Divides the lie from truth in what has passed,  
 But in the future there's no line at all.

CASSANDRA: But if one says what he does not believe,  
 Then that is a clear lie.

HELENUS: But if one says .  
 It in good faith, but makes a small mistake  
 As to the facts, then is it now the truth?

CASSANDRA: And how, Helenus, do *you* then distinguished  
 The truth from lies?

HELENUS: I don't at all. I leave  
 This quite alone.

CASSANDRA: How do you prophesy?  
 What do you tell the people?

HELENUS: What is needful  
 Sister, and useful, what is honourable.

CASSANDRA: Does this mean you have never seen what will be,  
 Fate unescapable, implacable?

Does a voice never tell you in your heart:  
 "It shall be thus, thus and no other way?"

HELENUS: To tell you honestly—no, never once.

CASSANDRA: Then it is hard to understand each other.  
 But tell me how you can proclaim in public:  
 "The god revealed to me . . . I have beheld . . .  
 A voice mysterious spoke to me, . . ." when all  
 This is untrue?

HELENUS: Truth and untruth again!  
 Let's put these words aside, they have no meaning.  
 You think that it is truth gives birth to speech?  
 I think that it is speech gives birth to truth.  
 And by what name are we to call the truth  
 Which is born from a lie. Have you not looked  
 Upon this kind of generation ever?  
 I've seen it countless times. The word is fruitful  
 And gives birth more than Proto-Mother Earth.

CASSANDRA: But you yourself said: "I do what is needful,

And what is useful, what is honourable."  
 Why is it needful you should play the Prophet?  
 Is it so useful and so honourable?

HELENUS: Indeed so! If today father and brothers,  
 And with them all the Trojan men and women  
 Tried to beg and entreat the Lydians,  
 It would all come to naught. The Lydians  
 Would simply say: "The Prophetess Cassandra  
 Has cursed—the war and wedding are unlucky!"  
 But I came with the dignity of priesthood,  
 In prophet's diadem, and with a staff  
 Silvered; I held it high above my head.  
 Like lightning the staff flashed before the eyes  
 Of all the foreigners. I said: "Be silent  
 And wait. I have let fly from out the temple  
 The sacred doves." At once there died away  
 All tumult and all hubbub. I proclaimed:  
 "King Onomaus insulted Lord Apollo,  
 By plighting troth with his own Prophetess  
 Without seeking consent of him the Lord  
 Of Arrows; hence the god pronounced his anger  
 Through the lips of the seer Cassandra. Maybe  
 We yet can turn away his wrath, by giving  
 A noble hecatomb to him of white  
 Oxen which never yet have felt the yoke."  
 "I promise it!" shouted the Lydian King,  
 And I exclaimed: "I see the doves have come  
 Back home and give nourishment to their chicks!  
 A lucky outcome, and a lucky marriage!"  
 And with this very word I vanquished you,  
 Far-seeing sister.

CASSANDRA: And for how long, brother?

HELENUS: That we shall see. Truly, out in the field,  
 It is not Lydians and the Achaeans  
 But you and I that fight. Helenus guides  
 Courage; Cassandra, though, commands despair.

CASSANDRA: And what will happen if Cassandra conquers?  
 How will Helenus justify his lie?

HELENUS: He will say publicly: "King Onomaus  
 Destroyed himself, he gave to Lord Apollo



Only a promise, not a hecatomb."

And to himself he'll say: "The weapon broke,  
But we shall find another. Death is always  
More honourable armed *than empty handed.*"

CASSANDRA: Why did you not go out to fight today,  
Not with a staff, but with a sword and spear?

HELENUS: The sword and spear are small weapons for me,  
For human souls—they are my proper tools,  
The winged word is my arrow, nations set  
In conflict with each other form my duel!  
All these I govern; Phrygian understanding.  
This diadem, this staff, they are the signs  
Of power and domination above kings.  
I have no equal like unto myself  
Among all rulers and above all heroes.  
Only you are my equal, maybe greater,  
And we shall fight each other to the end.

CASSANDRA: Oh, I myself do not know if I wish  
To conquer you today or not. This marriage  
Is as hateful to me as is death.  
I fear it as I fear the fall of Troy.

HELENUS: Indeed you have no Phrygian understanding.  
Have you not heard how sometimes the gods will  
Enfold their chosen ones about in cloud?  
I have a secret way beneath the altar—  
You shall stand there with Onomaus together,  
Offering the gods the wedding sacrifice.  
And from the offering dense smoke shall come,  
A brimstone cloud, and when it melts—instead of  
Cassandra—empty space. You understand?

CASSANDRA: It is disgrace and shame to counsel so!  
Is this way out what you call "honourable?"

HELENUS: At least it's useful and it's safe, my sister.

CASSANDRA: I'd rather take my own life with the sword!

HELENUS: And that way you would anger Onomaus,  
And still would break your word to him. That would be  
Neither useful nor honourable, sister.

*(looks at her, smiling)*

No, we are not alike, yet we are equal,  
If not in deeds, at least so in our thoughts.

