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# Trojan Women: A Love Story

by CHARLES L. MEE

Based on the works of Euripides and Berlioz.

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## THE PROLOGUE

Lights out.

Immediately: a deafening wall of sound—  
from Berlioz' Les Troyens.

Sounds under it of gunfire, explosions, screams, fire truck sirens.

Lights very slowly up on 100 dark-skinned "3rd world" women making computer components at little work tables.

Early dawn.

As the dawn light comes up very slowly, the Berlioz gradually fades.

The women are in torn clothes; they are in shock; many have been raped.

Their tables are set out on dirt.

Behind them, the city is a smoking, still-burning ruin.

Black ashes rain down continuously on the stage.

As the Berlioz fades from all the speakers, from one speaker the introductory accompaniment for a pop song comes up: and the women—maintaining their expressions and attitudes of being shell-shocked, without affect—sing the Billie Holliday arrangement of "All the Way."

SONG:

When somebody loves you  
it's no good unless he loves you  
all the way.

Happy to be near you  
when you need someone to cheer you  
all the way.

Taller than the tallest tree is  
that's how it's got to feel  
Deeper than the deep blue sea is  
that's how deep it goes  
if it's real

When somebody needs you  
you're no good unless he needs you  
all the way.

Through the good or lean years  
and for all the in between years  
come what may.

Who knows where the road will lead us  
only a fool would say.

But if you'll let me love you  
it's for sure I'm gonna love you  
all the way.

But if you'll let me love you  
it's for sure I'm gonna love you  
all the way.  
All the way.

Some women are lying against a wall, shivering.

Or crouching in corners.

There is a body motionless under a blanket.

A pile of rags at center suddenly moves.

The women stop singing abruptly in the middle of their song and turn to look at the pile of rags.

Hecuba raises her head from the pile of rags.

We hear the occasional sound of a howling wind,  
the pop of a gunshot in the distance.

She is a grand woman, a diva.

She wears a silk Yves Saint Laurent that has been torn.

She has been dragged across the city.

She is dazed.

From time to time, her speaking is interrupted by uncontrollable shivering.

HECUBA

Last night: a child picked up  
out of its bed by its feet  
taken out to the courtyard  
swung round by a soldier in an arc  
its head smashed against a tree  
all this done while another soldier held back  
the child's mother  
all this done right before the mother's eyes

and the mother  
could not even cry.

They tore out a woman's hair  
fistfuls at a time  
and then when they had finished  
they poked her eyes out with their fingers

Anyone who refused to undress  
had her eyes gouged out.

People wearing glasses  
they just hit directly in the face.

I heard a young girl call out  
Mamma—

the last word she ever spoke.

A child saying to her mother:  
Look what I have lived to see before my death.

A world destroyed  
by the hands of those who thought  
themselves the creators of civilization.

CHORUS MEMBER 1, EISA  
This is how men are.

HECUBA  
My husband  
my sons  
all murdered  
My home on fire.

The war is ended;  
and yet it goes on without end.  
Yesterday, between one streetcar stop and the next  
six people were killed, twenty wounded;  
two mortar shells  
killed five children and wounded twenty;  
these are the reports we hear;  
we don't know if that is the extent of it;  
People are shot and killed every day,  
day after day,  
and the casualty lists are never up to date.  
They take the women off somewhere to rape them.

When the television works  
one can see the dead bodies in the streets  
no one has dared to retrieve;  
the graves dug out in front of houses;  
the tanks driving up and down the runways at the airport  
shooting whatever they please;  
not even the trees are spared;  
the turrets of the armored vehicles in the streets  
revolving furiously  
spewing rounds of fire.

They've killed all the young boys  
along with the men.

Why was this done?

This is beyond knowing.  
I pray that I could  
pull it all inside my body  
all the murder  
all the cruelty  
the ruin  
the fire  
the wounds  
broken limbs  
bleeding children  
my city  
bring it all deep inside me  
so that I could understand.

CHORUS MEMBER 2, AIMABLE

I had just come into the room and said "Good morning." and suddenly it turned bright red. I felt hot on my cheeks. When I came to, I realized everyone was lying at one side of the room. Nobody was standing. The desks and chairs had blown to one side. At the windows, there was no window glass and the window frames had been blown out too. After a while, I realized that my white shirt was red all over. I thought it was funny because I was not injured. I looked around and then I realized

that the girl lying near to me was badly injured, with lots of broken glass stuck all over her body. Her blood had splashed and made stains on my shirt. And she had pieces of wood stuck in her.

CHORUS MEMBER 3, SEI

When the blast came, my friend and I were blown into another room. When I came to, I found myself in the dark. I was wondering what my family were doing. I found that all the houses around had collapsed for as far as I could see. Then, I looked next door and I saw the father of the neighboring family standing almost naked. His skin was peeling off all over his body and was hanging down from his finger tips. I talked to him, but he was too exhausted to give me a reply. He was looking for his family.

HECUBA

Why was this done?

[Andromache rushes down front and picks up a microphone, tries to speak. She cannot. Puts down the microphone and retreats upstage.]

EISA

When I looked down on the town from the top of that hill, I could see that the city was completely lost. The city turned into yellow sand, the color of the yellow desert. The smoke was so thick that it covered the entire town. Then fire broke out here and there. And then the rain fell heavy for several hours—black and sticky rain. When it fell on trees and leaves and people's clothes and hands, it stuck and turned everything black.

VALERIE

We were on the bus. I had been holding my son in my arms, the young woman in front of me said, "I'll be getting off here. Please take this seat." We were just changing places when there was a strange smell and sound. All of a sudden, it went dark and before I knew it, I was outside. I was holding my son still, and I looked down at him. Fragments of glass had pierced his head. Blood was flowing from his head over his face. But he looked up at me and smiled. His smile has stayed glued in my memory. He didn't understand what had happened. And so he looked at me and smiled at my face which was all bloody. I had plenty of milk which he drank all throughout that day. I think my child sucked the poison right out of my body. And soon after that he died.

HECUBA

Why was this done?

[Andromache rushes down front again and picks up a microphone, tries to speak. She still cannot. Puts down the microphone and retreats upstage.]

CHEA

I was running away with my mother.  
There were shells landing everywhere  
making craters in the ground  
throwing up rocks and dirt.  
And when she couldn't run any more  
I put her on my back and carried her  
still running.  
But she was heavy,  
and I suffered with the burden of her.  
Until after a while I realized she was dead,  
and I felt relieved to let her fall from my back,  
and be done with her.

SEI

I was sitting in a box at the opera,  
dressed in a new gown.  
It was a big opera house,  
filled with beautiful people,  
downtown,  
and they were performing my favorite opera.  
My hair was done up so beautifully.  
And when it came to the line,  
"There is the devil,"  
a company of enemy soldiers ran in,  
stomping their feet,  
and came right up to me.  
They had a secret machine  
that had told them  
that when I heard the word devil I thought of their general.  
I looked around for help,  
but everyone in the audience was staring straight ahead  
silent, expressionless,

not even showing pity for what I'd got myself into.  
An elderly gentleman in the box next to mine  
looked over at me,  
but when I started to speak to him,  
he spit in my face.

AIMABLE

I was at a movie,  
a very large theatre, very dark,  
a downtown theatre,  
and I knew it was wrong for me to be there.  
Only enemy soldiers were allowed there.  
And their general came in and sat next to me.  
And I was more scared than ever.  
But he put his arm around me.

[tears come to her eyes]

And I felt comforted.  
He put his hand on me.  
Inside my thigh.  
And I liked it.

[she weeps; silence]

VALERIE

What should a woman do  
when all the men are gone.

EISA

Turned and ran

VALERIE

No, not most of them.  
Most kept on  
till they were dead.

CHEA

But the smart ones.

They all ran in the end.

AIMABLE

Except Aeneas.

CHEA

Who what?

EISA

Who hid here

in the house

CHEA

Pious Aeneas.

AIMABLE

The last man alive.

EISA

Or maybe not.

Who knows where the others are?

CHEA

Let him rest.

Let him recover.

Let him escape.

Let him live

to gather up all the others who ran away

and pay them back for the wrong that's been done to us.

HECUBA

No.

Enough.

Let it end.

There are tanks below our windows.  
People have learned many things even just these past seven days.  
We no longer switch on the light in our homes;  
the kerosene is running out;  
day by day our lamps get dimmer.  
We have cigarettes made of tea;  
a package of feta cheese;  
we have learned how to be grateful for a bit of rain;  
how to wash our hair with cold water;  
how to cook—from whatever we have—  
a food made with flour that is like bread but isn't;  
and how to spread on it things that were never meant to be spread;  
we've forgotten what it is like to be irritated  
by a television commercial;  
optimists are those who believe  
they will be buried next to their families;  
we don't get angry at the mailman for coming late;  
because there is no longer a mailman.  
Then let it end here.  
Let it end now.

What ever could make you  
want to start again?

[Talthybius enters.

He wears the standard State Department pin-stripe suit. He is accompanied by two soldiers from Special Forces, Bill and Ray Bob.

TALTHYBIUS

Hecuba.

I beg your pardon.

My name is Talthybius.

I come to you

as a liaison from the Greeks.

And with my

—sympathies—

to you and your compatriots.

My regrets I must find you in this:

condition.

I am a diplomat,  
not a creator of policy.  
My charge is to give to policies  
set by others  
not perhaps what is the best part of myself—  
not my heart, or mind, or soul—  
but the honest employment of  
my voice.

BILL

For what is a man  
but a tube with two orifices,  
anal and buccal.

RAY BOB

This is not you show me yours I'll show you mine.  
This is let's bust some balls.  
This is how men are.

TALTHYBIUS

And at the same time....

BILL

A human being can be thought of as a tree trunk on fire  
You can lay them down screaming  
on their stomachs or their backs—  
or you can spare the fire  
and lay them out on the beach  
nothing more than breathless lacerations  
shapeless silhouettes  
half eaten  
getting up or moaning on the ground  
then you might say  
the head—  
the eyes, the ears, the brain  
represent the complications of the buccal orifice  
the penis, the testicles  
or you could say  
the female organs that correspond to these

are the complications of the anal orifice.  
So you have the familiar violent thrusts  
that come from the interior of the body  
indifferently ejected  
from one end of the body or the other  
discharged,  
that is to say,  
wherever they meet the weakest resistance.

I don't say I like it this way.

RAY BOB

You can accept it.

BILL

I can live with it.

TALTHYBIUS

To be sure  
in war  
there are no victors

HECUBA

Are there not?

TALTHYBIUS

I should think not.  
Here, at the end  
when we would all wish to restore some order  
return to some world of civility  
we discover instead that  
the aftermath of war is  
a riot in a parrot house.  
This is not to my taste, I must say.  
I confess I am the sort of man  
who enjoys what is familiar.  
I have a sweater I like to wear  
that I have had since my days at Princeton.  
And when I sing

I like to sing the Duke of Plaza Toro  
or some other song from Gilbert and Sullivan  
or the hymns I learned as a child,  
How Firm a Foundation,  
The Son of God Goes Forth to War.  
I have a favorite walking stick,  
I love to tell the stories my father told to me.  
I don't think of myself as a rude man  
or harsh.  
And so I would not say it is in my nature  
to have to say to you  
that the council of my countrymen  
has reached some decisions  
about how you women have been allotted  
each to a man.

HECUBA  
Allotted?

TALTHYBIUS  
Yes.

HECUBA  
How these women are to be  
distributed  
among your soldiers?

AIMABLE  
as slaves?

TALTHYBIUS  
Or wives.

HECUBA  
Or wives.

You mean  
these men will do with these women whatever they want?

[silence]

And with me, too?

TALTHYBIUS

Yes.

[silence]

HECUBA

And my children?

TALTHYBIUS

Yes.

HECUBA

This is what you and these men have come to do?

TALTHYBIUS

Yes.

HECUBA

This is why you come to us speaking of your regret  
and sympathy  
talking of civility

Why is it at the end of war  
the victors can imagine nothing better  
than to remake the conditions  
that are the cause of war?

