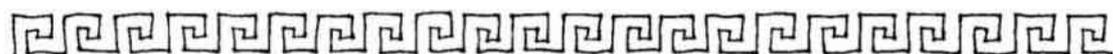


# Trojan Women

Freeform roleplaying game by Troels Ken Pedersen, 2017



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Characters

Lost Wonders of Troy

For the Wall



# Brief practical introduction

You need six people (five players and a facilitator, henceforth "you"), four hours and a not too small room. The requirements are that you must be able to be verbally noisy, as this is not a quiet game, and you must have access from the main play space to wall space where you can tape up six to nine sheets of paper. You also need three masks, see under "props" on pg. 19. The players should bring along some items such as sweaters, scarves etc. out of which to build a baby. You should bring a piece of red cloth, preferably ragged and stained-looking, for use in the epilogue. Print the characters double sided, the rest single sided.

## Breakdown:

1,5 hours of preparations, training and prologue

2 hours of play, one single, coherent scene

½ hour of closing rituals, cleanup and debriefing

# Brief, slightly less practical introduction

So, what is this game? It's a freeform adaptation of the tragic play by Euripides, first performed in Athens in 415 BC. The original (which you really ought to read) worked cleverly with the constraints imposed by the format of 5<sup>th</sup> century BC Athenian drama and with the expectations, knowledge and values of it's Athenian audience – this is an attempt to mindfully adapt the play in a way that works positively with the form constraints of freeform roleplay and with the expectations, knowledge and values of a modern, Western audience. Accordingly, the exact order of events has been rearranged and some of the outcomes changed – though as far as possible always in touch with *some* corner of the body of Trojan legend. The original choir has turned into two player characters, Dexia and Aristera.

What's under the hood? The game deals with individual and collective coping, and the connection and tension between the two. In a sense, the women are dealing not only with their own individual misfortunes, but with the downfall of their civilization. Western civilization's values (recognizable descendents of Classical Greek values) are present in the game and represented by sheets of paper on the wall. As the game progresses, these are destroyed one by one as the women are hit by a relentless series of hammer blows, until one remains, or none. Can the women hold on to something of value, *anything*, as their hopes are dashed, or will they fall into despair? As the women grieve and struggle on behalf of an entire civilization, this is what's at stake.

The game uses Mediterranean/Middle Eastern mourning traditions and techniques. These are very dramatic and also serve to make the players feel – when you perform emotions dramatically, you will feel them to some extent.

The style is freeform or "semi live". Morten Jaeger explained this well in his 2015 game *Distance*, so I'll quote: *This means that all dialogue must be in the first-person and all gestures count as part of the fiction. It is no 100 % live in the sense that the players' actual appearances do not count as part of the fiction.* Obviously, anyone can play female characters in this game.

# The Setting

The setting is the Trojan War (~1.200 BC) as it appears in Euripides' *Trojan Women*. This means a society of city-states ruled by kings. Heavily armoured individual "heroes" are highly important in war. If you don't have a reasonable working knowledge of the Trojan War, it's probably a good idea to read up on it, on a Wikipedia or encyclopedia level – you won't need more than that. You need to be able deliver a short introduction to the players during the preparations, based on the "History Lesson" handout on pg. 18, referring to the three overview poster sheets from "On the Wall".

The society is *patriarchal*. This is important in a game about women and women's lives under unbearable conditions dictated by men. Here's what it means in this context, briefly explained: There are strong and strongly enforced gender roles. Women can wield soft power, meaning social pressure, shame and praise. If women have the hard power to order people around or punish them, they have it because of their relationships with men. Men can wield both hard AND soft power. Soft power is at it's strongest when you're playing upon traditions and drawing authority from them, rather than resisting them.

*The gods* are important for people's world-view. In the play, gods appear on stage but are never seen by human eyes. Ultimately, people cannot be sure of the gods, on any level. In the roleplaying game, the gods are a part of the story as background, and maybe as Helena's excuse and justification for her actions, but they never appear directly.

**Greek names:** If anyone knows how to pronounce them, great, but correct pronunciation is not really important in this context.

# The Characters

All the player characters offer opportunities for both drama and emotional immersion, but some of them emphasize one or the other. Some practical player duties come with the role of Hekabe, and the role of Helena(+Kassandra) sticks out a bit, both because of the character change halfway and because it leans markedly more towards show play than the other roles.

## Player Characters:

- **Hekabe**, queen of fallen Troy. Tragic hero, emphasizes both drama and immersion, and also has a practical leadership function. She gets pummeled by the plot in the course of play.
- **Andromache**, the widow of the hero Hektor. Mother of Astyanax, emphasizes both drama and immersion. She gets pummeled by the plot in the course of play.
- **Helena**, most beautiful and most hated. Greek, wears a blue mask, emphasizes drama and is a social outcast. She gets pummeled by the plot in the course of play, and her story involves sexual violence off stage.
- **Dexia**, royal nurse and servant. The conservative part of the choir, emphasizes immersion.
- **Aristera**, royal servant. The progressive part of the choir, emphasizes immersion.

## The "secret" player character:

- **Kassandra**, princess, priestess and holy madwoman. Emphasizes drama. Played by the same player as Helena (there's a change halfway). The character's story involves rape before the start of play – really it's mostly here that the sexual violence of the Helena player is hiding, more than in the Helena character.