POLYXENA (*entering*):

King Onomaus is slain. The Lydians  
Have all been put to flight. O sorrow, sorrow!

HELENUS: Rejoice, Cassandra, victory is yours!

CASSANDRA (*in prophetic tone*):

Not mine, but Moira's. I am but her tool.  
The quick and lithe Phrygian understanding—  
Moira has overthrown and broken it,  
Her strong right hand falls heavily and stern,  
She forges the world's weapons out of nations,  
You and I are but rivets in those weapons.  
Don't overestimate yourself, Helenus.

ANDROMACHE (*enters running and in a frenzy hurls himself at Cassandra*):

You, fierce destruction, have destroyed us all!

CASSANDRA (*calmly pointing to Helenus*):

Ask him why he could bring no salvation.  
We are both seers and, so it seems, are equal.  
(*She takes the distaff from her girdle and sits down to spin.*)

## ACT VII

A large square with a temple in the middle on a somewhat elevated site. To the right, in the background, the palace of King Priam, in the foreground various other buildings of the Citadel of Ilium. To the left, in the foreground, the Scaean Gate. It is a bright morning, the square is bathed in sunlight. There is a large crowd of Trojans coming and going to and from the Gate, they crowd together in front of the temple, talking together, now loudly, now softly, then suddenly there is complete silence, and they wait for something, expectantly. From the royal palace comes Helenus, in white robes of a priest, wearing a silver diadem, with a white, silver-adorned staff in his hand, walking with a solemn, hieratic step.

VOICES FROM THE CROWD:

Helenus comes! Way for the mighty seer!

HELENUS (*goes up onto the peristyle of the temple, and gives a sign with his staff, striking it three times on the marble pavement, then he begins to speak in a solemn, prophetic voice*):

Fathers, brothers and sons! O native Troy!  
The Olympian gods took pity on our tears,  
Upon our hecatombs, on our entreaties—  
And without arms they overcame the foe.

Zeus put it in the hearts of the Hellenes  
 Of their own will to go away from Troy.  
 Go to the gate—the Achæan camp is empty,  
 Only a horse alone upon the site—  
 An offering made to the gods of Troy  
 By the Achæans is this horse. Of wood  
 It is, not splendid, no rich prize of war,  
 But it is dearer far than gold or silver  
 To us, richer than costly stone or marble.  
 Gifts of accord are better far than booty  
 Won on the battlefield at price of blood.  
 The Greeks departed of their own free will  
 And all the gods' will, and they left this gift  
 Of honour and accord. Hail to the Greeks!

PEOPLE: Hail to the Greeks!

CASSANDRA (*from the temple*):

For blood, for death, for tears!

DEIPHOBUS (*turning to the temple door*):

Silence, Cassandra!

HELENUS (*to the Trojans*): You, O men of Troy,

I counsel: bring that gift into the temple

And set it there by the Palladion.

CASSANDRA (*appearing at the door of the temple with a black staff in her hand and stretching it forth as if barring the entry*):

I shall not let you in.

HELENUS (*striking down her staff with his own*):

Make way, Cassandra!

CASSANDRA (*again barring the way*):

I have the power not to let you in.

Men may not dare to venture to approach

Pallas's statue. I am guardian

Of the Palladion. Helenus, you

Make way; go, watch your birds!

(*She looks him in the eyes, he lowers his staff.*)

A gift impure,

A gift accursed!

(*The people murmur together, evidently confused.*)

VOICE FROM THE CROWD: Away, chase her away!

Ill-boding wretch!

ANOTHER VOICE: Quiet! She's a Princess!

FIRST VOICE: So much the worse! We have grown weary of

These prophecies of hers. We can endure them  
No longer!

A THIRD VOICE: Kill the woman!

*(A young man brandishes a spear.)*

HELENUS *(making a sign with his hand)*: Do not move!  
Do not spill blood—this is a holy place!

DEIPHOBUS: And what shall we do, brother, with the gift?

HELENUS: We shall build a new temple for it, named  
"The temple of accord." And in the meantime  
The gift shall stand within the palace court.  
*(to Deiphobus)*

You shall appoint a guard as its due honour.

CASSANDRA: The blind man sets the beaten to keep guard.

DEIPHOBUS: Cassandra!

HELENUS: Brother, and you, men of Troy,  
Bring in the horse into the palace courtyard.  
*(Deiphobus gives them the sign to move and himself goes  
to the Scaean Gate.)*

VOICE FROM THE PEOPLE:

Helenus has commanded! Come, my brothers!  
He is our wisdom and our seeing eye!

CASSANDRA: A single eye—and that bedimmed with film!  
*(All the people move out through the Scaean Gate.)*

HELENUS: Cassandra, listen to me, why are you  
Trying me with this scoffing and this jeering?

CASSANDRA: To try if at least once you'd be clear sighted.