BILL

The war ended?

You say this to the men:

The war is not ended, they say,  
we are the war,  
we ourselves are the war.

RAY BOB

Men act.  
We know this.  
Attach no value to it,  
particularly.  
To act is to be.  
No more no less.

BILL

The world is a bleeding wound  
when it comes to that.

RAY BOB

The natural state of a man,  
the ecstatic state, will find itself in the visions of things that appear suddenly:  
cadavers, for example,  
nudity, explosions, spilled blood, sunbursts, abscesses, thunder.

BILL

Everything that exists  
destroys itself  
when it comes to that.  
The sun in the sky  
like an orgy of frozen light,  
consuming itself  
and dying.  
The stars  
consuming themselves  
in an agony of fire.  
The joy of life that comes into the world  
to give itself  
and be annihilated.

I can imagine the earth projected in space  
as it is  
in reality  
like a woman screaming,  
her head in flames.

RAY BOB

I remember once  
there was this group that had an ape,  
tied up with ropes  
struggling to break free  
but trussed up like a chicken  
legs folded back against its body  
tied upside down to a stake  
planted in the middle of a pit  
howling and swallowing dirt  
its anus screaming pink and pointing at the sky  
like a flower  
and all the women around the pit  
stripped naked for the work and sweating with pleasure  
and anticipation  
armed with shovels  
filling in the pit with dirt  
burying the ape alive  
its screams choked on the dirt  
until all that remains  
is the radiant flower of its anus  
touched by pretty white fingers  
its violent contractions  
helpless as it strangles on the dirt  
and all who stand around the pit and watch  
are overcome by heat and stupor  
their throats choked by sighs  
and crying out  
eyes moist with tears.

BILL

This is how men are.

TALTHYBIUS

Of course,  
nonetheless,  
when the rain clears in the evening  
and you can see the stars come out over the city  
walk to some nice restaurant  
where they still retain all the old culinary arts—  
no sugar for the after dinner coffee, to be sure,  
and the cost of a filet of sole is atrocious—  
yet one can believe  
a good life is still possible in the world  
it may be that there are throat germs everywhere  
but one can still attend a concert  
or hear a reading of Claudel's poetry.

HECUBA

And shall my children be listening to concerts and poetry?

Who shall have my daughter Cassandra?

TALTHYBIUS

She is fortunate.  
She will be well taken care of.

HECUBA

Who shall have her?

TALTHYBIUS

King Agamemnon.

[Orchestral music is heard.]

HECUBA

Agamemnon,  
the general of this army that has murdered my husband and my sons  
destroyed my home and my city  
torn down all our houses  
put an end

to whatever pretence there might have been before  
that there is any kind of nobility in war—  
this is the brutal man who will have my daughter?

TALTHYBIUS

I understand  
your feelings.  
I understand  
this is sudden, and rude.  
These days war is so unsparing.

Once upon a time  
men fought by day  
and grieved at night;  
they had the opportunity to consider  
the world that they were making;  
but now they fight both day and night,  
it leaves no time for grief  
and so men have come to adopt a certain hardness  
that never leaves them  
even when the shooting stops.

HECUBA

Yes. To be sure.  
And my son's wife Andromache?

TALTHYBIUS

She is to be taken as wife by the son of Achilles, Neoptolemus.

HECUBA

A boy.  
And not,  
as I have heard,  
an honest boy.

These are the people who will take my children to their beds.

[She sinks to the ground again.]

CHORUS SINGS  
THE RACHEL SWEET VERSION OF  
"IT'S SO DIFFERENT HERE":

You wanted me to send you a letter  
Here it is  
it's got....  
beneath the things I feel around me  
couldn't reach you and never will  
you're much too removed

women walk in the shade with water jars  
it's so different here  
so hot  
before....  
it's so different here

this afternoon to fall asleep  
the people mend their nets  
the bee and the birds at sunrise  
I watch them at their lives  
they teach me much I could not tell you what  
until you've seen my eyes

women walk in the shade with water jars  
it's so different here  
so HOT  
...it's so different here  
it's so hot here

do you still love me?

ANDROMACHE emerges slowly from the huddled women, wearing torn Lagerfeld clothes holding a dead doll by one arm, that she treats with absent-minded casualness, letting it dangle at her side. The doll, a boy, is dressed in a little white

jacket (dirtied), white short pants, white shoes. She is beautiful, remote, disconnected, a blown mind— not superficial or silly, but blown away and in shock. There is soft piano music playing.

ANDROMACHE

Some days  
I remember what it's been like  
on a summer day  
when the weather's so hot  
you can't think what to do with yourself.  
You keep waving your fan  
but there isn't a breath of fresh air.  
And then, just as you're thinking  
to put your hand in a bowl of iced water  
suddenly:  
a letter arrives,  
written on a sheet of fine  
brilliant red paper  
attached to an orchid in full bloom  
and you think  
how deeply your friend must feel  
to have taken such trouble  
on a suffocating day

HECUBA [going to embrace Andromache]  
Andromache, dear, come to me.  
Come.

ANDROMACHE

Suddenly there came a flash of light. And then, I felt some hot mask attacking me all of a sudden. I felt hot. I lay flat on the ground, trying to escape the heat. I forgot all about my children for a moment. Then, there came a big sound, sliding wooden doors and windows were blown off into the air. I turned around to see what had happened to the house, and at one part of the ceiling, it was hanging in the air.

And you think:  
just when I was in such despair  
because my garden is torn up  
all the flowers torn up

and trampled  
all the flowers  
that you've come to think are  
the most delicate parts of your own body  
and other plants and trees you've put in your garden  
thinking at first  
you'd make a beautiful landscape  
of living things  
and then coming to see,  
as they grew  
and took their own ways  
that you would have to let them go  
that a garden is not a thing you can control  
you can live within it  
but finally you must let it go  
and now to see what's come of it

HECUBA

Come.

Compose yourself.

ANDROMACHE

I was facing toward the north when I noticed the flashing light. The flash was so bright, ten or a hundred or a thousand times brighter than a camera flash. It pierced my eyes, and my mind went blank. In a few seconds, the heat wave came. White clouds spread over the sky. It was amazing. It was as if blue morning-glories had suddenly bloomed up in the sky.

these living things  
you've cared for,  
lying dead  
cut open  
crushed and trampled on

I think

you can't bring this sort of thing inside  
people have Sister Parish do their living rooms  
with flowered sofas  
and flowered draperies at the windows

and they can be torn down, too  
ripped and burned  
You think  
well  
I deserved it  
living all this time in such comfort  
when you look around you  
and you see others not so well off as you are  
suffering  
in fact  
suffering

#### VALERIE

and now you think  
well  
I know how they've felt all these years  
what would be the point of being born a woman  
if you didn't know one day  
the world would break your heart  
there's nothing special about you

#### ANDROMACHE

I remember there were Friday night dances  
at the golf club,  
and Aunt Rose would drive over in her little blue car  
and look in on us,  
very unobtrusively,  
to see how we were doing.  
The next  
day some of us probably would get some coaching from her  
about dancing.  
I had my heels going in some funny way,  
and she'd give me a demonstration of how I looked  
and how to correct it.  
The boys would be pumping their dates' arms,  
and she'd show them how to dance smoothly.  
Bobby was a terrible dancer for a while.  
He not only pumped, he hopped.  
Joe was probably even worse.

He danced like a longshoreman.  
Aunt Rose tried to show him  
and then gave up  
and made him go to dancing classes.

And what, after all, is my reward  
for having been a good wife  
a reputation  
that some foreigners think I'll make a perfect slave  
Not to say I haven't had a wonderful life  
a life of privilege  
other people would envy it  
even though  
it had none of the glamor of Helen's life

HECUBA

Andromache, it won't do now to....

ANDROMACHE

Every diet I've ever been on  
I think I've entered in the proper frame of mind  
And every morning at the clinic  
I had an hour of acupuncture  
and the needles would be left in  
for the whole session while I did my relaxation  
The enemas were a Saturday routine,  
and I think my eating habits  
underwent a revolution

Just the other day my trainer said to me  
well,  
you're in the final weeks of a battle  
that has been going on for a long time  
and it seems you're going to win most  
if not all that you set out to  
You'll be allowed to keep

almost all the new territory and authority  
that you've won for yourself  
over the last year or two  
and it will be seen by others as your property.

[she has begun to weep]

And what will please you even more  
is you won't have to give up anything you started with.  
That precious home base  
that you were willing to die to defend  
is safe.  
So the net result is that you've extended  
what you can call your own.  
Of course,  
there may still be some last minute concessions  
to the other side to be made  
but in general you seem to have proved  
you can have your cake and eat it.

[sobbing]

The world now sees you  
as a force to be reckoned with  
not only in your career  
but most significantly  
in your personal relationships as well.

I had a woman tell me  
she is bisexual  
and her friends began passing other women to her  
as clients

HECUBA  
Now, then.

## ANDROMACHE

She would charge \$300 for two hours  
a lot of money for most women  
And she said most of them had saved up for it.  
Most of them are experimenting, she said,  
from young women in their twenties  
to women of her mother's generation.  
Before I go to an appointment, she said,  
I shower.  
Women expect a massage and then oral sex.  
Usually they never tell you what they want.  
It's kind of assumed.  
I massage her all over for maybe 20 minutes  
and then slowly start to massage  
her erogenous zones.  
I always say,  
if there's something you don't like  
just tell me, and I'll stop.  
Then I take off her pants  
and ask her to turn over  
I massage her front  
and wait until I get a sign that she is ready for me  
to continue  
she may moan or touch me  
and then I start kissing her pubic area and thighs.  
Everything happens slowly  
and she has plenty of warning about  
what is going to happen  
Some women are just very lonely  
or sexually frustrated  
and they aren't the type to pick up a man  
in a bar.  
They wouldn't call a male escort  
because they don't want a strange man in the house.  
It's easier for them to trust a woman.  
I don't think they see sleeping with a prostitute

as a dirty thing like men do.  
Their attitude towards me  
makes it very different  
from sleeping with a man.

So, while I stayed home  
a faithful wife  
well  
when it comes down to it  
we all make our bargains  
although Helen knew right from the start  
you might as well take the risk  
knowing how it will end in any case  
So she ends up with a nasty reputation  
but a good life

HECUBA  
Andromache, dear.

ANDROMACHE  
And I can't help myself from thinking  
too  
if I'd known  
there were other things I meant to get  
things I would have liked  
if I'd known it was going to end so soon.

When I was a girl  
I had a horse I loved so much  
I wanted to take him right inside me  
or suck his cock.  
And I would have done it, too,  
if I hadn't been so timid.

Or I'd have hung myself in the bathroom  
things I didn't do because I was afraid  
put a rope around your neck  
to get a more intense feeling  
you know

cross dress  
wear pants and a necktie  
stand on a chair and hang from something  
while you use some cream and a vibrator  
I was always afraid I'd slip and fall  
but when you think about it now  
I might as well have run the risk  
Or had myself wrapped up in Saran wrap  
I always thought it would be just like a cocoon  
covered up and warm  
helpless and exposed  
all at once  
Or have a man kiss me  
between my legs  
while he had ice cubes in his mouth

HECUBA

Surely, this is not....

ANDROMACHE

But, no,  
you think,  
you musn't put a drink to your lips  
when you have food in your mouth  
or you may leave a particle of food in your drink  
or make a mark on the rim of your glass.  
Or, if you bring a piece of food to your mouth with your fork  
it is thought nowadays that the tines should be pointing down, not up.  
One musn't dunk a donut or a cookie in public.  
Nothing may be spit out,  
however surreptitiously, into a napkin,  
not even a bad clam.  
Olives are put all at once into the mouth.  
Would you sign a letter Mrs. R.C. Jones?  
No.  
Or Mrs. Robert Jones?  
No.  
You would sign it with your maiden name  
or your married name,

such as Marion Jones  
and then, in parentheses,  
if the person to whom the letter is addressed doesn't know this,  
one could write Mrs. R.C. Jones.

