



Women of Troy
Euripides, translated by Kennet McLeish

In Troy, the city is torn apart by the Greeks. Soldiers die and the Women of Troy remain. Cassandra, the daughter of Priam and Hecuba, can see the future. She knows that she is destined to become Agamemnon's wife. Speaking to her mother, Cassandra weaponises her future marriage.

(No man's land, between the shattered walls of Troy and the tents of the victorious Greeks. Night. Enter Cassandra with torches.)

CASSANDRA: Rejoice, mother.
Crown me with flowers. I've won.
I'm marrying a king. Take me to him;
Make me, give me no choice.
Trust Apollo. If God is god,
This marriage will ruin His Lordship.
Agamemnon, grand admiral of Greece!
I'll hurt him more than Helen did.
I'll kill him, strip all his house.
Till the price is paid.
For my father and brothers dead.
Cassandra, hush! Don't tell it all:
Don't sing of knives, necks chipped,
Mine and those others',
Blood-feud, the mother dead,
The dynasty destroyed.
My marriage-price!
Sane now, no madness,
I tell you this: God's words.
We outrank the Greeks. We win.
What did they do?
For on woman's sake,
They hunted Helen,
Squandered a million lives.
Agamemnon -
So experienced, so worldly - wise-
Killed what he loved for what he hated,
Threw away happiness, children, home,
For his brother's woman,
The wife who left

Of her own free choice,
Whom no one forced.

So they flocked to the Scamander,
Lined up to die
On a foreign river's banks,
On a foreign plain -
For what? Their city?
The towers of their native land?
Plucked, they'll never see
Their children; their wives' soft hands
Won't sheet them for burial.
They sleep in foreign soil.
And what of those at home?
Widows, fathers stripped of their songs,
They die alone. Who weeps for them?
Whose offerings drench their tombs?

Now, what of Troy?
What of our Trojans, dead
For their native land?
What more could they ask?
Spears snatched them. Loving hands,
Friends' hands, carried them home,
Made them decent for burial.
The earth of Troy enfolds them.
Others escaped, day after day escaped,
To smile on their wives, their children.
What Greek had that?
Is it Hector you weep for,
His cruel death? I tell you, no other man
Ever dies so rich in reputation -
And that was the gift of Greeks.
If they'd stayed at home,
Who now would know his name?
And Paris. He could have married
A nobody, a name on no one's lips.

Instead: Helen of Sparta,
Daughter of Zeus on high.
If wars must be fought,
A glorious death, not a coward's,
Brings honour to the city.
You see? Mother? Don't weep for Troy.
Don't weep for me.
Your enemies, my enemies -
I'll marry, and destroy them all.