HELENUS: Cassandra, this is folly. It is plain:  
The Achaean camp's deserted; on the sea  
There's not a boat, no, not the smallest speck.  
Deiphobus and I have sent forth scouts,  
Far and wide, the swiftest of our lads,  
On horseback and on foot. They could not find  
A garrison or sentinel or any  
Such thing, not anywhere.

CASSANDRA: An enemy  
Does not give gifts in vain.

HELENUS: But this gift is  
A sign of peace. Do you not understand?

CASSANDRA: Indeed no. If upon the sea there were  
A burning stick floating among the waves,  
Glowing with fire, would that be a sign

Of peace between water and flame? Who would  
Perceive it so?

HELENUS: Men are not elements,  
There is a bound to human wrong and anger.  
Many Achaean maidens have grown up  
During the war, and maybe Menelaus  
Will find a younger bride instead of Helen.

CASSANDRA: But he saw Helen on the Scaean Gate  
Yesterday morning.

HELENUS: Well, then?

CASSANDRA: Go to her,  
Helenus, in the women's bower, and there  
Think over what you've said.

HELENUS (*is lost in thought. Meanwhile, from the Scaean Gate, there  
appears a troop of armed Trojans. Helenus points them  
out to Cassandra*): You see those spears,

And those sharp swords? There is no need for warnings  
By prophecy. There is our watchful herald.  
The trumpet has a voice, and Troy has ears.

CASSANDRA: The dumb man will be watchman for the deaf!

HELENUS: Enough, Cassandra. I am deaf to you,  
And likewise all your words are dumb to me.  
We've talked the matter to an end. Enough.

DEIPHOBUS (*from out of the crowd of armed men, leads a captive  
Greek up to Cassandra and Helenus*):

Bring him here, bring him here. Let them speak,  
Let our Trojan seers decide this matter,  
And say to us what we ought best to do  
About this stranger. Brother, and you, Cassandra,  
Listen and ponder on it. We have caught  
This stranger in the field beside the horse.  
Wandering as if stunned, and shedding tears,  
Wringing his hands and murmuring meanwhile  
Disordered words. We took him prisoner,  
Seeing he was by dress and speech a Greek.  
But now we are divided in our thoughts:  
Some people say we ought to let him go—  
He was left here because he is demented,  
And therefore, surely, can do no one harm;  
But others say: this is some cunning spy,  
So let us kill him, then he'll do no evil.

(While Deiphobus is speaking, people, men and women, are gathering, some from the field, coming in through the Scaean Gate, and some from the houses in the town, and forming into a crowd.)

VOICES FROM THE CROWD:

Yes! Kill him! Kill him!

ONE VOICE: For what cause?

ANOTHER VOICE: For vengeance!

THIRD VOICE: As an example.

FOURTH VOICE: But Zeus will avenge  
Innocent blood.

DEIPHOBUS (*in a loud voice*): Be silent, men of Troy!  
Judgment is not for you. Tell us, Helenus,  
Are we to kill him or to set him free?

HELENUS: Neither of these proposals. It would be  
Useless to kill him, would bring us no honour,  
And would mean danger. Once the Achaeans learned  
A Hellene had been slain without a cause,  
Then once again they could renew the conflict  
For long years more. All the same, to set free  
An unknown stranger—that would be imprudent.  
So let him live, but let him live in chains  
And watched by a strict guard.

SINON (*the captured Greek*): O noble King,  
Or Prophet all-foreseeing. I know not  
How I ought to address my Lord in honour. . . .  
But I can see wisdom like to a god's  
Upon your brow. All-wise one, you know well  
A Hellene's soul. I am myself from Hellas.  
Hellas, that is the cradle from all time  
Of holy freedom. A true son of Hellas  
Out of his native element cannot  
Live, or if he can, will not.

CASSANDRA: With these words  
You've earned an honourable death in Troy.

HELENUS: Why speak of death? Set him at liberty,  
Since no guilt has been found in him.

CASSANDRA: My brother,  
Say, what is guilt? Is the hyena guilty,  
That it must live on death and on corruption?

DEIPHOBUS: And do you really know this stranger's motives,  
So that you liken him to a hyena?  
For if you know, then say so openly  
That he has come resolved on our destruction.

CASSANDRA: I can know nothing, I can only see  
The bloodstained form of a hyena, hear  
The piercing and rapacious voice. . . .  
(*in a sudden ecstasy*)

Alas!

Hyenas roam on the ruins of Troy,  
Licking the blood that is still living, warm . . .  
Sniffing the corpses not yet stiff in death,  
Howling with joy. . . .

(*Groaning, she covers her face with her hands. The people stand in a heavy silence, then begin to whisper among themselves. Simon looks from side to side in alarm.*)

DEIPHOBUS (*takes Cassandra by the arm and shakes her. She grows quiet*):

Sister, control yourself!  
Enough of these dark, fearful words, that have  
Weighed down the people like a smoky cloud. (*loudly*)  
If you see a hyena in this stranger,  
Why, kill him then, and we shall not oppose you.

HELENUS (*offering her a sacrificial sword*):

Here, take this sword!