## Non-player characters:

- **Astyanax**, the infant son of Andromache and the dead hero Hektor. Murdered in the course of the game. Built by the players (see more under props, pg. 19).
- **Talthybios**, the Greek herald. Played by the facilitator, wears a pale yellow mask. Unwilling to take responsibility for the power that he wields.
- **Menelaos**, husband of Helena and king of the Greek city state Sparta. Played by the facilitator, wears a red mask. Arrogant, crass and intimidating.

Others exist off stage only, though they might be important to the plot. See "The History Lesson", pg. 18.

# The Story

The Trojans have lost the war. By means of the deceitful trick with the wooden horse, the Greeks have taken the city and killed all grown men. The players play the women of the royal court of Troy, sitting with the children and the rest of the women, waiting to be handed out as spoils of war. A desperate situation, but they have not yet lost everything. "Trojan Women" is the story of how they (maybe) lose everything, and what that means. Aside from their immediate family members and themselves, the women as a group are in possession of six values representing things to believe in and hope for. These are also their connection to and investment in civilization.

After preparations and a prologue where they grieve the destruction of Troy, the rest of the game is a single, extended scene. Over the course of the scene, Greeks keep bringing terrible messages about things that have already happened or are to come. Every time the women have been hit with one of these hammer blows, they try as best they can to come to terms and find meaning and hope in their situation. Every time, they have to destroy one of the values, and then collectively use the remaining values to cope. In the end, one value will be left which they can either hold on to or destroy in despair as the game ends.

Here's an overview of the fiction of the game as it unfolds in play.

**Prologue:** Tears for Troja.

**First news:** Polyxena has been sacrificed. Hekabe is in focus.

**Second news:** Bestowed before the lots are drawn. Andromache to Neoptolemos, son of her husband's killer, Hekabe to the wily Odysseus. Andromache and Hekabe are in focus.

**Third news:** Menelaos comes for Helena. Helena and Hekabe are in focus. Helena leaves the game.

**Interlude:** Cassandra wakes from her faint.

**Fourth news:** Astyanax must die. Andromache and Hekabe are in focus.

**Fifth news:** Agamemnon claims Cassandra through his herald. Cassandra and Hekabe are in focus. Cassandra remains in play.

**Epilogue:** Astyanax' funeral.

The cyclical structure around the individual news in the main scene works thusly:

- **Free play.** Here, the players can play what they feel like and need to.
- **Bad news,** played out on stage, before an active audience.
- **Grief** and destruction. The players rail and mourn, and destroy a value.
- **Coping.** By means of the remaining values, interpreted through both group dynamics and the survival strategies of individual characters.

It's quite possible that the intensity of the game will decrease a bit from cycles 1 to 3. That's nothing to be concerned about, as it will go way up again with cycle 4.

# Rules and guidelines

The game has a few rules and guidelines, summarized here.

- a) **Violence, escape and suicide.** It's fine to talk about them, and threaten with them, but they aren't things you can actually do in the game. They're not possible.
- b) **Physical contact,** as a guideline, should be limited to hands, arms and shoulders, and you should never use force, whether to move or hold fast. It's possible that people will end up hugging or grasp ankles in supplication later, and you should only intervene against this if you deem it necessary. The physical contact is practiced in the warmup.
- c) **Greek orders.** The *second* time a Greek man gives an order, the players **MUST** obey.
- d) **The Hand of Silence** – when the facilitator raises a hand over their head, be quiet and raise a hand yourself. Likewise with the safety phrase "STOP THE GAME" – when you hear it, repeat it then raise a hand and stop.

## *Safety*

The safety phrase is "STOP THE GAME", per point d). It's to be used by players if the game hurts in a way that's not OK. If you as facilitator notice that someone looks like they might be in trouble, quietly check up on them without interrupting play. If something is obviously, badly wrong and none of the players stop the game on their own, you should use the phrase yourself.

If someone uses the safety phrase, remember to take the time to care for them in the situation. You might send others to get tea – that the interruption takes some time helps ensure that the situation is calmed down and distressed players comforted, even if noone wants the tea.

# Preparations & prologue

**\*Set up the room\*** You'll need a main play area with good floor space and access to a part of the wall where you can get at the six sheets of values during play. Another part of the wall should hold the three info sheets, which you can put up right away. You must be able to point to them and draw crosses by the dead during the exercise "The Trojan War/Active Audience". Later on, the info sheets should be clearly readable from the main play area. One end of the main play area is the "stage". This where you'll be going as Talthybios or Menelaos to deliver bad news to whomever the bad news most concern. The rest of the players will be watching from the rest of the main play area. You'll also need a facilitator's base where you can stay and keep props and papers. It should be clearly distinct from the main play area – you might use chairs and tables to mark it. You need a good view of the main play area, and you need to be able to get to the stage without crossing the rest of the main play area.

**\*Welcome the players\*** Introduce the game, the themes and the style. Remind people of the potentially tough content of the game: Dramatic madness, loss of family/children, rape, social violence and threats of physical violence. Let people greet each other nicely.