[A telephone receiver is heard. It continues throughout the following.]

And a widow,  
if she wishes  
may entertain a gentleman friend for a weekend  
if she is more than 30 years of age  
and if her children are present in the house  
although every woman  
should value her reputation  
and conduct herself in such a way  
that she does not make a public display  
of her very private life.

CHEA

It must be a shock for a woman in your position  
to be treated this way

EISA

a thing to be used to sweep the floor  
and thrown away when it's worn out.

CHEA

Nothing new to us of course.

EISA

To be taken,  
told to do this or that with our bodies  
put here from 9 to 5  
put there after ten o'clock  
used till we're exhausted  
years taken off our lives  
and added to the years of those  
whose lives are only shortened otherwise  
by too much eating

CHEA  
or too much sitting

SEI  
Shhhh. That's enough.

CHEA  
Now you see,  
the haves are the ones who have their own bodies

EISA  
and the have nots don't

CHEA  
[to Andromache and Hecuba]  
I'm not surprised it escaped your notice.

EISA  
So you'll be given to some king  
or king's son  
to use however he likes  
and I'll be given  
to someone like these fellows here  
to be thrown around however they like  
these nouveau riche owners  
don't know how to take care of their possessions  
they can really cause some damage

VALERIE  
Have some pity.

EISA  
For them?

[looking toward Hecuba and Andromache]

VALERIE  
Yes.

EISA

Oh, yes, sure,

it's always those who've suffered most

who best know how to have pity for those who have suffered least.

You know: like men;

they like a little sympathy....

BILL

Well, you know, I had my ear ripped off.

[silence]

By a woman.

CHEA

Your ear ripped off?

BILL

It was a, like, more of a drunken brawl type thing, and I had a beer bottle smashed across the side of my head, cut my—you know, bottom of my ear lobe off, it was sort of dangling by a piece of skin—and had 17 staples in the side of my head, too, at the same time. And plus had two thirds of the cornea of my right eye furrowed out by a fingernail.

EISA

What were you....

BILL

I was running away from my wife. And so then she stabbed me in the back, too, with a—like, you know—Ginsu-type steak knife. And I have a scar.

[he starts to pull up his shirt to show a scar]

And I love my wife.

RAY BOB

I know what you mean.

BILL

But she eggs me on. I...

RAY BOB

Right.

BILL

I mean, I love my wife,  
and when she's straight and she's not drinking or taking Valiums or anything....

RAY BOB

She's a nice person.

BILL

...she's the most even-spoken, nicest person in the world.

RAY BOB

Right.

BILL

And I'm the same way. I can't—  
I can't throw stones at her.  
I've—I used to drink and do cocaine and—  
and I've had my wild times.

RAY BOB

But, I mean, when you say you used to do cocaine,  
the fact is you've put, basically,  
your family fortune up your nose, Bill,  
am I right here?

BILL

Pretty much so, yeah. Yeah.

RAY BOB

And isn't that one of the things that so aggravates Janine?

BILL

Right. Sure. I've acknowledged that.  
Haven't I acknowledged that?

EISA

Right, right,  
okay, but you know,  
you're talking to someone who had five husbands  
so it's not like I don't know anything about men.

CHEA

Six husbands, I thought you had six husbands.

EISA

Five.  
All bad.  
I mean with my first husband  
all my children were born out of rape.  
I never had normal sex with him.

RAY BOB

Your first husband was a rapist?

EISA

And he beat me.  
He used to beat me, that's how he got turned on.  
And then he'd rape me.

CHEA

So then you married....

EISA

He used to lock me in a closet while I was pregnant  
so no one could see my injuries  
because we were stationed in Guantanamo Bay  
and he didn't want his—want the other sailors to see my injuries.

CHEA

Okay. So. Go ahead. Husband number two.

EISA

He, well, he, three days after we were married,  
he wanted me to get rid of my children.  
And he just made a complete change.  
The only way he wanted to have sex was anally,  
and he lost my money at the race track  
which was supposed to be for a business.

CHEA

Right.

EISA

Put sugar in my car.  
Tried to extort money from me,  
and everything.

CHEA

Husband number three.

EISA

He married me to get a green card.

CHEA

He was....?

EISA

a man from a foreign country.

AIMABLE

I heard he was a prince from Jordan.

CHEA

Is that true?

EISA

No.

I don't know where that got around.

CHEA  
Okay.

EISA  
No.

CHEA  
Okay.  
Number four?

EISA  
He was an Italian guy I met.  
I knew him ten days and he just swooped me off my feet.

CHEA  
Unh-hunh.

EISA  
And tried to get my home from me  
and was beating on me,  
very, very abusive.  
Turned out he was bisexual and he was—  
we were married about ten days.

CHEA  
Husband number five we know was Robert Sand,  
the man you were convicted of murdering.  
And who was number six?

EISA  
That was Joe Mims.

SEI  
The man you married the day you were indicted...

EISA  
Right.

SEI

for the murder of your husband.

CHEA

So that's six.

EISA

Oh, right, if you count Joe,  
that's six.

SEI

Where is he now?

EISA

He died of a heart attack on the day we were going to get remarried.  
So?

CHEA

So nothing.

EISA

So if you want to count him, that's six.

CHEA

That's all I said.

EISA [to the men]

For feminists, utopia is a place where egalitarian, consensual, and cooperative relationships flourish and where both sexes are able to engage in meaningful work. They are based on the notion that the key to a satisfying life is opportunity for love and work where the two are compatible. In feminist utopias the social structure is such that women do not have to choose between work and love. Another feature of feminist utopias is size—either the whole society is small or people live in fairly small- sized communities. Families, however, are communal and extended, not the isolated, privatized nuclear families characteristic of post-industrial society. Feminist utopias are ecologically conscious. There is no exploitation or severe depletion of natural resources. In a very real sense, feminist utopias celebrate what we usually think of as traditionally female tasks and traits: nurturance, expressiveness, support or personal growth and development, a link with the land or earth.

[Silence.]

Talthybius notices the doll Andromache holds.]

TALTHYBIUS

Who is this?

ANDROMACHE

Who?

TALTHYBIUS

This boy you hold.

ANDROMACHE

This is a doll.

TALTHYBIUS

Is this your son?

ANDROMACHE

Astyanax?

TALTHYBIUS

I thought all the men of the royal family were dead.

ANDROMACHE

They are.

TALTHYBIUS

Except this one it seems.

A living heir to the throne.

[to Bill]

Take the boy with you.

ANDROMACHE

No!

[Bill snatches the doll from Andromache,  
and knocks her to the ground with a savage hit  
so that she falls like a rock,

The entire chorus falls suddenly to the ground,  
with Hecuba standing by astonished.]

HECUBA [going slowly to the ground, embracing Andromache]  
Andromache,  
my child

ANDROMACHE  
My child gone.  
They've taken my child.

When they came the first time,  
I think I must have been  
down already  
crawling on all fours

thinking only of myself again

I heard a shot  
blood splashed on my head and neck  
I pretended I was dead  
Some men came to see  
if anyone was moving  
I had to stop myself from shivering  
I felt a boot kick my side  
They spat on the bodies and walked away  
And then I forgot entirely  
I had been lying on top of my son  
to protect him from the gunfire  
I still held his hand  
I'd kept him with me all that time  
like a bird underneath his mother's wing  
But now, what difference has it made?  
I let my attention wander  
for just a moment.  
And now he's gone.  
They've taken him.

[Hecuba holds Andromache, comforting her.]

Cassandra enters running at top speed.

She is wearing black.

A very chic—though torn—outfit  
from Comme les Garçons.]

CASSANDRA

Am I too late?

TALTHYBIUS

What?

CASSANDRA

Have I missed the wedding?

BILL

Who is this?

HECUBA [calling out as though to warn her]

Cassandra!

TALTHYBIUS

Is this Cassandra?

CASSANDRA

The bride of Agamemnon!

And blessed am I to lie at a king's side.

[She throws herself at Talthybius's feet.]

I'll tell you what I see  
in this king's future,  
I see he takes a bride  
who will climb into his bed  
and cut his throat.

HECUBA

No, child, don't.

RAY BOB

She's nothing but trouble this one.

CASSANDRA

Not for me  
the life of mourning  
the tears  
the nursing of my sorrow

EISA

No.

HECUBA

Cassandra, have some sense  
of the position you find yourself in now.

TALTHYBIUS

I must say,  
to speak  
not so much as a diplomat  
but as a—

CASSANDRA

[to Talthymbius]

One day, when I lie dead cold and naked  
next to my husband's tomb  
piled in a ditch for animals to rip and feed on  
beaten by the storms of winter,  
you, too, you will be lying in some mud pit  
or buried  
somewhere no one will remember  
or give a shit  
what you've done long since forgotten  
unless some bitch strings you up  
before that  
with hoods and gags and blindfolds

HECUBA  
Cassandra....

TALTHYBIUS  
I beg your....

CASSANDRA  
and you feel some dizziness coming on

EISA  
some nausea

CASSANDRA  
some chick's getting her rocks off  
cutting you up a little bit  
plugging you into the wall  
cranking you up on the rheostat?

[all the women speaking at once over each other  
so it moves with dizzying speed]

EISA  
putting a long pin through his flesh and scraping his bones

CHEA  
sewing his lips together,

EISA  
sewing his eyelids open,

CHEA  
sewing his hands together

EISA  
nailing his scrotum to a chair

CASSANDRA  
Not that ALL these assholes shouldn't be eliminated  
these dicks with their pussy envy

HECUBA  
Cassandra!

[Cassandra's attention is momentarily distracted by her mother.]

CHEA  
These cuntsuckers

EISA  
these pricks who can only compensate  
for not being a woman  
by savaging some entire country

CASSANDRA  
It doesn't follow  
because men have always been around  
like a disease  
that they always must be around  
because these men are not needed!

CHEA  
we can make whole human beings  
in laboratories

CASSANDRA  
I've loved a man  
I know what it is to love.  
A man whose kisses were so sweet,  
so much of a different time.

[Hecuba has buried herself again in the pile of rags.]

We might be loved for a while and then forgotten.  
But the love will have been enough;  
all those impulses of love return to the love that made them.  
Even memory is not necessary for love.

There is a land of the living  
and a land of the dead,  
and the bridge is love,  
the only meaning.

Let's have him, then,  
Bring me to him  
Take me into his home  
Let me lie down with him  
stretch him out on a board  
put weights on his chest  
is this a man who likes to be bitten  
all over his body  
on his neck and chest  
Does he like to be laced  
with needle and thread  
like a spider's web  
sewn down to his bed  
immobilized?  
Then he's chosen well  
which woman here  
to take back home with him.

Where is this general's ship?  
Take me to it.  
and know, that when this ship leaves the shore  
it carries with it  
one of the Furies

[The Chorus, led by Cassandra, sings.]

[At the end of the song, Cassandra runs out at full tilt.]

HECUBA  
Come back!  
Stop her, someone.  
She doesn't know what she's saying.  
She doesn't mean it.

TALTHYBIUS

I think she does.

I had hoped we could proceed with some sense of self-respect  
but I see this is not to be the case.

Where is your daughter Polyxena?

HECUBA

Polyxena?

She found a ship.

She's run away.

She's gone.

TALTHYBIUS

We know she's here.

HECUBA

She's a child,  
a young child.

TALTHYBIUS

It's been decided she should be given to Achilles.

HECUBA

Achilles?

TALTHYBIUS

Yes.

HECUBA

We were told Achilles is dead.

TALTHYBIUS

Yes.

It's true he's dead,

His companions in arms

have decided

that his body cannot be left here in Troy

in an unhonored grave.

HECUBA  
Unhonored?

TALTHYBIUS  
Achilles was a hero.  
His companions remember his courage in battle.  
How he went in where others were afraid  
with no care for his own safety  
as though he were already dead.  
So.  
His fellow soldiers will not see him buried  
without a proper sacrifice  
to give honor to HIS sacrifice.  
Just as all the living will be given companions  
he, too, must have a companion in his death.