CASSANDRA (*embarrassed*): No, brother, I've no skill  
To wield the sword.

HELENUS: A priestess should be able,  
When need be, to slay any sacrifice  
With her own hand.

CASSANDRA: Is this a sacrifice?

HELENUS: It is a sacrifice to your clear vision.

CASSANDRA: But why do you not slay this sacrifice?

HELENUS: The blind has no wish to shed blood in blindness,  
So let your seeing eye clearly direct  
Your certain hand. So let a single heart  
Give the commandment to both hand and eyes.

DEIPHOBUS: Let it be so. Then at least once Cassandra  
Cannot reproach men's incredulity.  
If the Hellene is guiltless, let Cassandra

To Zeus be answerable for his blood,  
And human judgment shall be silent now,  
The eldest son of Priam guarantees it.

*(Helenus puts the sword into Cassandra's hand. Cassandra silently takes the sword. At a sign from Deiphobus they bring Sinon closer.)*

SINON *(stretching out his bound hands to Cassandra and falling on his knees)*:

O Prophetess, Oh, how should I entreat,  
Unworthy I plead with your Holiness;  
Strange to you are the small affairs of men,  
You, goddess-like, like Moira, gaze upon  
The agony of weak and mortal hearts.  
Perhaps, indeed, the grief of nearest kin,  
To you, as to the gods, appears as holy.  
But hapless I have no kin left on earth,  
An orphan, without father, without mother,  
I must confess it, for you are all-knowing!  
But I have someone—she is my betrothed,  
She loves me dearly. . . . O, I understand  
That to your ears these words are vain and empty.  
But if you knew. . . . Oh, if you only knew,  
How my heart's breaking from our separation,  
And my soul's dying from anxiety! . . .

*(Among the Trojan women there is a movement and sighing; some of them wipe away tears.)*

CASSANDRA *(struggling to control her own emotions)*:

Stand up, O Hellene, stand, and speak more calmly.

SINON: *(stands)*: Forgive me, but to speak of this more calmly  
My lips have not the power. Forgive me that  
They tremble . . .

*(He covers his face with his cloak, and is silent. Then he uncovers it, and continues.)*

O why did I, hapless man,  
Not heed the words of my own Leukoté  
She pleaded with me, O so fervently,  
As earnestly as now I plead to you.  
"O do not kill me," she cried out to me,  
"Look well upon my youthful, spring-like charms!"  
But I stood firm as rock and looked upon  
The black ship and the darkness of the wave.



And Leukoté was crying to the sea:

"O sea, O sea, thou living separation!"

Times without number she cried out these wild

Words, poor unhappy girl, lamenting, wailing . . .

And I heard them until, at last, around me

Sounded the great surge of the dark, black waters . . .

*(He clasps his head and quietly, as if at a great distance,  
says in a whimper.)*

O sea, O sea! Thou living separation!

CASSANDRA (*perturbed*):

Did they leave you on purpose?

SINON (*humbly*):

Yes, Princess!

CASSANDRA: For what cause?

SINON:

O Princess, I do not know!

They left me in my sleep. When I awoke,

I was out in the field, all, all alone.

Probably mighty Diomedé grew angry

With me long, long ago, because in public

I said he was a Charon without mercy,

On the occasion when he and two others

Of our men put to death a Trojan scout.

CASSANDRA: (*tense*):

When?

SINON:

Long ago, O Prophetess, when still

Achilles was alive. But Diomedé

Has a long memory for anger. He

Was roused that I strove to defend a captive

Taken for death by him with his own hand.

But I felt such deep pity for this Trojan.

He was so very handsome and so young,

And O so pitifully begged for mercy . . .

O sorrow! I plead now in such a way,

But there is none to intercede for me,

Not say a single word. . . . They all are silent. . . .

Death is inevitable. . . . Why prolong

These last few minutes underneath the sword?

*(Suddenly he falls on his knees and bows his head.)*

Smite with your sword then, implacable maiden!

CASSANDRA: Helenus, I am doubtful, maybe truly

This stranger's innocent. What do you say?

HELENUS: Sister, without my birds, I shall say nothing.

DEIPHOBUS: But I'm amazed to see your hesitation  
Once you were able to send a whole army  
Of men, quite innocent, forth to destruction  
With just one word, and yet you felt no pity.  
So what can this one stranger mean to you?  
Has he indeed won favour in your sight  
By a single offer of protection  
To a single Trojan, while the Lydians  
Wished to bring salvation to all Troy  
And yet it found no favour in your sight.

CASSANDRA (*with a despairing movement, raises the sword over Sinon,  
but her hand trembles and she slowly lowers the sword  
without touching Sinon*):

You have drained the last strength away from me  
With this remembrance. The blood shed in vain  
Cries to the gods against me. A dark cloud  
Of crimson creeps upon my eyes, upon  
My mind . . . O, an impenetrable cloud! . . .  
(*The sword falls from her hands.*)  
My hand has failed, my heart is dry and sere,  
Darkness, all darkness . . .