**\*Introduction to the values\*** First lay out the six sheets of values and say that we'll be using and interpreting these in play. The point of this exercise is to find a positive interpretation of what these values mean to us as modern people. The players must cooperate in interpreting these in a positive way – they'll be fuel for the game later on, when the players will be interpreting the same values through non-modern characters. As a group, the players must find good things to say within three minutes. Set a timer for three minutes and give them a warning at two, and ask them to round off when time runs out. Then give them another value, reset the timer and hang the just discussed value on the wall as they're discussing the next. As needed, give helpful hints based on the following.

**Honour** – integrity, dependability

**Ambition** – pride, material improvement, hope

**Justice** – retribution, fairness

**Spirituality** – meaningfulness

**Pleasure** – beauty, joy, art

**Family** – loyalty, comfort, the long game

Count on it taking ~30 minutes all in all.

**\*The Trojan War/Active Audience\*** Speak from the aid sheet "The History Lesson" (pg. 18) and refer to the info sheets on the wall. The exercise has a dual purpose, equipping the players with the smallest (but not tiny) amount of information necessary for a useful common understanding of the Trojan War, and also getting the players ready to be an active audience that responds verbally and emotionally to what's happening "on stage", that they witness but do not directly take part in. Here, the players simply take on roles as generic Trojan Women, cheering for Troy and in awe of the gods, as you summarize the background and events of the war. ~10-15 minutes.

It is important to underline that the active audience part is as important as the history lesson! When the game gets going, the way it works is that players on the stage can address the audience without the others on the stage hearing them ("aside"), and people on stage don't respond directly to the audience (at least not in character).

By the way it's OK if some of the players know the play, but they shouldn't spoil it for the others. It's not secret as such, but on one hand there are a few surprises, on the other a few things have been changed from play to freeform, on the third it's a weight of information that the others don't need.

**\*Rules and safety\*** Run through the four rules and the safety procedure. Then clap a beat (or put on some music) and ask the players to dance. While dancing, you're free and welcome to touch each other on hands, arms and shoulders as per rule b). Stop when someone says "stop the game" – everyone stops, repeats the phrase and raises a hand as per rule d). Then start again, continuing until everyone has used the phrase. It might be necessary to prod hesitant players into trying it. This doubles as safety training and warmup.

**\*Casting exercises and casting\*** First, form two status lines, with brief negotiations allowed to determine places. One is preference for putting on a good show versus quiet emotional immersion, the other is extensive knowledge of classical culture and history versus no clue. Then ask the players if anyone has children of their own. Next, present the player characters (except Cassandra) and cast in cooperation with the players. One idea could be to ask the players to close their eyes and raise their hands at characters that they think they could play, as you (quickly) run through them again.

- **Hekabe** must be willing and able to handle some leadership duties. Hekabe is the hero, insofar as the story has one. Classical knowledge is an advantage, but not essential.
- **Andromache** can give an extremely strong experience to a player who desires emotional immersion and who doesn't know so much about Greeks, especially if the player is a parent themselves. If you can hit that combination (having children makes the role a LOT tougher), you should probably make sure that the player actually wants dark and very intense play.
- **Helena** requires a player who is OK with less immersion-oriented play AND with taking a bit of a beating, both from the story and the other players.
- The roles **Dexia** and **Aristera** can control their own level of engagement, as they're not directly in the plot's sights. This makes them ideal for players who can engage directly in their own emotional immersion, and they're also a good choice for players who want to be able to dial down the pressure.

**\*Read the characters\*** Let the players read the characters reasonably thoroughly, and make sure that they realize that the characters are two pages each.

**\*Build-a-child\*** It's time to build Astyanax. See under "Props", pg. 19. The players go into character, except Helena who's still a generic Trojan woman.

When the child is built, explain that caring for it is supposed to be a communal endeavour during the game, primarily between Andromache the mother, Dexia the nurse and Aristera the servant, and the child should pass between these three. Hekabe can get involved as she pleases, Helena to the extent that the others let her.

**\*Prologue: Tears for Troy\*** An exercise in grieving and comforting; run it off the aid sheet pg. 17. This is also the point at which the game starts producing fiction that counts. The exercise results in scattered bits of paper that are NOT to be cleaned up until after the game.

**\*Helena puts on her mask\*** And goes into character. Make it a little solemn.

**\*The main scene\*** This is the core of the game. Start by explaining the cyclical structure around the bad news, and say that you'll comment and the players are welcome to ask during the first cycle. Then play the first cycle, and go directly into the rest, based on the detailed run-through of the main scene found below.

# The cycle of the main scene

As previously mentioned, in the main scene there's a repeating cycle.

- **Free play.** Here, the players can play as they like and need to. You as facilitator can read up on what is about to happen.
- **Bad news,** played out on stage before an active audience. Hekabe is always on stage here, others are called up in character. People on stage have a duty to present clearly what the bad news is, and why it is bad. The rest are an active audience, and their duty is to do their best to get what the problem is, together. They can and should quietly discuss the news amongst themselves, as well as protest and exclaim. People on stage can speak "aside" to the audience, without others on stage hearing them in character.
- **Grief and destruction.** The players devote themselves to grief and mourning, and destroy a value. At the end of the grieving phase, the players **MUST** have destroyed one of the six values – this falls back on Hekabe if noone else initiates. Someone, anyone (other than Helena, who can neither destroy nor veto) takes a value off the wall, holds it up and declares why they can no longer believe in this, in light of this last terrible news. The rest can agree, in which case the sheet with the value is torn up into pieces, or someone can protest and passionately tell the rest why the value is vital and must be preserved. If such a veto is declared, the player holding the value puts it back up on the wall and picks another to be destroyed – and this second choice cannot be vetoed. It's quite important that the players understand that the idea here is to protect values that are precious to their characters, not to "defeat" other players or push their buttons.
- **Coping.** By means of the remaining values, interpreted through both group dynamics and the survival strategies of the individual characters.