HECUBA  
A young girl to be his companion in death?

TALTHYBIUS  
Yes.

HECUBA  
Is this not perverse?  
Are you all perverse?  
Now you must find some reason  
after the war is over  
and the city lies in ashes  
to search out a girl  
and kill her, too.

BILL  
Easy to say the war is over  
but the men are still on fire  
Their blood racing  
They'd like to feel  
the impact of two or three more bombs exploding

the woods moving like one living creature  
heaving up the earth,  
the slow collapsing pull of gravity  
before they feel at peace

TALTHYBIUS

I am not the man to do this,  
I admit it.  
Some other,  
without pity,  
should have come in my place.  
But I've come to do my job.

HECUBA

To do your job?  
What about my job?  
My job is not yet over.  
I've not yet finished raising these children.  
I've not yet finished making a home  
or a life.  
I've not finished teaching my boys how to be men.  
My mother said to me,  
a gentleman is one who considers not just another's rights  
but also her preferences.  
I've not finished teaching my boys  
about the sacredness of human life  
even when it is contained in the meanest of vessels,  
about compassion.  
This is my work.  
It should be yours.  
My compatriots—  
needle-makers, linen makers,  
nail makers, brick makers,  
straw-plaiters, lace makers,  
iron workers, corn millers,  
wall builders, bottle makers,  
shirt makers, wheat growers,  
these people who recreate and rearrange the material world—  
thread rearranged into lace

dispersed bricks rearranged into a house  
coal rearranged, relocated to the visible surface of the earth  
its deep refusal to surrender the capture of an ancient sun  
now rendered into a source of light and warmth  
the spill of tiny wheels rearranged into a watch  
the soft and dangerous miscellany of rags  
rearranged into paper  
not for such a simple, brutal purpose  
as wealth or power  
but for the more complex and interesting purpose  
of making a community  
to sustain human life.  
Can it be that you have forgotten your job?  
Is it too late for you to remember  
what you were meant to do when you became a man?  
And if it is too late for you,  
you've come too far  
there is nothing you feel you can do,  
must it be too late for me, too?  
Could you not at least protect my unfinished job?  
Let me keep my daughter Polyxena,  
my youngest child,  
only Polyxena.  
Or, if you must have someone to put atop Achilles' grave,  
take me.  
What use am I if I cannot finish what I have begun?  
If you will end my job of mothering,  
then take me instead.

POLYXENA, who had been hiding among the members of the chorus, steps forward. She is 13 years old, funkily dressed in torn jeans and a tarty looking red velvet bustier (not that she is tarty, but that that is the—unconscious?—teen-age style).

POLYXENA  
No.  
Take me.  
Here I am.

HECUBA  
Go back!

POLYXENA  
I'm not afraid.  
I heard everything.  
Don't be afraid, mother.  
[to Talthibius]  
You won't take her.  
I'm going with you.

HECUBA  
No.

[She goes to Polyxena and holds her.]

She's a child.

POLYXENA  
I don't feel sorry, mother,  
it's my fate.  
If you have an eight for a name  
then you can have an eight and a four  
or an eight and a thirteen  
you come to combinations of 21,  
or three  
you know then that's your fate.  
I might have had a nine  
but if you believe in numerology  
you know you don't choose your numbers  
they're given to you  
and you learn to accept them.

HECUBA  
She doesn't mean what she's saying.  
She's a child.

POLYXENA

Yes, I do.

I think

I wish I had lived to have some years with you  
when we would both be grownups  
and talk as equals  
and share our thoughts.

[breaking loose from Hecuba]

But when it's in your numbers  
or your horoscope  
you just know  
that's the way the world was  
when you had your life  
and you accept it.

Of course, I have to admit  
I'd have liked to live a little longer  
I mean there's a lot I don't know yet.  
Like: why do guys insist on driving?  
And how come they call on Friday to ask you out  
for Friday night?  
And why do guys hate to get dressed up?  
How come they don't like to talk on the phone?  
Why do guys drink out of the milk carton?  
And how come they like to play air guitar?  
Why is a guy who sleeps around a stud  
but a girl who does is a slut?

BILL

I think it's almost expected of a guy.

POLYXENA

How come guys wait till way after they love you  
to say they do?

TALTHYBIUS

It's nervousness, I think.

POLYXENA

And why is it they keep on checking out other girls  
even though they insist you're the only one?

VALERIE

It's just human nature to look at beautiful girls.  
It doesn't necessarily mean anything at all.

POLYXENA

How can a guy stand to make out with a girl  
he makes fun of to his friends?

RAY BOB

It's just peer pressure.  
It's a bad thing to do,  
but if a guy's friends start making fun of the girl,  
it's easier to go along with the crowd.  
He doesn't mean it.

POLYXENA

And how come they don't like to fight?

RAY BOB

They're afraid they'll say something they didn't mean to say,  
because sometimes they don't think so fast,  
and they'll get dumped.

POLYXENA

How come they back off as soon as they know you like them?

VALERIE

They're scared.

POLYXENA

Guys need so much space.  
A few months ago,  
I had sex with my cousin.  
We've never talked about it since.

[Polyxena sings, and then, after the song:]

POLYXENA

I guess, when you think of having regrets,  
I regret we never talked about it.

HECUBA

Let my child stay with me.  
This is a good child  
Human nature doesn't change.  
Evil stays itself, evil to the end.  
And goodness good, its nature uncorrupted  
by any shock or blow.  
This child's young heart is filled with love  
and hope.  
Everything I lost lives on in her.  
This one life redeems the rest.  
Let my child stay with me.

[Ray Bob and Bill take hold of Polyxena  
and throw Hecuba to the ground.]

POLYXENA

Mother!

HECUBA

No! No!

[Ray Bob wraps a scarf around Polyxena's mouth and hustles her off the stage.  
Talthybius and Bill follow.]

Through the following song, no one speaks.  
They all look at the door through which Polyxena was taken.  
Andromache goes to the door, stops, looks  
turns away, walks away,  
turns back, walks toward the door, stops, looks,  
turns away, walks away, stops, turns back to look,  
starts to walk toward the door, stops, looks.]

THE CHORUS SINGS

Calling All Angels

from Wim Wenders film Until the End of the World

(the saints' names continue under the song when they begin to sing)

Soto voce:

Santa Maria

Santa Theresa

Santa Susanna

Santa Cecelia

Copelia

Domenica

Mary

Giulianus

Santa Petronella

etc etc

Singing:

Oh man this place to fall

the steps

a baby cries

high above

you didn't hear the church bells start to ring

the heaviness, the heaviness

ah, it settles in

sorry to leave you so soon

then it's one foot then the other

as you step along the road hard

step along the road

ah, which way, ah which way

it's how long and how far and how many times

ooooohhh, before it's too late

calling all angels

calling all angels

walk me through this one

don't leave me alone

calling all angels  
calling all angels  
we're trying  
we're hoping  
but we're not sure  
how  
this goes

on every day you gaze upon the sunset of such high intensity  
why it's almost as if,  
if you could only crack the code  
you'd finally understand it's all me and you

Calling all angels  
calling all angels  
walk me through this one  
don't leave me alone  
calling all angels  
calling all angels  
we're turning  
we're hoping  
but we're not sure  
Calling all angels  
Calling all angels  
Walk me through this one  
don't leave me alone  
Calling all angels  
Calling all angels  
We're trying  
we're hoping  
we're hurting  
we're loving  
we're crying  
we're calling  
cause we're not sure  
how  
this goes

[Hecuba is still collapsed on the ground.]

MENELAUS enters.

He wears a torn military uniform.

His hair is matted with blood.

And as the scene goes on, his uniform oozes blood.

He speaks to a chorus member.

MENELAUS

I beg your pardon.

I am looking for Helen,  
my wife.

HECUBA

Menelaus?

MENELAUS

Yes.

EISA

You're the man responsible  
for this war?

MENELAUS

So they say.

CHEA

Because you couldn't keep your wife at home.

MENELAUS

I love her.

HECUBA

For that you took thousands to their death.

MENELAUS

A war begun  
by a friend of mine,

a countryman of yours,  
welcomed into my home as a guest  
who took my wife  
in violation of my trust.

Took my wife.

Raped my wife.

CHEA  
Your wife was taken from you?

MENELAUS  
Yes.

CHEA  
This is not the story that we heard.

MENELAUS  
Stolen.

EISA  
We were told she ran away from you.

HECUBA  
Look what you've done.

MENELAUS  
Really.  
Put it how you will.  
My friend betrayed me.  
Or my wife did.  
Broke her promise.  
Her vow of marriage.  
Betrayed my love.  
That's the point, isn't it?

In marriage,  
and in the world.  
If we betray our trust,  
we are at war.

A society at peace  
is founded on mutual promises,  
freely given  
without coercion.  
And when such promises are broken,  
when one party  
on its own,  
decides to enforce its preference  
by some unilateral action  
then if the relationship continues  
it is based upon coercion,  
then force has come into play,  
war has been declared.

And then?  
And then, when my friend  
was asked to bring my wife back to me,  
he was instead supported by all his countrymen  
in his act.  
So that they,  
you,  
became accomplices in this betrayal of love and trust,  
this destruction of the foundation of my life,  
and of my society.

You and your friends  
treated with contempt  
that mutual trust that is essential  
for my country  
to live with itself  
in peace.

You violated our peace.  
And so we have annihilated yours.  
And would do it again.

Now, I've come for my wife.  
I know she is inside here.  
My friends,  
the victors in this war,  
have given her to me  
to bring her home with me,  
or not  
as I will.

CHEA  
Chattel, like all the rest of us.

MENELAUS  
[to another chorus member]  
Who is this person?  
[to CHEA]  
I said she is my wife.  
I said: I'll have her back.

The truth is I can sleep in a bed of ice if I choose  
I can detach my head  
and let it trundle off somewhere on its own  
At times I feel myself going down  
a steep and winding staircase to a bottomless depth  
but I look with wonder at my hands from time to time  
when they've gone numb  
They'll do anything I like  
Take my cock in one hand  
and rub it on your bellies  
and hang you on a peg  
to cut you open  
do you think if I cut the artery in your neck  
you'd spurt blood.

I'll have her back  
or kill you  
one by one  
until I've cleared my path to her.

But sometimes I like to lie down at night  
with my arms around someone  
and KNOW she loves me  
know this gives her pleasure—  
just lying there  
my arms around her  
her back to me  
my stomach pressed against her back  
my face buried in her hair  
my arms around her  
one hand on her stomach  
trusting her love  
feeling at peace

I'll have her back.

Bring her to me.  
I want her arms tied behind her back  
and I want her dragged to me.

CHEA  
Take her back, then.  
And when you take her back then:  
kill her!

HECUBA  
No!

MENELAUS  
What?

CHEA

Kill her—

she who brought all this down on us:

kill her,

and we will bless you for it.

But don't bring her out here for you to see.

Let them take her somewhere and kill her there

without seeing her first.

We all know the truth about you.

You can't look at her without wanting her.

HELEN suddenly appears from among the chorus members.

She wears a chemise, and nothing else,

from Victoria's Secret.

She is the seductive survivor, the master of "feminine wiles" (not used by any of the other women in the play) to be used to survive in a man's world.

THE CHORUS SINGS

the Bow Wow Wow version of "I Want Candy"

I know a guy who's tough but sweet

he's so fine he can't be beat

he's got everything that I desire

sets the summer sun on fire

i want candy

i want candy

goin to sea when the sun goes down

ain't no finer boy in town

you're my guy I want to talk to all night

so sweet you make my mouth water

i want candy  
i want candy

yeah

candy on the beach there's nothing better  
but I like candy when its wrapped in a sweater  
some may say I'll make you mine  
then I'll have candy all the time

I want candy  
I want candy  
I want candy  
I want candy

hey  
hey  
hey  
hey  
hey

[Helen continues to sing until she notices Menelaus.]

HELEN  
Menelaus!  
Thank God.  
I've found you at last.