(*She sways, and falls into the arms of Helenus.*)

HELLENUS: She has swooned! O Trojan  
Women, assist her!

(*The Trojan women carry Cassandra into the temple.*)

HELENUS (*to Sinon*): Hellene, you are free  
The gods are not desirous of your death.

## ACT VIII

The same square. It is evening. Night is falling rapidly, a dark moonless night, but the stars shine sharply as on cold winter nights. A guard has been posted in the square. One sentry is near the palace gate, another near the Scaean Gate, a third near the temple. The fourth guard walks about on patrol, watching over the Trojan's houses. All are armed as if for war. For a time the guards keep watch in silence. From the royal palace, sounds of music and the noise of a gay banquet are heard.

1ST GUARD (*from the palace gate*):

Well brothers, what a feast!

2ND GUARD (*from the Scaean Gate*): A feast indeed!

Some drink and revel, but we have to stand  
On guard against who knows what or from whom!

3RD GUARD: Hector has gone, and with him, sense has gone.  
He would not make us waste our time this way.  
Wouldn't have made a joke of lesser men—  
He was a hero, but knew others' worth,  
While these . . .

229

4TH GUARD (*who is patrolling, approaches the 3rd Guard and says quietly*):

You'd better be more careful, brother,  
Cassandra's there, and she's their sister!

3RD GUARD: So!  
She and her brothers are like fire and water,  
That's their accord!

4TH GUARD: But still, they are one kin!

3RD GUARD: May Hades bear the lot of them away!  
The Trojans have grown weary of them all,  
And worst of all that bird of evil omen—  
(*He nods towards the temple.*)  
All troubles come from her!

4TH GUARD: Hush! Here comes Paris!  
(*From the royal palace approach Paris and Sinon. Paris is dressed in festive, colourful embroidered clothing, unarmed; on his head is a red Phrygian cap with a garland of roses round it, from beneath which his hair falls upon his shoulders in long curls.*)

PARIS: Well? Are you keeping guard? Deiphobus  
Sent me to make the rounds. Well, are you keeping  
A good strict watch?

1ST GUARD (*gloomily*): Of course we're keeping watch.

PARIS: Then why are you so sad?

1ST GUARD: Small consolation  
To stand here hungrily and parching dry  
Upon a feast day.

PARIS: That is true. But still  
We shall think of a way.

CASSANDRA (*from the temple*): Guards, keep good watch!

PARIS (*with a start*):  
What was that?

1ST GUARD: It was your sister, Cassandra,  
She keeps watch over the Palladion.

PARIS: Ah, so indeed!  
(*He shudders again, and looks around anxiously.*)  
What a cold night it is!

1ST GUARD: With mountain winds, we'll freeze without a fire.

PARIS: Well go and bring some logs of wood, and light  
A fire. (*Exeunt the nearest guards.*)

SINON: Yes, indeed, the night is cold.

(*Paris wraps himself closer in his cloak.*)

Your lady-wife, the golden-haired, has surely  
Kindled the hearth fire now, and has prepared  
Herself with scattered scents, so that they rise  
Like smoke from incense, like to a light dream,  
Over the snow-white forehead delicately.

(*Paris is silent, and dreamily looks towards the royal palace.*)

Perhaps, indeed, now, those eyes, clear as stars,  
Are filled with tears. She is all, all alone,  
Sitting and spinning, thinking her own thoughts,  
While you are either feasting or on guard.

PARIS (*quietly, as if to himself, not looking at Sinon*):

What is the sense in it? Should I leave all  
Of this? . . . Well, what would happen? (*He prepares to go.*)

CASSANDRA (*appearing at the door*): Paris, wait!

Where are you going?

PARIS (*embarrassed*): I? For a warmer cloak!

The night is cold.

CASSANDRA: Did you say cold? My brother,

It is in vain that you fear cold so much,

The cold will not destroy you.

PARIS: Ah, Cassandra,

When will you cease this chatter about death,

About misfortune, about vain destruction?

It is all over now, the war and sorrow.

It's time to rest.

CASSANDRA: How quickly has misfortune

Finished for you. Come hither, Paris, and

Look over there.

(*Paris makes a sign at Sinon to go off by himself, and goes  
to Cassandra, who points out to him the moonlit valley.  
Exit Sinon.*)

CASSANDRA: What is that in the field?

PARIS: There? It's a grave mound!

CASSANDRA: You've forgotten whose?

(*Paris is silent and drops his eyes.*)

CASSANDRA: Under it lies our Hector, Trojan glory.

PARIS: But he fell long ago . . .

CASSANDRA: And you remained!

That signifies: Be joyful and rejoice,  
People of Troy?

PARIS: Sister, never before

Have you hurt me so deeply with your words.

CASSANDRA: Because never before have I beheld you  
As now I see you. These your roses have  
Pierced me to the heart with their sharp thorns  
And drained its blood.

PARIS: Cassandra!

CASSANDRA: Ah, enough!