Some of the phases will flow into each other a little bit. It is Hekabe's job to maintain order and forward momentum more than it is yours as facilitator. She summarizes after the bad news, the grief and the coping phases.

# The contents of the main scene

When the main scene begins, very quickly outline the rules and the safety procedure, and add that you're a secondary character when you wear a mask and an invisible, purely meta facilitator presence when you're not.

**Set the scene.** They're on a river bank outside the walls of Troy. There are tents nearby, and hundreds of Trojan women and children are awaiting their fate. The Greek camp is down by the beach, by the ships which will soon sail away the prisoners as spoils of war bound for the Greek kingdoms. Mention that princess Cassandra is lying in a faint in one of the tents, while princess Polyxena is in the Greek camp, waiting on the kings. Point out the stage and your facilitator space.

As facilitator you should be aware that intensity curve will likely dip a bit in cycle two and perhaps three, and then rise drastically in cycle four, as Cassandra enters play and the Greeks commit infanticide. That's OK, don't worry about slightly falling tension.

## *1) Polyxena has been sacrificed (commented)*

Though you explain it step by step, this is real play and counts as fiction. Remember to lift up the mask when you comment out of character.

Start the first phase (free play) and give people a couple of minutes to get into character and to become properly expectant and nervous. Then put on the yellow Talthybios mask and step onto the stage, raising your hand for silence. Lift your mask and explain that it's just you and Hekabe on stage this time; you haven't called up anyone else, as you would had it been relevant. Quickly outline that the audience is free to speak and discuss, as long as it doesn't prevent them from perceiving what's happening, and that Hekabe is allowed to speak "aside" to the audience without the Greek taking note of it – though she shouldn't make long speeches in this way. Properly put on the mask and introduce yourself as Talthybios, herald and messenger of the Greek high king Agamemnon. You bring sad news about Polyxena. Be a bit hesitant, and see if you can make Hekabe drag it out of you.

Polyxena has just been sacrificed on Achilles' grave, but Talthybios starts with the expression "she will dwell by the grave of Achilles." The seers had seen bad omens for the journey home and declared that the shadow of the hero demanded Polyxena as blood sacrifice. The assembly of warriors debated the matter and were convinced by the wise king Odysseus of Ithaca that making the sacrifice was the most prudent course of action. Achilles' son Neoptolemos wielded the knife; he cut her throat on top of Achilles' burial mound so that her blood ran down to the angry revenant in the cold darkness underground. But look at the bright side – this will avert misfortune from your new masters, so you will benefit too, right?

Lift the mask and emphasize that it is their duty as players and audience to grasp what the problem is, so that they can properly react to it now. If Hekabe doesn't summarize, prompt her. Put on your mask and properly leave the stage as Talthybios.

If they well and properly freak out with grief, fine. If they don't go at it pretty straight and hard, step forward again, maskless, and say that now is the time to be upset about Polyxena's fate. Again, if they handle the value destruction, fine (and praise them when you comment), otherwise talk them through it. Break in if the "family" value is about to go, and ask if they're *really* ready to let that one go? Praise them for good work if there's anything to praise.

Then it's time to cope. If Hekabe hasn't summarized the grieving, prompt her. Comment that the task here is that together, they must talk their way to some way to get on with life, to live with what's happened, based on the values that are still left on the wall, using the individual strategies as ways of bringing the values into the common conversation. Even when a player isn't speaking, it's important to be an active audience, permitting themselves to react visibly and audibly.

And when they've talked their way to something that makes sense to most of them, they get a little time. They don't and can't know precisely how much, before a Greek enters with the next news. And when that happens, the game is fully in swing, uncommented.

## ***2) Bestowed before the lots are drawn***

Talthybios enters and declares that some of the women have been set aside and bestowed before the great lottery which will determine everyone else's fate. Hekabe and Andromache have been bestowed directly. Signal to Hekabe and Andromache to join you on stage, if they don't catch the hint. Again, Talthybios is hesitant, and if you can get Hekabe and Andromache to put a little work into dragging the details out of you, good. Don't resist too much, though.

Andromache is to be bestowed upon Neoptolemos, son of Achilleus, king of Phthia in Thessalia. Neoptolemos killed king Priamos, and for this deed he has been able to demand the honour of getting Hektor's wife as booty.

Hekabe is to be bestowed upon king Odysseus of Ithaca. He demanded the honour of possessing the queen of Troy because the wooden horse that led to the Greek victory was his idea – and he was very good at convincing the assembly with his silver tongue.