MENELAUS  
Helen...

HELEN  
Where have you been?  
I know.  
I know you must hate me.  
But, Menelaus,  
I've never loved anyone but you.  
[she cries]  
I couldn't help myself.

CHEA  
Tears.

HELEN  
[overlooking the interruption, not responding to it]  
If you want to blame someone, blame her!  
[gesturing to Hecuba]  
She mothered the man who stole me from you.  
She raised him,  
taught him how to treat a woman.  
If Troy is ruined now  
she has no one to blame but herself.

Am I to blame for my beauty?

[the members of the chorus exchange glances;  
Helen takes them in,  
is distracted momentarily.]

Am I responsible for how I look?

[full attention back to Menelaus]

Or if you say, well,  
nonetheless,

you did run away

hadn't you gone to Crete?  
And left me alone in the house in Sparta.

To wonder if you were finished with me.  
Do you think...  
all those years that I loved you...  
was I not supposed to feel...  
left alone as I was...  
was I not supposed to fear...  
that I would never know your love again?

CHEA

Of course, without a man,  
some women would rather have a dildo  
than go with the enemy.

SEI

A dildo?

HELEN [seizing attention again]

Do you know,  
as soon as Paris was killed in the war,  
I tried to find my way back to you.  
These women can attest.  
But they caught me—  
and took me to Deiphobus,  
my second husband....

[silence]

who kept me as his wife

[looks at chorus, then back to Menelaus]

by force.

[silence, taking in chorus again]

And now you would kill me?

I

who have been a bride of force.  
Do you not think I've suffered enough,  
away from you,  
that you couldn't bring me back to your bed,  
forgive me  
lie with me  
our arms around each other  
to make love  
or not  
just lie together  
your arms around me  
your stomach pressed into my back

your arms around me  
your face buried in my hair  
one hand on my stomach  
feeling once again  
at peace

VALERIE

Menelaus, will you be tricked  
by all this talk

CHEA

She should be flogged  
She should be caned

SEI

Rule number one: exciting women can make men miserable.

AIMABLE

Rule number two: there are no perfect women.

SEI

Rule number three: reforming a woman is usually futile.

EISA

Rule number four: no woman can give a man self-esteem.

AIMABLE

Rule number five: many good women go unnoticed.

VALERIE

Rule number six: women like men who like women.

AIMABLE

Rule number seven: men who really listen are irresistible.

MENELAUS

[holding up a hand]

Enough.

I think I understand my own wife.

CHEA

Then let her be stoned to death now.  
There's no one left alive  
who wouldn't be eager to help

HECUBA

No.

HELEN

[falling to the ground, embracing Menelaus' knees]  
How could this be?  
To have me stoned to death by these strangers?  
Take me home to Greece, please  
if I must die,  
then let me die at home.

CHEA

Put her on the same ship home with you?  
She'll have you in her bed in no time.

HECUBA [to the women]

Show some pity.

MENELAUS [to Chea]

What do you mean?

VALERIE

A man like you  
once in love  
will never let a woman go.

[silence]

MENELAUS

I'll take her home.  
The others will be back for the rest of you.

HELEN AND MENELAUS SING DUET

HELEN

If you were a woman  
and I was a man  
would I send you yellow roses  
would I dare to kiss your hand

In morning would I caress you  
like the moon caresses the sand  
if you were the woman  
and I was the man

MENELAUS

If I was the woman  
and you were the man  
would you send me yellow roses  
would you dare to kiss my hand

in the morning would you caress me  
and the wind caresses the sand  
if I was the woman  
and you were the man

TOGETHER

If I was the heart  
and you were the head  
would you think me very foolish  
if one day I shattered  
these walls that surround me  
just to see where these feelings led  
if I was the heart  
and you were the head

HELEN

If I was the woman  
and you were the man  
would I laugh if you came to me  
with your heart in your hand  
and said I offer you this freely  
and will give you all that I can

TOGETHER

because you are the woman  
and I am the man

[As the music continues, Helen and Menelaus turn to leave together.  
Helen stops, turns back to chorus.]

HELEN

And you,  
you worthless pieces of shit  
don't give me any of your fucking attitude  
try to cut me down  
with your whining  
oh, here come tears  
blame him  
"she should be flogged"  
"she should be caned"  
these are the seven rules for women and men  
as though you knew your ass from your elbow  
you haven't been anywhere  
You use a fucking dildo,  
you fucking  
losers.

[She wheels around and exits with Menelaus.]

If it seems that Helen and Menelaus need an encore,  
here is one:

THEY SING:

MENELAUS

Well, I'll buy you a chevrolet  
I'm gonna buy you a chevrolet  
I'm gonna buy you a chevrolet  
if you'll do somethin for me  
hear me, doll,  
if you'll do somethin for me

HELEN

I don't want your chevrolet  
I don't want your chevrolet  
I don't want your chevrolet  
And you can't do nothin for me  
oh, no  
you can't do nothin for me

MENELAUS

Well, I'll buy you a diamond ring  
I'm gonna buy you a diamond ring  
I'm gonna buy you a diamond ring  
if you'll do somethin for me  
hey yay yay  
if you'll do somethin for me

HELEN

I don't want your diamond ring  
I don't want your diamond ring  
I don't want your diamond ring  
And you can't do nothin for me  
you can't do nothin for me

MENELAUS

Well, I'll buy you a cuttin board  
I'm gonna buy you a cuttin board  
I'm gonna buy you a cuttin board  
if you'll do somethin for me  
eee eeee  
if you'll do somethin for me

HELEN

I don't want your cuttin board  
I don't want your cuttin board  
I don't want nothin in the world you got  
And you can't do nothin for me  
you can't do nothin for me

MENELAUS

unnnh ooooh oooooh  
uuuuuh

Well, I'll buy you a paper bow  
I'm gonna buy you a paper bow  
I'm gonna buy you a paper bow  
if you'll do somethin for me  
eee eeee  
if you'll do somethin for me

HELEN

I don't want your paper bow  
I don't want your paper bow  
I don't want nothin in the world you got  
And you can't do nothin for me  
you can't do nothin for me

MENELAUS

Well, I'll buy you a big cigar  
I'm gonna buy you a big cigar  
I'm gonna buy you a big cigar  
if you'll do somethin for me  
NOW LISTEN!  
if you'll do somethin for me

HELEN

I don't want your big cigar  
I don't want your big cigar  
I don't want nothin in the world you got  
And you can't do nothin for me  
you can't do nothin for me

MENELAUS

Well, I'll buy you a super ball  
I'm gonna buy you a super ball  
I'm gonna buy you a super ball

if you'll do somethin for me  
eee eeeh  
if you'll do somethin for me

HELEN

Well, then, I'll accept your super ball  
I could use your super ball  
I could use your super ball  
and you can do somethin for me  
anytime!  
you can do something for me

[Music, very sad,  
comes up, almost inaudibly at first.]

Two chorus women bring in body of Polyxena to Hecuba  
she makes her ready for burial.]

SEI

Hecuba  
they've let us bring your child to you  
to prepare her body to lie atop Achilles' grave.

HECUBA

Polyxena?  
Prepare her body?  
Oh, no, my child, my child.  
Is there no end to this?  
Why do I still live?

[she buries her head in Polyxena's body,  
then after a time looks up]

How was she put to death?  
Tell me.  
Let me hear it all,  
however terrible.

[uncertainty among the chorus members about whether to tell the story; finally one speaks]

AIMABLE

The whole army of the Greeks  
was drawn up in ranks.  
Some soldiers held her arms,  
and Achilles' son, Neoptolemus, led her to his father's grave  
and there drew his sword to kill her.  
But she spoke first:  
Wait, she said,  
let no man touch me  
I die of my own free will,  
and the soldiers let her go.  
She took hold of her robe at the shoulder  
and ripped it open to her waist  
She sank to her knees  
and said to Neoptolemus,  
Here is my breast, then,  
will you stab me here?  
Here is my throat ready for your sword.  
And Neoptolemus,  
torn between pity and duty,  
stood hesitating  
and then, at last,  
slashed her throat with his sword  
and even as she dropped to the ground  
she did so with dignity and grace.

HECUBA

Oh, my child,  
this goes past all endurance.  
Now I am no longer who I was.

My husband dead,  
my children gone,  
now my dear,  
dear littlest daughter,  
what god in heaven

what power below  
can help me now  
as I feel myself sinking into  
a rage  
I should have died long ago  
but I was kept alive  
as though by the gods  
saved to witness more  
and each time to witness worse.  
Until now  
I myself  
finally feel  
this rage of war  
deep deep within me  
I would myself have vengeance  
How can I live now  
silently accepting what they have done  
thinking I shall understand  
if I  
but draw  
this pain  
inside myself  
as though my understanding  
would make it right  
as though this pain would be erased  
if only I could understand  
as though all the world's suffering  
were only meant to assist me  
to attain an understanding  
as though some human empathy  
could contain it and so make it right  
no  
this pain must be answered with pain  
this savagery with savagery in kind

Bring Aeneas to me.

SEI

He is afraid...

HECUBA

Bring him to me!

We are nothing but creatures waiting  
to be shattered by our lives.

In the end,  
we don't come through life  
as we come through each experience along the way —  
enriched or changed,  
wounded or restored;  
in the end we are all  
each one of us  
consumed by life.

Soon all my world will be blotted out with ash.

[Aeneas enters.

He is in shock

and is brought in supported, almost carried, by chorus members.

He wears tennis whites that are filthy and torn.

He is completely freaked out, eyes darting, disoriented as though he has just come  
out of darkness into the light, terrified.

AENEAS

Queen Hecuba.

[he falls to his knees]

HECUBA

Stand up.

Your time of hiding is at an end.

AENEAS

Hiding, no, I haven't been...

HECUBA

No, not hiding.

AENEAS

No.

HECUBA

Cowering,  
while all the other men were murdered  
and all the women beaten, raped,  
murdered, taken into slavery.  
In all this time,  
you have been cowering.

[silence]

Now, you see,  
here is Polyxena in my arms,  
a child,  
who did not shrink from death as you did.  
Look at her.  
Look.  
Remember her.

[Aeneas goes to his knees,  
weeping,  
puts his head down on the lifeless body of Polyxena.]

Now your time has come  
to be as brave as she has been

Your time has come to avenge her death.

Will human beings be caught forever  
in a cycle of hatred, violence, and war?  
A world without compassion.  
Murdering men  
and women who urge them to it.

So be it.

That person is happiest who lives from day to day  
and asks no more.

Learn from this.  
Harbor no more illusions.  
See the world  
and the men and women who live in it  
for what they are.

Turn away from love  
compassion.

AENEAS

This is not what I have heard you say before.  
I have heard you....

HECUBA [cutting him off]  
Enough of speaking.  
Have you seen what I've achieved by speaking  
and pleading and crying.  
Give up hope.

Your time has come  
to find all those who have survived,  
take them to a new country  
build a home.  
Make it strong.  
Put your trust in power alone.

Make a nation that can endure.

And when you have,  
come back,  
reduce these Greeks and their world  
to ruins.  
Destroy their cities.  
Burn them.

Pull down their homes.  
Leave them wounded and alone,  
abandoned.  
Let them bleed to death on their own graves.

Go now.  
Take who you can and go.

Have you heard me?

AENEAS

Yes.

I've heard what you've said before, but  
I'm not a child.  
After the things I've lived to see.

This boy  
one time  
jumped down out of a truck  
thinking he'd be smart  
and he said  
Has anyone ever escaped from here?  
So they stripped him naked  
and hung him upside down for a few hours  
and then they got him down and lay him on the ground  
and poked sand down his throat until he died.