Go, go to her, O hateful one, go to  
The bewitching beautiful Medusa,  
And turn to stone, falling down there before her  
Upon your knees—so is our glory fallen.

PARIS: How has it "fallen?" Victory is ours.

CASSANDRA: You call this victory? Why, all our glory  
And all our honour perished long ago.  
And only stolen Helen has remained,  
And, too, that senseless lump of wood. Indeed,  
A famous victory!

PARIS: Listen, my sister,

If you have kept me standing here for this,  
For me to take such words from you, then I  
Do not agree to it. (*He turns to go.*)

CASSANDRA: Indeed, then, go!

Let people never say that all in vain  
Perished the Trojan strength and glory. Let  
Paris become drunk with that love of his,  
So that for him we all must walk in mourning,  
Let him make his heart glad with happiness,  
For which we have paid in eternal sorrow!  
This was indeed the glorious aim of the  
War of destruction. Thus complete your great  
Victory there at Helen's side in the  
Sumptuous women's bower.

(*Paris, who was about to go, has stopped at Cassandra's  
first words, and now stands in indecision.*)

CASSANDRA: Where is your sword?

PARIS: Why should I need a sword?

CASSANDRA:

You think you are  
Armed enough then with your red cap, your fine  
Embroidered chiton, roses and dark eyes?  
They are enough to gain your victory?

PARIS (*blushing*):

And for your victory, say, what is lacking?  
I might ask too: Cassandra, where's your sword?  
For you have held it in your hand today,  
Did you not win honour and glory with it?  
Prophetess, you are silent, you lack words!

CASSANDRA (*as if depressed*):

Forgive me, brother . . . it is true . . . well . . . go. . .

PARIS (*with childish joy, forgetting his anger*):

Yes, I shall go. . . I'll not be long, of course. . .  
No, do not think. . . (*He is already on his way.*)  
I'm going for my cloak,

For it is cold . . . I'll be back very soon. . .

(*The further he goes, the faster he walks. Soon he disappears through the gate of the royal palace. Cassandra goes into the temple, and closes behind her the veil of the temple door. The sound of a flute is heard, the twanging of a cithara and singing. Soon Sinon with a flautist and citharist, who are carrying a big amphora of wine between them, enter. Sinon is carrying a basket of fruit and has a phial at his belt. He is garlanded with flowers, and has more garlands hung over his arms. From the opposite side the guards enter carrying logs of wood and pieces of meat; they make a fire in front of the temple and start to roast the meat. The musicians put down the amphora, setting it carefully in the sand, and prepare to play.*)

SINON (*sings. The flautist and citharist play*):

In the Asphodelian meadows,  
In the deep Elysian valleys,  
Wander, robed in robes of glory,  
Shades of our departed heroes,  
Why, O why are they so sad?

CHORUS OF GUARDS:

For in Asphodelian meadows,  
In the deep Elysian valleys,  
Blossoms never bloom.

*(During the singing, the third guard himself unties the phial from Sinon's belt and starts drinking, then gives it to the others.)*

SINON (*sings*):

There by Styx's waters murky,  
There by Lethe sad and gloomy,  
Wander, crowned with crowns of laurel,  
Shadows of our "unforgotten,"  
Why, O why, are they so sad?

CHORUS:

For in Styx's waters murky,  
There in Lethe sad and gloomy,  
Water flows, not wine!

SINON (*sings*):

There in Hades' mighty palace,  
Where Persephone is thronéd,  
Rise up in eternal glory  
Shadows of our great defenders,  
Why, O why, are they so sad?

CHORUS:

For in Hades' mighty palace,  
Where Persephone is thronéd,  
Songs are never heard.

1ST GUARD (*sings in a rough voice and out of tune*):

On the banks of the Cocytus,  
Roam the heroes ever gloomy,  
Smoke from sacrifice comes curling,  
Blood from hecatombs is pouring,  
So why are they grieving yet?

*(shouts)*

Where's the antistrophe!

CITHARIST: I do not want to!

1ST GUARD (*continues singing alone*):

For there is no meat or bacon,  
No plump steaks are there for eating,  
Only smoke and blood!

5TH GUARD: It's out of tune.

1ST GUARD: So what, the sense is good!

SINON: Sit down, my brothers, quickly, by the fire,  
And praise the gods that we still walk the earth,  
That there is wine, and song and flowers enough.

1ST GUARD: And still good meat enough!

*(He busies himself with the roasting.)*

SINON *(distributes garlands to everyone, and himself puts the garland on the head of the 1st Guard, who is doing the roasting):*

Pour me some too!

*(They pour some wine for him and he drinks. To the 2nd Guard.)*

Why don't you drink? Is it not to your liking?

2ND GUARD: *(indecisively):*

There is no water . .

3RD GUARD: What's the need of water?

Tonight we'll drink our wine unmixed. Let's dance!

2ND GUARD: But unmixed wine goes straight into the head!

3RD GUARD: What does it matter! Well, don't drink at all!