If they ask him about others, he'll answer regarding the ones that they ask about, but will not give out information unprompted. Helena naturally belongs to her original husband, the fierce king Menelaos of Sparta, brother of Agamemnon the high king. The kings disagree about Kassandra; some confusion has arisen from the fact that the hero Aias has laid his hand upon her (Talthybios will verbally tiptoe around Aias raping Kassandra). He doesn't know anything about Dexia and Aristera and doesn't care – they aren't aristocrats, so they just get handed out in the lottery.

### 3) *Menelaos comes for Helena*

If you're not reasonably sure that Helena will defend herself, you can whisper in her ear during the free play phase to prepare to speak in her own defense – but it's a bit prettier if she isn't prompted.

This time it's Menelaos who enters wearing the red mask, with dominant and intimidating body language and booming voice. Take up space and stomp as you walk. He presents himself and talks of the injustice done to him by his faithless Helena and by all of you Trojans who for years and years kept him from taking possession of his rightful property. Lay it on thick and be so boastful, threatening and vulgar that it isn't funny. Call Helena to the stage (Hekabe will be there too, obviously).

**Attention.** *Menelaos does not respect the magic edge of the stage.* He doesn't notice asides as long as he's on stage himself, but he can hear the audience. React violently to disrespect or attempts to thwart your will. In a sense this is cheating, but it's also very effective.

**Threats.** If a third party boos or otherwise provokes you, you can step over the edge of the stage to get in their face and lift your hand as if you're about to strike, with as threatening body language as you can at all muster (actual violence is of course still not permitted). If you need a verbal threat and think the player can take it, here's a good one:

***"I'll throw you to my men like a bone to the dogs!"***

It suggests very bad things, but figuratively and indirectly – don't get worse and more direct than this.

**Use of force.** If people are still defying you, you can exercise physical force by laying your hand on their shoulders and pressing down gently, while twice rapidly ordering them to get on their knees. Then stand over them, crowing and threatening.

Say to Helena that you'll bring her home to Sparta so the women there can stone her to death. But let her speak for herself. If Helena drops the ball, ask her if she has anything to say in her defense, or if she's sucked to much Trojan cock that she's lost her voice. If Hekabe on the other hand doesn't get involved of her own accord, ask her royal opinion. Hekabe will probably want to condemn Helena, but it's possible that she might defend her. When Hekabe has spoken, give the word back to Helena if she doesn't desperately seize it herself. Enjoy your power trip. Let yourself be persuaded to take Helena back into your graces, preferably in an openly lascivious manner. If you're lucky, she'll totally humiliate herself. Pardon her in an overbearing way and react with rage to any protest. Then leave with Helena on your arm – don't give her time to react, do it abruptly.

Take the Helena player with you to your facilitator space and check if they're OK, especially if the other players have been hard on her. Give the player a moment to catch their breath and then give them Cassandra to read. Point out her function of pushing the others and reacting wildly, to add nervous energy, anger and frustration to future grief. You might also take a moment to check in with yourself if you've been really horrible as Menelaos.

Keep an out for which value the other players destroy. When they're done coping with whatever injustice they interpret this as (horrible Helena escaping her fate, nice Helena being at the mercy of that horrible man), introduce Cassandra who's woken up and come out of one of the tents.

## Interlude

Say that now it'll be about ten minutes before anything else happens. As a guideline they should stay in character, but now is a good time to powder their noses or get refreshments.

### ***4) Astyanax must die***

Talthybios returns to the Trojan women, and this time he's really uncomfortable. Andromache to the stage, and Hekabe of course. The warriors' assembly has discussed the matter, and king Odysseus' opinion prevailed: Astyanax is a male heir to Troy, and one day he might gather the scattered survivors to rebuild the city and plot revenge against the Greeks, so he must die.

When Talthybios has finally managed to deliver the message, he'll be hair-trigger ready to disclaim responsibility, and will react quite aggressively if anyone tries to hold him to account. Be clearly hypocritical and self-righteous about being an accessory to child murder. Reject any plan to cheat the judgement and say that the little prince will be thrown to his death from the walls of Troy by a real, proper Greek king, Neptolemos of Phthia. When it's been dramatic enough, demand (again) that they hand over Astyanax. If necessary, point out in character that this is the second time that you demand that they hand him over, and you won't be asking nicely again. Take Astyanax with you into the facilitator space.

It's quite possible that it will make the most sense for you as Talthybios to step over the edge of the stage to go after the baby, and that's OK.

This is probably the dramatic high point of the game. Note that the conflict in this cycle can be quite hard on you as facilitator. Do take a moment to catch your breath and check in with yourself before getting ready to move on to the next news.

### ***5) Agamemnon claims Cassandra***

Aside from Hekabe, Cassandra to the stage.

Talthybios returns with a message from the Greek high king Agamemnon that he has chosen princess Cassandra as his personal concubine and bed-warmer. Though she is no longer pure and virginal, he has chosen to overlook her shortcomings and grant her a place in the royal bed. Agamemnon's wife is Helena's sister Klytemnestra, and she and Cassandra will surely get along fine in Argos.

Lay it on thick as if it were romantic courtship, but there's no choice, and do point this out if anyone protests. Cassandra can stay here and say goodbye to her family until it's time for the ships to sail, which will be soon. Talthybios will (perhaps a bit condescendingly, but in a basically friendly way) try to convince Cassandra that this is a good thing for her, and he honestly believes that it is.

