

The Trojan Women

Adapted by Philip Lerman
from the original Greek play by Euripides

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Troy lies in ruins after its defeat by the Grecian army. All the men have been killed, and the women wait to be transported to Greece, as slaves or concubines. Hecuba, Troy's former queen, learns the disposition of her surviving family from the Grecian soldier Talthybius. In parting scenes with her daughter, the prophetess Cassandra, and with Andromache, her son Hector's widow, Hecuba's spirits are lifted by the courage of these young women. After a blunt exchange with Helen, whose illicit romance with Hecuba's son Paris led to Troy's destruction, the former queen goes off to her servitude.

With this modern, easy-to-stage adaptation, actors can ease into the unfamiliar world of Greek tragedy. Actors can perform these classic roles as if the characters might be our contemporaries, thereby showing the terrible waste of war in more contemporary terms.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

3 m, 6 w, some doubling possible

HECUBA: The Queen of Troy.

CASSANDRA: Hecuba's daughter.

ANDROMACHE: Hecuba's daughter-in-law.

TALTHYBIUS: Greek soldier.

HELEN: Helen of Troy.

MENELAUS: Greek General. Helen's husband.

TROJAN MOTHER

YOUNG DAUGHTER

GREEK SOLDIER

*DOUBLING: MOTHER and DAUGHTER can double as
CASSANDRA, ANDROMACHE or HELEN.*

Scene: A seaport near the decimated city of Troy after four years of bloody war with Greece.

Props: Sealed wooden boxes of loot, large enough on which to sit; three military caps; canteens.

SFX: Distant explosions.

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(AT RISE: A pile of packing cases center stage. TROJAN MOTHER sits on one of the lower boxes. Her DAUGHTER sleeps against her. SFX: A distant explosion is heard. Daughter stirs. SFX: A second explosion awakens her.)

DAUGHTER: Mother. I hear an explosion.

MOTHER: It's all right. Nothing to fear.

DAUGHTER: Are they still firing their cannons at us?

MOTHER: No. There's no more cannon fire.

DAUGHTER: I must have been dreaming.

MOTHER: Go back to sleep.

DAUGHTER: I still dream about those horrible cannon shells
exploding on our street.

MOTHER: That's all over now.

DAUGHTER: Seeing our neighbors killed.

MOTHER: Try not to think about it. Get some rest.

DAUGHTER: Mother, is this really happening to us?

MOTHER: Yes, my child. It is.

DAUGHTER: I hoped I could wake up and find that it was
just a bad dream.

MOTHER: Sleep, child. You'll need all your strength.

DAUGHTER: I'm afraid that what's coming will be even
worse than the war.

MOTHER: We'll survive somehow.

DAUGHTER: What's going to become of us, Mother? What
will the Greeks do to us?

MOTHER: They will put us on one of these ships and take
us to Greece.

DAUGHTER: And we'll never see Troy again? We'll never
see our homes?

MOTHER: I don't think we ever shall.

DAUGHTER: What will they do to us in Greece?

MOTHER: We will be their slaves and servants.

(SFX: Distant explosion heard.)

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DAUGHTER: I wasn't dreaming, Mother. There's the sound of an explosion coming from the city. The war's over, isn't it? The Greeks have captured Troy, haven't they? Why are there still explosions over there?

MOTHER: The Greeks are blowing up buildings in Troy.

DAUGHTER: Why? Is someone still resisting them?

MOTHER: There's no one left to resist. All our soldiers are dead.

DAUGHTER: All our soldiers killed? Didn't any of them surrender?

MOTHER: On their last attack, the Greeks signaled that they would give no quarter. Every Trojan soldier had no choice but to fight to the death.

DAUGHTER: All I remember is hiding in the cellar of our house, until some Greek soldiers dragged us out.

MOTHER: We were among the lucky ones.

(SFX: Another distant explosion.)

DAUGHTER: Why are the Greeks blowing up buildings?

MOTHER: I think they intend to demolish the city, and leave not a building standing in Troy.

DAUGHTER: Will they blow up our house, too?