Go, guard the gate, as you were ordered to!

2ND GUARD: What a wise fellow!

3RD GUARD: Then keep quiet and drink

What you are given.

*(The 2nd Guard drinks. They fill the phial again, and pass it from hand to hand.)*

3RD GUARD: One phial is no good!

It's most annoying waiting for one's turn.

4TH GUARD: *(laughs):*

Then go and ask Cassandra for the loan  
Of offering cups. She's in the temple there.

CASSANDRA *(from the temple):*

Guards, keep good watch!

1ST GUARD: You see, she answered you!

Princess, just wait until the meat is roasted,  
Then we shall give you some! *(They all laugh.)*

3RD GUARD: I've an idea.

*(He takes off his helmet, pours wine into it, and drinks.)*

Isn't this a good phial?

*(The others follow his example and do the same.)*

1ST GUARD: That's very clever

And no mistake! Here's the roast! Eat, good friends!

*(He takes a piece of meat from the spear and divides it among them with his sword.)*

2ND GUARD *(eats):* It's rawish, never mind! It's good and hot!

SINON: Here, take a peppercorn to flavour it!

2ND GUARD: Then it will be too hot!



3RD GUARD: The wine will quench it—

It's not a small amphora!

4TH GUARD: When it's finished,

We'll fetch another.

*(They eat the meat, cutting it up with their swords; they eat the fruit and drink wine from their helmets. Gradually, the wine begins to make them quite noticeably tipsy. The musicians meanwhile go on playing.)*

2ND GUARD: You should sing some more.

3RD GUARD: And you?

2ND GUARD: I can't alone, I'll follow you.

*(Sinon plays the flute for a while, then hands it to the flautist who continues playing; the citharist takes up the melody and the others join in the song.)*

By the river, the vineyard is a-growing,

Ah, the vineyard is a-growing!

If fair Leukoté comes down to the river,

Then embrace her, my curly headed friend!

1ST GUARD: Eh, that's a dull one!

CITHARIST: Which one would you like?

1ST GUARD: *(sings without music in a clumsy recitative):*

Watch your wife, or watch her not,

You won't stop her! Vain's your labour!

Though you're an Olympian god,

Like old crook-leg, old Hephaistos!

*(He sways, staggers and falls. He mutters once or twice, reminiscently "Like old crook-leg, old Hephaistos . . . old Hephaestus. . ." then he becomes silent and sleeps.)*

2ND GUARD: Now that's a jolly song indeed!

3RD GUARD: Goodnight!

*(They go on drinking. The flautist and citharist go on playing, without singing. Gradually all except the musicians are overcome by the wine, lie down round the fire and sleep. Sinon also pretends to sleep.)*

FLAUTIST *(stops playing):*

They're all asleep! Now what are we to do!

CITHARIST: Let us sleep, too!

FLAUTIST: No, let's go to the feast!

*(The two of them drink up the rest of the wine and go into the royal palace. It is quiet on the stage for some time;*

*everyone is asleep, only from the distance is heard music and singing and sounds of revelry.)*

CASSANDRA (*from the temple*):

Guards, keep good watch!

*(Complete silence. The sounds die away. Sinon slowly gets up and looks about him cautiously.)*

CASSANDRA (*from the temple*): Keep a good watch! Keep guard!

*(Sinon jumps up, runs to the royal palace, and vanishes through the Gate.)*

CASSANDRA (*at the door of the temple*):

Do not sleep, watchmen! *(She notices the sleeping guards.)*

Guards, alarm, alarm!

*(Cassandra bends over the guards and tries to rouse them; some of them move and mutter something incomprehensible, but none of them has the power to wake up.)*

CASSANDRA (*goes to the royal palace, calling*):

Hey! Is there anyone alive there? Trojans!

*(Sinon comes out from the palace gate towards her, and with him armed Greeks: Menelaus, Agamemnon, Odysseus, Ajax and Diomedes. They cross their spears and bar the way to Cassandra.)*

AJAX: Stop, girl! Who are you?

ODYSSEUS: Why, it is the mad,  
Senseless Cassandra? Don't you recognize her?

CASSANDRA (*tries to throw herself on their spears*):

Trojans! Treachery! Treachery! Hurry, Trojans!

AGAMEMNON: Seize her, and stop her mouth with a strong gag!

*(Cassandra swiftly turns, and escapes into the temple, where she falls before the Palladion, tightly embracing the statue.)*

CASSANDRA: Don't touch me! I claim temple sanctuary!

AJAX: Indeed!

DIOMEDES: What matter, you're our prisoner!

*(Diomedes seizes Cassandra by the hand which holds the staff. Ajax seizes her by her hair. She tries to grasp the pedestal of the Palladion with her free hand, but the statue sways and falls, together with the pedestal. The soldiers drag Cassandra from the temple, tie her hands with their sword straps without taking away her staff, then bind her to a column in the temple portico, at the*

*top of the steps. Meanwhile Menelaus and Odysseus open the Scaean Gate, while Diomedes returns to the temple and carries off the Palladion.)*

DIOMEDES (shouts): Ours! The Palladion is ours! Come, heroes!