If someone asks about Astyanax in a way that Talthybios can't get away with ignoring (he will try), he'll answer that the deed is to be done by Neoptolemos, who seems to be occupied with plundering the royal palace at the moment.

After this cycle, there will be just one value left on the wall.

## *Epilogue: Astyanax' funeral*

First, as maskless facilitator, explain the rules of the epilogue. Anyone can take the last value down off the wall, if they cannot find room in their hearts to believe in it. Noone is forced to do this, though! If someone takes the value off the wall it must be placed, whole and unripped, on the floor. Anyone *other* than the one who took it down can choose to take it and rip it apart, and this definitively destroys the last value. Veto is not an option, though it takes two to destroy the last value.

Then withdraw and let enough time pass for it to feel slightly awkward. Use the time to work your red rag into Astyanax in a way that will be clearly visible when you bring him back to the players. Then put on your yellow Talthybios mask and carry the dead child to the women with awkward tenderness. Explain that after Neoptolemos threw him from the wall in front of the crowd of Greek warriors, you've washed him in the river as best you could, but he keeps bleeding. Be unironically sad.

Tell the women that they must go to the ships when the great horn sounds – they have until then to hold a funeral for Astyanax. Then leave. No rule requires it, but they will probably cover him under the torn pieces of the values and wonders of Troy.

When the scene is played out and they've held the funeral and either destroyed or not destroyed the last value, step forward, maskless and arms spread wide, that Troy is burning, and the drifting smoke makes their eyes run. Then, the great bronze horn sounds and it's time to leave the burning ruins of Troy and go to the ships. When they step out of the door, they step out of the story and into the rest of their lives.

Everyone out. Say that this was the story, but there's still some rounding off to do. Call them back in.

## After the game

Let people back in again and carry out a closing ritual, of which a couple of parts also serve practical purposes. Say that it's a ritual, be solemn and ask them not to talk before it's time for that.

**First**, gather everyone in a circle around Astyanax and sit down. Ask them to one by one take the thing back that they put into the child, until only the red rag is left. Take that last.

**Second**, clean up, still silently. You have paper to take down off the walls and facilitator materials to gather, the players have a whole lot of paper to collect.

**Third**, gather in a circle and share how you're feeling right now. First, explain that everyone who wants can take a turn and say how they're feeling right now, with noone interrupting or asking questions – skipping is also fine. It's perfectly normal to feel small and not particularly dramatic feelings, and it's also normal to feel lots of possibly slightly weird feelings. Both are fine to share. Remember to take a turn yourself, if you feel like it. Facilitators are human too.

Then, the game is over for real. You're free to talk further and ask each other questions (time and inclination permitting), and you might want to do a longer debriefing.

# Aid sheet: Tears for Troy

The facilitator writes or handles no sheets. Early on, set a high standard for dramatic grieving. Then as the players get more and more into it, you can slowly tone down your contribution and withdraw.

Explain the two concepts, performing grief and comforting.

**Grieving.** Wailing, chanting, beating your chest, pulling your hair, slapping your upper arms, rocking back and forth. Grief can be performed quietly or loudly, but in this exercise everyone should go for loud. The obvious and socially acceptable emotion is of course grief, but it's OK to feel anger and frustration, and to use these feelings when ostensibly performing grief. By the way it's just as dramatic and emotionally effective to use the sing-song chanting of words and sounds ("nononono", "bloodbloodbloodblood", "aiaiaiaiai" etc.), as it is to scream and hoarsely shout, and it's MUCH easier on the voice. Wailing cries are also good.

In the culture of the game, grieving rituals are womens' work and a significant social obligation for women. If your are leaving someone dead or lost un-mournd, you are failing and disgracing them.

**Comforting.** Engaging physically, silently or with words. Compassionate looks. Remember the guidelines for physical touch.

## The exercise:

Shout together, ***TROY HAS FALLEN!*** Then perform grief.

Everyone but the facilitator writes on a sheet of paper a concrete thing that was wonderful about Troy. For instance the marketplace, the temple of Athena, the gardens. Just a headline.

One player briefly and concretely describes the thing on their sheet and puts it on the floor between the players. Everyone else, one by one, say a praiseful adjective. For instance, beautiful, graceful, good, brave, kindly, strong. Repeat until all sheets are praised and on the ground.

Shout together, ***TROY HAS FALLEN!*** Then perform grief.

One player picks up a sheet with a wonder named by someone else and describes how this was destroyed when Troy fell. Then they slowly and dramatically rip the sheet into tiny little bits and pieces while the rest perform grief. Then the others comfort the destroyer. The players take turns destroying and comforting until everything is destroyed.

Whisper together three times, ***Troy has fallen!***

# Aid sheet: The History Lesson

## (the Trojan War/active audience)

These are just keywords and refer to the overview sheets "For the wall" (it might be an idea to do some light brushing up on the Trojan war).

**The divine intrigue:** The golden apple of Eris and the beauty contest between the three goddesses Athena, Hera and Aphrodite. The judgement of Paris. Paris & Helena (Troy & Sparta).