Or you hear the rules that have been set  
anyone who walks away too quickly is shot  
anyone out of line is shot  
anyone who walks too slowly is shot  
anyone who speaks too loudly  
anyone who bends down  
anyone who turns his head  
any child who cries

a hospital floor cleared  
by pushing the wheelchairs out on the balcony  
tipping the people out of them  
into the trucks in the street below

people who have suffocated  
their tongues stuck out of their mouths  
like dead fish  
so that you feel nothing for them so much as  
contempt

When I see a girl being drowned  
I go crazy  
and I have butterflies in my stomach  
and pressure of some kind in my temples  
and they seem to get hot  
I sometimes smell something burning  
and I am overcome by panic  
I feel some kind of feeling in my penis  
my heart rate goes up  
I sweat sometimes  
I get the runs  
and then I masturbate over and over and over and over again  
six times a day for days  
while I see in my mind the drowning I have seen on television  
I wish I could have videotaped it  
and watched it over and over again  
I have the head rush of that sweeping liquid-like feeling  
that goes through my brain when I see a drowning  
and I have trouble breathing  
I have asthma  
I have to use my inhaler to breathe normally again  
I might not sleep for days on end  
I am in a constant state of fear and agitation  
I can't eat  
I ache all over  
and all because of the drowning of the girl  
that I saw on television

VALERIE

This is how men are.

HECUBA

Make good use of it.

Aeneas leaves.

Hecuba remains with Polyxena in her arms  
rocking back and forth with her for a long, long time

A member of the chorus sings solo  
the Sinead O'Connor arrangement of  
Scarlet Ribbons

I peeked in  
to say goodnight  
and I heard my child in prayer  
and for me some scarlet ribbons  
scarlet ribbons for my hair  
All the stores  
were closed and shuttered  
All the streets were dark and bare  
In our town  
no scarlet ribbons  
Scarlet ribbons for her hair  
Through the night  
my heart was aching  
just before the dawn was breaking  
I peeked in and on her pillow  
on her pillow  
lying there  
lovely ribbons  
scarlet ribbons  
scarlet ribbons for her hair  
If I live to be a hundred

I will never know from where  
came those ribbons  
scarlet ribbons  
scarlet ribbons for her hair.

## THE PLAY

Carthage.

A bright full moon in a deep blue sky.

The dramaturgical rules have shifted here:  
this is dreamland, a world of drift, heaven.

A spa  
Exercise machines of all sorts  
Bowls of fruit  
Bottles of Evian water  
Fresh flowers  
Piles of towels  
A hot tub

Women are working out on these machines  
This is the chorus: they are, variously,  
patrons and instructors at the spa.

These are not the same women as are in the Prologue.

They turn to face the audience, even as they continue their workouts, and sing the Cowboy Junkies arrangement of Blue Moon:

SONG:

La la lala la lalalalala

La la lala la lalalalala

I only want to say  
that if there is a way  
I want my baby  
back with me  
cause he's my true love  
my only one don't you see  
and on that fateful day  
perhaps a new sign of May  
my baby walks back into my arms  
I'll keep him beside me forever now

[they get off the machines and come forward to sing]

You see I was afraid  
to let my baby stray  
I kept him too tightly  
by my side  
and then one sad day  
he went away and he died

Blue Moon  
you saw me standing alone  
without a dream in my heart  
without a love of my own

Blue Moon  
you knew just what I was there for  
you heard me say the prayer for  
someone I really could care for

[Several veterans of the Trojan war enter—  
double cast Eddie, Joe and Jim—,  
followed by Aeneas.]

I only want to say  
That if there is a way  
I want my baby  
back with me  
cause he's my true love  
my only one don't you see

[they return to the machines as the music finishes,  
as the veterans step tentatively into the room]

JOE  
Excuse me.  
I'm sorry.

[the women turn, surprised to see the men there]

I apologize,  
but...  
is this a club for women only?

ANDREA  
No.

CAROL  
Well, yes it is.

ANDREA  
Come in.

ALICE  
Come in.

LETTY  
What's happened to you?

JOE  
We've been...  
uh...

JIM  
Beaten.  
In war.  
Routed.

JOE  
Thrown out.

EDDIE  
Exiled.

JOE  
From our home.

JIM  
Troy.

ALICE  
You're refugees.

EDDIE  
Yes.

JOE  
We're pacifists, really.

LETTY  
Well, come in.  
Come.

[she opens her arms to them]

You're safe here.

JOE

Thank you.

[The women move to them,  
put their arms around the men,  
help them toward massage tables  
and recliner chairs.]

ANDREA

Come.

You should rest.

JOE

Well, I...

ANDREA

Don't be shy.

JOE [to ALICE]

I like women.

ANDREA

You do?

[None of the following remarks are lascivious, even those of Jim; they are delivered gently—as memories of gentler days—and taken as such by the women.]

JOE

There are times I feel I could kiss a woman's cheek for hours and hours at a time,  
nestle my face in her hair, whisper in her ear.

JIM

I love to kiss a woman's ear.

In fact, to tell the truth,

I like to crawl right up inside a woman.

JOE

I like to hold a woman

have a woman hold me

JIM

I like to put my head on a woman's breast  
have her arms around me  
so that I can't escape  
and fall asleep

JOE

Sometimes I think of having my head on a woman's breast  
and then I think of her head on my chest  
and my mind goes back and forth  
back and forth  
I can't settle on one thought or the other  
I love them both so much

JIM

I like to see a woman smile  
I love it when a woman laughs

JOE

Following her thoughts  
while she tells a story  
where she goes  
where her voice is quiet or deep  
where she hesitates  
where she stops  
where she takes a long slow curve  
where she takes a quick turn without thinking  
where she thinks it's funny

EDDIE

I like to get inside a woman's head  
as much as in her body.

JIM

I like to dress in her clothes.

JOE

I'd like to be a woman.

[Aeneas is left back by the chorus, standing alone.

Music.

From the doors of the sauna at upstage center,  
Dido enters  
She is a black woman in her thirties.

She looks at Aeneas for a moment,  
then turns at once  
and steps directly to the microphone at center stage.

DIDO SINGS  
the Linda Rondstadt arrangement of  
When You Wish Upon a Star

When you wish upon a star  
makes no difference  
who you are  
anything your heart desires  
will come to you

if your heart is in your dream  
no request is too extreme  
when you wish upon a star  
like dreamers do

Fate is kind  
She brings to those who love  
the sweet fulfillment of  
their secret longing

Like a bolt out of the blue  
fate steps in and pulls you through  
when you wish upon a star  
your dream comes true

[She reaches out her hand to Aeneas.  
He goes to her.  
She sings to him.]

Like a bolt out of the blue  
fate steps in and pulls you through  
when you wish upon a star  
your dreams come true

DIDO  
What's your name?

AENEAS  
Aeneas.

[She begins to unbutton his shirt.]

DIDO  
You know,  
a cave that has been dark for a million years  
will become bright  
the moment a candle is lit inside it.

Things can happen so suddenly.

AENEAS  
Yes.

DIDO  
In spring, I think,  
the dawn is most beautiful.

AENEAS  
Yes.

DIDO  
In summer, the nights.

[She takes off his shirt.]

A couple of chorus members help her.  
They take off his trousers.]

In autumn, the evenings.

AENEAS

Yes.

[She leads him to a hot tub,  
and, letting her own robe slip to the floor,  
gets in it with him.]

DIDO

In winter, the early mornings.  
Especially, when snow has fallen during the night.

[She is bathing him now.]

Or when the ground is white with frost.  
Or even when there is no snow or frost  
but it is simply very cold.

AENEAS

Yes.

DIDO

And people in the household hurry from room to room  
stirring up the fires  
and bringing charcoal.  
But as noon approaches,  
and the cold wears off,  
no one bothers to keep the fires lit,  
and soon nothing remains but piles of white ashes.

AENEAS

Yes.

JIM

You know...

sometimes I think  
I could just put myself in a woman's hands forever  
just do exactly what she says

ALICE  
Unh-hunh.

JIM  
I like it when a woman climbs on top of me  
rests both hands on the bed  
looks down at me  
and makes love to me, while I  
press both hands to her heart

JOE  
Or sits upright on you,  
her head thrown back  
bringing her feet together  
on the bed to one side of your body.

JIM  
Yes.

ALICE  
Here,  
we call that  
the Swan.

CAROL  
You know  
if you grasp your penis and move it  
in circles inside her  
we call this  
Churning the Curds.

JIM  
Unh-hunh.

ANDREA

Or, drawing up her feet,  
she might revolve her hips so that your penis  
circles deep inside her,  
we call that the Honey Bee.

ANDREA

Or if she sits astride you,  
facing your feet,  
brings both her feet up to your thighs,  
and works her hips  
frantically,  
this is known as  
the Swan Sport

ALICE

Or, catching your penis, she  
guides it into her quim  
clings to you and shakes her buttocks:  
this is called the Lovely Lady in Control

LETTY

And when you hold each other's hands,  
sprawled like two starfish making love,  
her nipples stabbing your chest,  
her thighs stretched out along yours:  
this is called the Coitus of the Gods

CAROL

Sometimes, you know,  
before you make love  
you can massage your penis  
with honey mixed with powdered black pepper,  
and you'll find you can go on and on.  
Women like this.

ALICE

Or leaves caught as they fall from trees  
and powdered with peacock-bone

and fragments of a corpse's winding-sheet  
dusted lightly on the penis,  
will bewitch any woman living.

CAROL

Or if you crush milky chunks of cactus  
with sulphur,  
dry the mixture seven times, powder it  
and apply it to your penis,  
you'll find that you can satisfy  
any woman.

DIDO

But when she is tired  
and her passion has ebbed,  
you should let her rest, bending forward to lay  
her forehead on yours  
without disturbing your bodies joined together.

LETTY

And sometimes, then  
your lover will feel aroused again  
and take your penis  
in her hand and, shaping  
her lips to an 'O', lay them lightly to its tip,  
moving her head in tiny circles.  
We call this Touching

CAROL

And then she takes the head of your penis  
gently between her lips,  
first pressing, then kissing it tenderly  
and pulling at its soft skin

And then she lets the head slide  
completely  
into her mouth

and presses the shaft firmly between her lips,  
holding a moment before pulling away  
we call this  
Inviting the Nectar

LETTY

And then taking your penis deep into her mouth,  
pulling on it and sucking  
as though she were stripping clean a mango-stone:  
this is what we call  
Sucking a Mango.

JIM

Oh.

AENEAS

When I was a child  
I would go for a walk in the woods,  
and everyone would say  
be careful  
stay on the path  
don't wander off the path  
or you'll get lost.  
And I was always afraid I might wander into the woods  
deeper and deeper  
and never find my way back again  
and it frightened me until now  
when I think of you,  
and the voice in the back of my head says  
go on  
go ahead  
go off the path.

[Dido puts a robe around him  
and moves him to a couch  
where there is food and drink.  
He lies with his head in her lap.]

DIDO

I was thinking  
we were travelling by camel in the dessert,  
and we decided to stop and rest  
on a lawn in the suburbs.  
My blouse was off.  
And there were all these people  
playing croquet around us.  
We took a walk through the village.  
Sometimes we were together  
and sometimes apart  
and we would meet sometimes.  
It was a wonderful community in this village  
and we were having a feast at a long table outdoors  
and someone gave me a baby  
and it was you  
and everyone was looking at me  
and I bent down to kiss you  
but I kissed you  
as a grownup.

JOE

I thought you were a pond  
and I slipped into you  
you were so cool  
and dark

JOE

Do you ever dream of the end of the world?  
Sometimes  
I dream the world is ending  
everything is burning  
and there is nowhere to run.

AENEAS

All I can remember was a pale lightning flash for two or three seconds. Then, I collapsed. I don't know how much time passed before I came to. Sandy dust was flying all around. I was trapped under the debris, and I was in terrible pain and that's probably why I came to. I couldn't move, not an inch. I found one of my friends lying

alive. I held her up in my arms. Her skull was cracked open, her flesh was dangling out from her head. She had only one eye left, and it was looking right at me. The lower part of her body was trapped, buried inside of the debris. First, she was mumbling something but I couldn't understand her. She started to bite off her finger nail. I took her finger out of her mouth. And then, I held her hand, then she started to reach for her notebook in her chest pocket, so I asked her, I said, "You want me to take this along to hand it over to your mother?" She nodded. Then she was gone.