MOTHER: It's not our house any longer.

DAUGHTER: What about all those nice things that people had in their houses? Will that get buried in the rubble?

MOTHER: The Greeks probably removed those nice things before they blew the houses up. I wouldn't be surprised if that's what these boxes here contain. They've been loading boxes like this on Greek ships all day.

DAUGHTER: There are only a few ships still here.

MOTHER: Most of them have already sailed taking troops back to Greece.

DAUGHTER: Are these the ships for the Trojan women like us?

MOTHER: They probably are.

DAUGHTER: Oh, Mother, I'm so hungry my stomach hurts.

MOTHER: The Greeks have not given us a thing to eat all day.

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DAUGHTER: Here comes a Greek soldier with another Trojan woman.

(HECUBA and TALTHYBIUS enter.)

TALTHYBIUS: You will wait here until it's time to go aboard. The ships' crews are busy making preparations for sailing and don't want to bother with women captives just yet.

HECUBA: That suits me. I'm in no hurry to become human cargo.

MOTHER: That's Hecuba. That's Queen Hecuba.

DAUGHTER: Hecuba, the Queen of Troy?

(HECUBA overhears, moves closer to MOTHER.)

MOTHER: Oh Your Majesty, forgive me. I didn't recognize you at first.

HECUBA: Come, come, there's no need for that.

MOTHER: I never expected to see Your Majesty here, like this.

HECUBA: I'm merely a Trojan woman like you are.

MOTHER: But you're a queen. The Queen of Troy.

HECUBA: Is this your daughter?

MOTHER: Yes, she is. *(To DAUGHTER.)* Curtsy to the Queen. Your Majesty, they haven't given us anything to eat all day. The girl here is famished.

HECUBA: *(To TALTHYBIUS.)* Why have these women been allowed to go hungry?

TALTHYBIUS: They'll be fed when they arrive in Greece. The crossing is going to be rough, and the ship they sail on will be too crowded to deal with the messy consequences of sea sickness.

HECUBA: *(To MOTHER.)* I'm sorry. We'll all have to wait till we get to Greece.

MOTHER: Can't you order him to feed us, Your Majesty?

HECUBA: I no longer can give orders to anyone.

(GREEK SOLDIER enters carrying three Trojan military caps.)

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SOLDIER: Hi, Sarge. Say, do you know if these crates here belong to Menelaus?

TALTHYBIUS: His ship is right over there.

SOLDIER: Then this is probably his pile of loot.

TALTHYBIUS: More war trophies for Menelaus?

SOLDIER: Yeah. I'll just leave them on top.

TALTHYBIUS: Now go get the one they call Cassandra and bring her here.

SOLDIER: The one that they say is crazy?

TALTHYBIUS: She going to be too much for you?

SOLDIER: Say, Sarge, how about letting me have a sip of your water?

TALTHYBIUS: What happened to your canteen?

SOLDIER: I lost it. Doesn't matter 'cause it was empty anyway.

TALTHYBIUS: I don't know. Water's pretty hard to come by what with all the wells polluted by corpses and blood.

SOLDIER: Aw, c'mon, Sarge. Have a heart. I'm as dry as a bone.

TALTHYBIUS: And my canteen's nearly empty.

SOLDIER: Just two swallows. You can spare that.

TALTHYBIUS: Two swallows. I'll hold the canteen.

SOLDIER: Thanks, Sarge. Now I'll go get Cassandra.

TALTHYBIUS: Wait a minute. It's going to get crowded here. *(Indicating MOTHER and DAUGHTER.)* Take these two aboard the ship. I don't give a damn if the crew doesn't like it.

SOLDIER: Come on, you two. And don't give me any trouble.

TALTHYBIUS: Take it easy, soldier. Take it easy. And listen. When you get them aboard give them a couple of biscuits from the ship's stores.

(SOLDIER, MOTHER and DAUGHTER exit.)

TALTHYBIUS: *(Cont'd.)* Those caps look familiar to you?

HECUBA: I've seen them before.

TALTHYBIUS: They look like military caps of very high-ranking officers.

End of Freeview

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