*(The Achaean army charges in through the open Gate.)*

CASSANDRA (calls, gathering all her strength):

Awaken, Troy! Your death approaches you!

*(Alarm lights are lit in the palace and other buildings. The Greek army quickly fills the entire square, and spreads in various directions through the streets of Troy. Soon a great clamour is heard in the city: Unarmed Trojans in festive clothing run across the square; after them in close pursuit, come Greek soldiers, taking some prisoner and killing others. Soon a great fire springs up. Gradually the fugitives and their pursuers become fewer and fewer, and more and more frequently there appear victorious Hellenes, who drive before them with their spears, like a flock of sheep, captive Trojans, men and women, bound with ropes. Some of them are brought into the temple. Others are taken out through the Scaean Gate, and others are made to sit down in the square. Then they fall face down on the ground, and lament. The captive women of Priam's family are put and told to sit in the portico of the temple, near Cassandra. When the commotion has died down a little, Andromache, Polyxena and several other women find themselves near Cassandra.)*

ANDROMACHE (lamenting):

My dearest child! My only, only son!

They have killed him! Dashed him against a stone!

POLYXENA: O bitter sorrow! Father! Dearest Mother!

Your daughter now will be a concubine!

OTHER WOMEN FROM THE ROYAL FAMILY:

Now we are doomed to die as slave women,

As slave women, far in a foreign land!

ANDROMACHE (to Cassandra):

Why silent? Why not prophesy our death?

Now death will be our only consolation!

CASSANDRA (with a terrible calm, with a voice as of the dead):

Here are those who'll find other consolation!

ANDROMACHE: A curse upon you!

CASSANDRA (*as before*): Yes, a curse on me,  
Because I now behold the worst of all,  
Trojan women captives and yet living!  
They walk around the loom, share victors' beds,  
They nourish children for the Hellenes' joy. . . .  
A curse upon the eyes which see such things!

ANDROMACHE: A curse upon the lips which speak such things!

CASSANDRA: A curse upon me! I cannot be silent!  
(*Fettered members of the Trojan royal family, including Helenus are led into the temple.*)

HELENUS (*as he passes Cassandra*):  
Rejoice, Cassandra, victory is yours!

CASSANDRA: No, it is yours. You've killed me with this word.  
My reason's broken. Yours will travel far,  
With it you'll gain the victory over victors,  
But mine will be extinguished with this fire.

HELEN (*runs across the square. Menelaus pursues her with a sword*):  
Rescue me, brother Hellenes! Rescue me!  
For what cause does he seek to punish me?  
I was brought treacherously and by force  
To Troy, I lived here an unhappy captive,  
Weeping each day for my own native land.  
(*The Achaeans irresolutely step aside before her, but they do not thrust her aside when she catches hold of one of them and tries to hide behind his shield.*)

MENELAUS: Here is the blood of Paris on this sword,  
It's craving for your blood as well!

CASSANDRA: O, Paris!

POLYXENA: Dear brother!

ANDROMACHE: Poor unhappy lad!

HELEN (*surrounded by young soldiers, suddenly proud*):  
O man!

Do you really wish to punish me?  
Have you spilled this sea of blood in order  
To shame my honour and yours, publicly?  
And so the Queen of Sparta has awaited  
Such an honour? Who will then believe  
In Spartan women's virtue, when the King  
Has glorified his wife as treacherous?  
(*to the soldiers*)

Spartans, do you also agree to this?

SPARTAN SOLDIERS (*surrounding Helen*):

She's innocent! A goddess among women!

Vainly, O King, you seek your wife's dishonour!

MENELAUS (*to Helen, kindly*):

Forgive me—I'm hot-tempered, as you know!

HELEN (*smiles and extends her hand*):

I see, my King, you haven't changed at all.

(*Menelaus extends his hand to Helen. She takes him by the hand and leads him through the Achaean ranks and out by the Scaean Gate into the field; all step aside before her with a murmur of admiration.*)

ANDROMACHE: She is a queen again, and we are slaves!

O gods, where is your justice?

CASSANDRA:

Ha ha ha!

ONE TROJAN WOMAN (*to another*):

Cassandra laughed. . . . Oh, it is terrible!

I've never heard her laugh in all my life.

CASSANDRA (*in a trance, watching as the tongues of flame play about the palace buildings*):

Bring here, bring here these glowing flowers of fire,

The pomegranates bloom! It's wedding time!

(*Off stage is heard the voice of an old woman, it laments, wailing terribly, as if howling!*)

POLYXENA (*listens in terror*):

It is our mother!

CASSANDRA:

It's the wedding song!

Our mother sends her daughters to their bridal!

Cassandra never told the truth at all!

There is no ruin! It is life! All life!

(*The voice of the old woman resounds more strongly. Suddenly it is lost in the crash of the falling buildings. The glare of the fire floods the stage.*)