JIM

I haven't really slept much lately.  
I lie down, but I don't sleep.  
I'm always watching the door,  
the window,  
then back to the door.  
I get up five times a night,  
to check the windows  
sometimes ten or fifteen times.  
There's always something within reach,  
like a knife or a chair  
I used to sleep with a gun underneath my pillow.

JOE

If I saw someone down an alley in the dark  
I wouldn't go the other way,  
I'd go down there thinking,  
"Maybe I'll get lucky."  
I guess I wanted to be killed.  
Once I came on a guy raping a hooker.  
She was screaming....  
and it was easy to tell he was hurting her real bad.  
I yelled at him.  
And he turned around and started reaching behind his back,  
so I knew he was carrying something.  
I ran on him so fast and had his elbow before he could pull out his gun  
and I pounded the shit out of him.  
After that I started carrying a carving fork with me  
wherever I went.

I sharpened the tines  
I didn't want to kill anyone.  
I figured you could just stick it into somebody so far  
before it stopped.

[During these texts,  
Aeneas sits up  
she lies face down  
he peels back her robe  
and gives her a massage.

the chorus steps forward to sing a song:

The Cowboy Junkies arrangement of  
Dreaming My Dreams With You]

#### CHORUS

I hope that I find what I'm reaching for  
a way that is in my mind  
I hope that there won't be a wrong any more  
and maybe I'll learn this time.

Some day I'll get over you  
I'll live to see it all through  
But I'll always miss  
dreaming my dreams with you.

But I won't let it change me  
Not if I can  
I'd rather believe in love  
And give it away as much as I can  
to those that I'm fondest of

Some day I'll get over you  
I'll live to see it all through  
But I'll always miss  
dreaming my dreams with you

Some day I'll get over you  
I'll miss dreaming with you  
Some day I'll get over you  
I'll miss dreaming with you  
Some day I'll get over you  
I'll miss dreaming with you  
Some day.

[As they sing,  
Dido turns over onto her back,  
Aeneas sits next to her,  
one hand on her quim,  
as he leans back, motionless,  
supporting himself with his other hand,  
and a minuscule sailboat  
crosses from one side of the stage to the other  
very, very slowly.

Silence.]

DIDO  
Have you ever read Tarot cards?

AENEAS  
No.

DIDO  
Would you like to?

AENEAS  
Ummm. Sure.

DIDO  
You don't believe in the cards?

AENEAS  
Do you?

DIDO

Well, of course I do.

AENEAS

Unh-hunh.

DIDO

So, do you?

AENEAS

Want to read them?

DIDO

Believe in them?

AENEAS

I'd like to read them with you.

[She takes a deck of tarot cards.

While Dido and Aeneas do the cards, the veterans serve food and drink to the chorus, serve the women, make them comfortable, bring them robes, etc.]

DIDO

First,

you take the cards

and hold them.

Look at them.

And choose one you like.

AENEAS

One I like?

DIDO

One that feels good to you.

AENEAS

This one does.

DIDO

The three of wands.

A calm person.

Stately.

His back turned.

Standing on the edge of a cliff

looking out to sea at passing ships.

His ships.

Were you thinking of leaving?

AENEAS

I was thinking of coming here.

DIDO

This guy is not on a ship going anywhere.

He's standing on the shore

looking at the ships.

With longing, maybe.

AENEAS

Longing for you, probably.

DIDO

You think I'm a ship?

AENEAS

[silence]

Yes.

DIDO

Here.

Let me have the deck.

[she shuffles them, places one down]

This is what you do.  
You choose another card.  
Like that.  
Put it on top of the first.  
This covers him.

AENEAS  
Covers him?

DIDO  
That's what they say.

AENEAS  
The Star.

DIDO  
This is the influence that works on you now.  
Loss. Abandonment.

AENEAS  
Really.  
Loss, yes.  
That's true.  
But abandonment.  
No.  
I don't think that's me.

DIDO  
Or some would say: it means hope. Bright prospects.

AENEAS  
It seems you can say whatever you want.

DIDO  
Well, sort of.  
Sure.  
[she takes another card and puts it down]  
These are his obstacles.

AENEAS

A dead man?

With ten swords in his back?

DIDO

Pain.

AENEAS

Really.

DIDO

Tears. Sadness. Desolation.

AENEAS

No kidding.

[silence]

Let's stop now.

DIDO

We have to keep going now.

This is how it is in life.

Once you start,

you have to see it to the end.

AENEAS

Make it go more quickly then.

Put all the cards down.

Let's see them all.

[beat]

DIDO

All right.

This crowns him: it is the best you may hope for.

The nine of pentacles

A woman with a bird on her hand.

Prudence. Discernment. Success.

This is beneath him: it is what you have to work with.

The page of cups.

Taste.

Seduction.

Deception.

AENEAS

Not deception, no.

Or seduction either.

You don't think I've seduced you, do you?

DIDO

The cards don't lie.

They're only cards after all.

They are what they are.

AENEAS

And do you think I would deceive you?

DIDO

Have you ever deceived anyone else?

AENEAS

Recently you mean.

DIDO

I meant ever.

AENEAS

Yes.

DIDO

Then I guess you could deceive me, too.

AENEAS

Do you think people can change?

DIDO

I think they can fall in love  
and change completely,  
and stay the same.

Look.

This is behind you—it's what you leave behind.

AENEAS

Lovers?

Are you making it come out this way?

DIDO

No.

AENEAS

I don't think you're supposed to cheat.

DIDO

Cheat?

AENEAS

Arrange the cards beforehand  
so they come out the way you've planned.

DIDO

I haven't done that.

[silence]

And this lies before you.

AENEAS

Death, of course.

[she turns over the card]

DIDO

Yes.

Or,

well,

change.

AENEAS

You're doing this to me.

DIDO

It's okay.

It's only cards.

AENEAS

But you believe them.

DIDO

Death, you know,

may not be always bad.

Until you've died

you can't be reborn.

AENEAS

Unh-hunh.

DIDO

The last four cards:

Yourself: your relationship to all this.

The hermit.

Lying.

Your home.

The Queen of Cups.

This must be me.

Beautiful. Honest. Devoted.

Your hopes and fears.

The Fool.

Your hope and your fear is folly.

Madness.  
Intoxication.  
Giving in to your heart.

And what is to come.  
The moon.  
Darkness.  
Terror.  
Deception.  
Error.

AENEAS  
No.

You know,  
I can read these cards, too.  
The moon is change.

See. You've read the story backwards.  
It begins with change.  
And moves back  
from the outer cards to the center  
through darkness  
to intoxication  
to giving in to my heart  
then to wisdom and happiness  
to death  
and to rebirth in love  
with you.

DIDO  
This wouldn't be fair for you to lie to me.  
To make me fall in love with you.  
I told you how you can read the cards  
and leave.  
You don't have to do this.  
You could just leave it alone.  
Keep me in a good place in your heart.  
Remember me.

And keep on going  
wherever it was you were headed  
and I could let you go.

AENEAS

But the way I read the cards  
I know it's true.

DIDO

Unless the death card really does mean an end.

You know: All great love stories end in death because the truth of life is that all any of us ever have is one great love in life, not two or three or a hundred. Just one. And then we die—whether soon or later, it doesn't matter, because that's all we are given in life, only one chance at real love, and all the rest is just what comes before and after—and if a love story ended differently it would be untrue.

AENEAS

No. We make our own chances. There's never an end of chances until you're dead.  
That I found you is the proof of it.

DIDO

That you found me is the proof that you have one chance in life.

Do you cook?

AENEAS

Well, I like to cook.

DIDO

What do you like to cook?

AENEAS

I can cook pasta  
and fish.

DIDO

Pasta.

AENEAS

I've always thought,  
one day,  
when I have lots of time  
you know,  
long afternoons  
I'd like to really learn to cook  
and make pottery.

DIDO

After we make love.

AENEAS

Right.

The chorus, as girl group, steps forward to sing:

CHORUS SINGS

Wham bebop boom bam  
I can swing, and I can jam  
Wham bebop boom bam  
I'm a killer diller yes I am  
Wham bebop boom bam  
When you learn it you'll be proud  
Wham bebop boom bam  
Join the crowd and swing out loud

Some folks say that swing won't stay  
and it's dying out  
But I can prove it's in the groove  
and they don't know what they're talking about

Wham bebop boom bam  
It's easy to do like the Suzy-Q  
Wham bebop boom bam  
If I can do it you can, too

[The music continues  
The veterans dance the Charleston  
with members of the chorus.

Dido and Aeneas rise from couch and join the dancing.

At the end of the song, Dido breaks away,  
steps to mike to sing—some sentimental ballads, torch songs.

While she sings  
one veteran and a chorus member begin to dance  
a romantic Tharp-like or Astaire-like dance.

Aeneas does some sand dancing or soft shoe dancing to one side.

One veteran and one chorus member  
put on ice skates  
and do a romantic ice dance number.

Etc.]

DIDO SINGS

the Linda Ronstandt arrangement of Crazy—or Dinah Washington's Our Love is  
Here to Stay—or use this for the very end?  
with saxophone backup

Say I'll move the mountain  
and I'll move the mountain  
if he wants them out of the way

Crazy he calls me  
sure I'm crazy  
Crazy in love you see

I say I'll go through fire  
and I'll go through fire  
if he wants it  
so it shall be

Crazy he calls me  
sure I'm crazy  
Crazy in love you see

Like the wind  
that shakes the bough  
he moves me with a smile  
the difficult  
I'll do right now  
the impossible  
will take a little while

I'll say I'll care forever  
and I'll mean forever  
if I have to hold up the sky

Crazy he calls me  
sure I'm crazy  
crazy in love am I

Like the wind  
that shakes the bough  
he moves me with his smile  
the difficult  
I'll do right now  
the impossible  
will take a little while  
I say I'll care forever  
and I'll mean forever  
if I have to hold up the sky

Crazy he calls me  
sure I'm crazy  
crazy in love  
am I

[Now she segues into the Sinead O'Connor  
arrangement of Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered]

DIDO SINGS

After one whole quart of brandy  
like a daisy I'll awake  
with no bromo seltzer handy  
I don't even shake  
Men are not a new sensation  
I've done pretty well I think  
but this half pint imitation  
put me on the blink

I'm wild again  
beguiled again  
a simpering whimpering child again  
Bewitched bothered and bewildered  
am I

couldn't sleep  
and wouldn't sleep  
when love came and told me I shouldn't sleep  
bewitched bothered and bewildered  
am I

lost my heart  
but what of it  
he is calm  
I agree  
he can laugh  
but I love it  
although the laugh's on me  
I'll sing to him  
each spring to him  
and long for the day when I'll cling to him  
bewitched bothered and bewildered  
am I

he's a fool  
and don't I know it  
but a fool can have his charms  
I'm in love and don't I show it  
like a babe in arms

I've sinned a lot  
I mean a lot  
but I'm my sweet seventeen a lot  
bewitched bothered and bewildered  
am I

I'll sing to him  
each spring to him  
and worship the trousers that cling to him  
bewitched bothered and bewildered  
am I

when he talks  
he is seeking  
wants to get  
off his chest  
how his arms while he's speaking  
he's at his very best  
next to him  
oh yes  
perplexed again  
and how  
I can be oversexed again  
bewitched bothered and bewildered  
am I

Aeneas joins Dido at the mike for a duet of  
You're Mine, or  
Sentimental Reasons  
or Let me Call you Sweetheart

DIDO AND AENEAS SING

I love you  
for sentimental reasons  
I hope you do believe me  
I'll give you my heart

I love you  
and you alone were meant for me  
please give your loving heart to me  
and say we'll never part

I think of you every morning  
dream of you every night  
darling I'm never lonely  
whenever you're in sight

I love you  
for sentimental reasons  
I hope you do believe me  
I've given you my heart

I think of you every morning  
dream of you every night  
Darling I'm never lonely  
whenever you're in sight

I love you  
for sentimental reasons  
I hope you do believe me  
I've given you my heart

[At the final chorus, Dido and Aeneas resume dancing together while the chorus finishes the song and Dido and Aeneas return to the couch and make love.