Deities for and against Troy. Aphrodite (sex) & Ares (violence) vs. Athena (war/crafts/wisdom) & Hera (marriage/queens). Zeus (storms/kings) in the middle, and Eris (strife). Depending on how you look at him, Zeus can be both a bearded, lightning-bolt-throwing libertine AND God/Fate in a more abstract or sublime sense, as we might think of God.

Greeks to the left, Trojans to the right. Draw (anachronistic) crosses next to the dead as they die in your narrative. The crosses are indicated below, but only draw them as you speak of their deaths.

Agamemnon of Argos (high king), king Menelaos of Sparta-Helena

King Odysseus the cunning of Ithaca, Achilles the greatest hero (+), his son Neoptolemos

King Priamos of Troy (+)-Hekabe

Prince Hektor (+)-Andromache, prince Paris (+)-Helena

Prince & princesses Astyanax, Cassandra, Polyxena

War for many years – Achilles kills Hektor in battle – Paris kills Achilles (with a poisoned arrow) – Odysseus comes up with the hollow wooden horse, Cassandra names it a trick but noone listens – the Greeks take Troy and slaughter all the men (including Paris) after a hard fight.

**Patriarchy**, what does it mean? Strong gender roles. Women have soft power, men have hard power AND soft power. Soft power is strongest when you play upon the traditions rather than opposing them.

# Props

There are three kinds of props for the game: The masks, the child Astyanax and the sheets of paper with the wonders & values.

**Sheets**, five A4 (or so) sheets for the wonders of Troy (for the exercise Tears for Troy), as well as six sheets with values for the wall. Masking tape or sticky tack are good for attaching the sheets to the wall. Attaching the sheets by the back is better than over the corners.

**Astyanax**, build-a-child. All players contribute some sort of object, preferably but not necessarily clothing, and together you'll build a child during the warmup. A sweater or two make a good base, and a scarf is nice for making it child-shaped. Other than that, just get creative. As facilitator, you need to bring a red, ragged, possibly a bit stained-looking piece of fabric. At the end of the game, you will work this into the child to visually represent the signs of violent death.

**Masks**, three of them. They must be strongly stylized but not entirely abstract – the effect when a living person puts them on is to place the person deep in "uncanny valley" and make them appear creepy and inhuman. Helena (player character) is blue, the facilitator characters Talthybios and Menelaos should be pale yellow and bright red, respectively. Here's a picture of three playtesters wearing carton masks.



Procure or produce masks based on these principles, or contact me for a specific recipe or the loan of masks.

# Hekabe, queen of fallen Troy

**Summary:** I am queen Hekabe, the center. I take care of my people. I am the passionate, long-suffering voice of reason. I AM Troy.

I have lived a long and happy life as queen of Troy, giving birth to many little princes and princesses – now I only have two daughters left that the Greeks haven't killed. Though we're only women and children left now, I'm still queen of the prisoners, leading them in grief and comfort, until such a time as the Greeks divide the spoils between them and my people are spread to the winds. Everything hurts now. Sleeping on the hard ground makes my limbs and head ache, and it's so much the worse for my having lived a life with royal beds. Ahead, the life of an old slave awaits – more pain.

## The Dead:

King *Priamos*, a worthy king, a good man and the father of my many children – the Greeks slaughtered the poor old man.

Prince *Hektor*, my favourite son and the strongest hero of Troy, yet both loving and dutiful – if only he'd been a little less brave, he might have avoided Achilles' lance.

Prince *Paris*, neither strong nor wise, but so lively – though he caused the war by seducing Helena, I cannot hate my most beautiful son, now that he too has fallen to the violence of the Greeks.

*Achilleus*, the strongest hero of the Greeks. He killed Hektor and shamefully mutilated his body. Paris killed Achilleus dishonourably with a poisoned arrow. Everything about Achilleus is fire and hate, even in death.

## The Living: \* are player characters

*Andromache*\* is Hektor's widow, a beautiful, good and proud woman. She would have been my successor as queen. It is still my habit to treat her as my successor, even though I'm the last queen of Troy.

*Astyanax* is the infant son of Hektor and Andromache, my grandson. He is Troy's heir and hope of a future.

*Helena\**, Helena the Greek, the widow of prince Paris, so beautiful and so very slippery. Her affair with Paris brought about the war. Hopefully her husband, the Greek king Menelaos of Sparta, will punish her with mutilation and death for her betrayal of him.

*Kassandra* and *Polyxena*, my daughters. Kassandra is mad and has devoted her life to the gods; Aias the Greek raped her at the altar where she had sought refuge; she is difficult but for that very reason needs protection so much more. Polyxena is a young girl, beautiful, dutiful and the perfect princess – perhaps she can win the heart of a Greek king? Polyxena is in the Greek camp waiting on the kings, Kassandra is lying in a faint.

*Dexia\** and *Aristera\**, the two sisters are my faithful servants, supports and nurses. Dexia looks back to the good, old days, Aristera looks ahead, scheming and planning. Dexia was made a widow years ago, Aristera recently lost her husband and child. They are my helpers, and they very much need me. Dexia is nursing Astyanax.

**Coping:** You fight to make sense of things, to put hope into words so the women can see point to life. You handle your pain by first screaming it out, then taking care of the despair of the other women, leading them in talking their way back to hope and meaning. Rhetoric and leadership is how you handle difficult times.