While they are making love, several chorus members segue into:

CHORUS SINGS:

the Willie Nelson arrangement of These Precious Days

Oh it's a long long while  
from May to December  
but the days grow short  
when you reach September  
when the autumn weather  
turn leaves to flame  
one hasn't got time  
for the waiting game  
oh the days dwindle down  
to a precious few  
September  
November  
and these few precious days  
I'll spend with you  
these precious days  
I'll spend with you

oh the days dwindle down  
to a precious few  
September  
November  
and these few precious days  
I'll spend with you  
these precious days  
I'll spend with you  
these precious days  
I'll spend with you

while other members of the chorus do slow dancing throughout the song.

[silence]

AENEAS

I dreamed

I was flying in a small plane

a Piper Cub

a young woman with me

a clear, beautiful day,

so clear in the sky

wonderful sunshine

the fertile landscape below

green fields

streams

small lakes

clear ponds

trees

and I was not only flying

not only exhilarated to be up in the sky

but I was taking off and landing

taking off and landing again and again

I could go from heaven to earth

and back again

whenever I wanted

[The following set of speeches are distributed among the chorus. They echo

Aeneas

feelings.]

AENEAS

I love your hair, I love to brush it and wind it around my fingers

I love your ear

OTHERS

I love your quickness

I love to lick your eyes

I love it when you put your tongue in my ear and make a sucking, rushing sound of  
boulders and rapids, white water

AENEAS

I love your singing when we make love, and your shouting and calling out loud and your laughing and humming and your ohs

I love your quim I might have mentioned that first it's just like you, quick and sweet tasting, delicious and full of nooks and pools, slides and surprises

OTHERS

I love it when you try to pick me up off the floor

AENEAS

I love it when we wake and sleep and wake and sleep a thousand times during the night

OTHERS

I love your toes

I love to kiss you on the neck when you turn your head all the way to your right side when you think I'm not looking

AENEAS

I love to listen to your voice

DIDO

How men are.

AENEAS

Sometimes I worry you will leave me.

DIDO

I leave you?

Never.

AENEAS

Or will you fall in love with someone else?

DIDO

No.

AENEAS

You might.

Make love with someone else.

I think I couldn't bear that.

I knew a man who was married

and had a lover

for thirty years.

He would have dinner with his family

and then go and have dinner with his lover.

Every night for thirty years,

he ate two dinners.

DIDO

This is a man you're talking about.

I couldn't make love with anyone but you.

AENEAS

But there are bigamists, you know.

DIDO

These are all men.

I was thinking about going shopping.

I was thinking about making love with you

And so I went shopping

and I bought two summer dresses

just simple things

and all I was thinking about when I picked them out

was how you would take them off

one with lots of tiny buttons down the front

and the other a long tee-shirt dress

sort of suggestive

not the usual sort of thing I wear

I mean I don't usually wear suggestive things,

do you think?

AENEAS

No.

Well, I guess not.

In a way.

To others maybe.

DIDO

Are you worried about yourself?

AENEAS

No.

But I've made promises.

DIDO

Promises?

AENEAS

To go on,

to find a home for those who have come with me.

DIDO

Really.

AENEAS

To take revenge.

It seems remote to me now.

To take revenge.

But I did promise.

DIDO

So.

You've found a home.

AENEAS

You mean here?

DIDO

Yes.

AENEAS

Well.

You could come with me.

DIDO

Come with you?

AENEAS

Would you?

DIDO

Are you asking me?

AENEAS [after a moment's pause]

Yes.

DIDO

My home is here.

AENEAS

You wouldn't leave?

DIDO

Why don't you stay?

AENEAS

This is a woman's world.

DIDO

A woman's world?

What's that?

AENEAS

I don't know, but...

it's not a world I've made.

The world I promised I would make.

DIDO

What world was that?

AENEAS

A world  
without  
false hope.

A world not built on sentiment.

Ideas we used to have of how things could be  
before we learned  
in our time  
who we really are.

A world that can  
endure.

DIDO [smiling]

Is this really what you're saying to me?

AENEAS

Yes.

DIDO

Is this what you really believe?

AENEAS

Yes.

DIDO

Really.

This is your reason you want to leave?

AENEAS

Yes.

[This is developing into a real, angry lovers' fight.]

DIDO  
Your real reason?

AENEAS  
Yes.

DIDO  
And you let me fall in love with you?

AENEAS  
What?

DIDO  
You let me fall in love with you  
and you meant to leave?

AENEAS  
I didn't mean anything.  
I didn't have any intention.  
I was lost, remember?  
It just happened.

DIDO  
Think about it.  
Are you awake now?

AENEAS  
What?

DIDO  
Are you wide awake?

[As Dido and Aeneas quarrel, the men and women of the chorus turn their backs on one another, walk away from one another, storm offstage, come back mad, push one another, etc.]

AENEAS  
Yes.

DIDO

You loved me when you saw me,  
and I loved you.

We fell in love the way people do.  
And then take months to find it out  
or never do.

Or else they really don't.  
But you love me, don't you?

[long silence]

AENEAS

Yes.

DIDO

And now you are saying you need to leave  
and that the reason is you need to live in a world without hope.  
Are you listening to yourself?

[silence]

It's not that you're afraid of me?

AENEAS

Afraid?

DIDO

Afraid of my love for you?

AENEAS

Of course not.

DIDO

Or your love for me?

[a moment of his not understanding the question]

AENEAS

No.

DIDO

You think someone who could love you so much  
might be crazy?

AENEAS

No.

DIDO

Not balanced.

Someone who would read Tarot cards  
must be crazy?

AENEAS

No.

DIDO

Superstitious.

Kind of fun

but not someone you could feel comfortable with  
year in year out.

Someone who might believe in other strange things  
astrological charts  
children's stories

AENEAS

No.

DIDO

[playful]

The I Ching.

AENEAS

No.

DIDO

You wouldn't lie to me?

[silence]

Because I'm black?

AENEAS

No.

DIDO

Because I'm foreign to you?

AENEAS

No.

JOE

You know, like 80% of men don't like their jobs, I mean they find them intrinsically meaningless and onerous. 80%. They experience their jobs and themselves as worthwhile only through priding themselves on the hard work and personal sacrifice they are making to be breadwinners for their families. But do their families appreciate that? No. In fact a man can become bitter and angry and frustrated about his wife and family, the way they take his earnings for granted, the way they come to expect that as their due, and then put the man down for his materialistic middle class trip. Sometimes he'd just like to tell them to get someone else to support them.

DIDO

Because I'm a woman?

AENEAS

What?

DIDO

[she speaks not with anger but with considerateness—as though she might help him past his fears if she can discover them]

So different.

Such another world.

Such a foreign country

to settle down in and feel at home

So unfamiliar.

Such a different landscape

such a different way of looking out and seeing the world around you.  
You might become a different person altogether  
living here  
a kind of person you wouldn't even recognize  
Are you afraid you might not be able to tell where it all might end.  
What our lives might become.  
How we might become lost in one another.

[Aeneas exits.]

Or else, that you will give up the life you know  
and then find out this life of ours collapses, too,  
and you'll be lost  
it will be too late to recover what you had  
you'll end your life alone  
in some country you never meant to come to  
no shape left to your life  
no point, no goal, no aim

Or it could end—  
this love at first glance—  
could just be infatuation

[Aeneas returns.]

a fling  
no lasting love  
or it could lead to something so deep  
so lifelong  
such a commitment  
to another person  
who might die  
or make a life with you  
no one can control  
and you don't know me  
stepping into the unknown  
your only life  
for all eternity  
this would be your fate

[silence]

Stay for a while.  
See if time  
will change things for you.

[Dido makes her way to the hot tub and climbs in.]

AENEAS

If I stay I'm afraid I'll never leave.  
But I'll stay from weakness,  
from failure to keep my word,  
not strength.

[The men of the chorus, lined up against the back wall,  
say everything Aeneas says, before he says it,  
overlapping with Aeneas in frantic explanation,  
so that all the men are expressing these thoughts.]

You know,  
I have to think about my age  
and my health  
how long I have to do the things I set out to do in the world  
in order to feel okay about myself  
do the things I think I am capable of doing  
even have some talent, or gift  
even what I like to do  
I mean what I've been trained to do  
I don't know if this is a difference between men and women  
where men can't  
in a way  
just follow their hearts  
but have to honor certain obligations they have made  
and things to do in the world  
as men/people who were meant to achieve something  
Plus I have obligations.

I mean  
I have a friend who had a career  
in Haiti and South Africa and Paris  
doing what he thought he could  
this was someone who had been a conscientious objector  
or another friend who has been a prison doctor  
a prison doctor all these years  
you know what a thankless task that is  
this guy is a saint  
and I think what am I doing  
There are certain things—  
the goals a man has for his life  
politics  
his career  
to feel good about himself  
to feel he is someone  
or even just to honor the commitments he has made  
to feel he is an honest person  
a man  
who can be counted on  
what else is it to be a man  
if, when you give your word,  
it can be counted on  
you stand for something  
which is, I mean, whether you believe in immortality or not  
what you have to contribute  
the best you can do  
having been raised to DO something  
men are meant to DO something  
or else they've just never existed  
stand by something  
be ready to die for it  
put their lives on the line  
there may even be some deep biological thing to this

[Aeneas speaks by himself.]

I feel it  
I feel I can't let it go  
without just  
annihilating myself.

[silence]

DIDO  
Okay.  
Then go.

[Silence.

They hug for a moment  
and then Dido grabs Aeneas by the hair  
and pushes him under water.  
The chorus movements among the men and women become violent  
pushing and slamming each other into the wall,  
throwing one another to the ground,

Dido picks up Aeneas's head—he comes up gasping—  
and pushes it under the water again and again.

They are thrashing wildly.  
She is plunging his head under water over and over.  
Finally she leaves him submerged.

She drags herself out of the hot tub,  
exhausted,  
lies on the floor.

The CHORUS sings.

CHORUS  
When somebody loves you  
it's no good unless he loves you  
all the way.

Happy to be near you  
when you need someone to cheer you  
all the way.

[While the chorus sings this final song,  
Aeneas drags himself from the hot tub.  
He is nearly dead—  
or else, he doesn't drag himself from the tub,  
and he is dead.]

Taller than the tallest tree is  
that's how it's got to feel  
Deeper than the deep blue sea is  
that's how deep it goes  
if it's real.

[Aeneas collapses on the floor.  
The chorus members are variously finding their way back to one another,  
embracing one another.]

When somebody needs you  
you're no good unless he needs you  
all the way.

[Slowly, Aeneas drags himself across the floor  
and puts his arm around Dido, who lies face down on the floor.  
They lie together, both on their stomachs, exhausted,  
his arm around her  
facing opposite directions.]

Through the good or lean years  
and for all the in between years  
come what may

Who knows where the road will lead us  
only a fool would say

But if you'll let me love you  
it's for sure I'm gonna love you  
all the way.

But if you'll let me love you  
it's for sure I'm gonna love you  
all the way.  
All the way.

[Lights out.]

The End.

NOTES:

*Trojan Women 2.0* was developed—with Greg Gunter as dramaturg—the way Max Ernst made his Fatagaga pieces at the end of World War I: incorporating shards of our contemporary world, to lie, as in a bed of ruins, within the frame of the classical world. It incorporates, also, texts by the survivors of Hiroshima and of the Holocaust, by Slavenka Drakulic, Zlatko Dizdarevic, Georges Bataille, Sei Shonagon, Elaine Scarry, Hannah Arendt, the Kama Sutra, Amy Vanderbilt, and the Geraldo show.

A Note on the Music:

There are too many songs in this piece. I loved them all so much I couldn't cut any, but there are too many. Also, a director and actors may want to bring in other songs that they feel capture the essence of the piece. Feel free to do it.

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