**Functions:** You are *always on stage as the women receive news*. You lead the cries of grief, and moderate and officiate as the women talk as a group. It is your responsibility to lead the way to the next phase. You are the voice of the community.

After the news, early in the grieving, you must state (or cry out) a clear summary of what the problem is and why it's terrible.

If noone else steps up to destroy a value, you must do so before you collectively get too far into the coping.

When you have comforted and hoped, you must summarize and say clearly what you've arrived at, and connect one or more of the surviving values with your situation.

## Andromache, the widow of the hero Hektor

**Summary:** I was a good wife to Hektor, Troy's heir and strongest hero. I was admired as the perfect wife and mother, and I was proud of it.

I don't have much left now that my city is fallen, but I still have myself. Neither wife nor queen to be any more, but I'm still a good mother to my little son Astyanax, a good daughter in law to queen Hekabe and a good friend to Dexia and Aristera. This, they cannot take from me!

### The Dead:

*Hektor!* My strong, loving husband Hektor, heir and mightiest hero of Troy. Though Paris and Helena were the prettiest couple, we were the best. I can see Hektor's blood in little Astyanax.

King *Priamos* was bent beneath the weight of the war even before his death – it is a cruel thing to bury your children, and we cried together at Hektor's funeral.

Prince *Paris*, the spoiled fop who brought disaster upon us all by bringing Helena to Troy. But everyone loves his memory so much that I cannot indulge myself in screaming curses at his shade.

*Achilleus*, the strongest hero of the Greeks. He killed Hektor and shamefully mutilated his body. Paris killed Achilleus dishonourably with a poisoned arrow. If only my Hektor had been as strong as that madman Achilleus!

### The Living: \* are player characters

*Astyanax*, my dear infant son, my little Hektor. I'll find some way to be a good mother to you.

*Hekabe\**, my mother in law, the proud, strong old queen of fallen Troy. Poor her!

*Helena\**, Helena the Greek, the widow of prince Paris, so beautiful and so very slippery. Her affair with Paris brought about the war. Hopefully her husband, the Greek king Menelaos of Sparta, will punish her with mutilation and death for her betrayal of him.

*Kassandra* and *Polyxena*, daughters of Priamos and Hekabe. *Kassandra* is mad and has devoted her life to the gods; *Aias* the Greek raped her at the altar where she had sought refuge; she is difficult but for that very reason needs protection so much more. *Polyxena* is a young girl, beautiful, dutiful and the perfect princess – perhaps she can win the heart of a Greek king? *Polyxena* is in the Greek camp waiting on the kings, *Kassandra* is lying in a faint.

*Dexia*\* & *Aristera*\*, sisters and faithful servants. *Dexia* looks back to the good, old days, *Aristera* looks ahead, scheming and planning. *Dexia* was made a widow years ago, *Aristera* recently lost her husband and child. They are my friends, and they really need me. *Dexia* is nursing *Astyanax*.

**Coping:** Look to Hekabe for hope and making sense of things, and cling to the ways in which you are a good person. Fight to be proud of yourself. Despair and let others help you, and help the others when they despair.

**Functions:** If someone isn't part of the conversation, find a quiet moment and ask them how they feel. You are the mother of *Astyanax*, but others are allowed to help care for him if you don't hate them. Talk to your child when you're thinking out loud.

## Dexia, royal nurse and servant

**Summary:** I'm a royal servant and a mature woman. I'm conservative – I look to the old customs and the good old days for ways to hold on to what little we have. I help those that deserve my help the most.

The outbreak of the war, many years ago, made me a widow, and a fever took my infant daughter not long after. Since then I've given milk and care to the little children of the court, and helped the queen and the fine ladies. I thought I'd lost everything, but I found I was still needed. I still have myself, my court and my belief in duty, service, decency and the virtues of our ancestors. I can still be of use.

### The Dead:

King *Priamos* was a worthy king of Troy, and it was shameful how the good, old man was slaughtered by the brutal, disrespectful Greeks.

Prince *Hektor*, Andromache's husband, was the strongest and best hero of Troy. Like one of the glorious ancestors come back. Now he's dead and there's no one like him, least of all the Greek victors.

Prince *Paris* was weak. And beautiful, to be sure, but no man should be that much into himself. He brought down the war upon us by seducing Helena. Only my love and respect for his mother, queen Hekabe, keeps me from uttering my honest opinion of him! Hekabe loved him dearly.

*Achilleus*, the strongest hero of the Greeks. He killed Hektor and shamefully mutilated his body. Paris killed Achilleus dishonourably with a poisoned arrow.

### The Living: \* are player characters

*Hekabe*\*, my queen. Poor old lady, and yet she's still queen through and through. She deserves all my support and love, and if there's a way, she'll show me.

*Aristera*\* is my sister, and a royal servant as I. She recently lost husband and child to the war, but is bearing the adversity bravely. She and I are inseparable, though we're like night and day. She doesn't have the proper respect for the old virtues and she's always making busybody plans for herself and not least for everyone else, but I love her anyway.

*Andromache\**, widow of Hektor. She's a beautiful and good woman, the embodiment of the virtuous wife, and a good friend too. I don't know what we'd do without her.

*Astyanax*, the infant son of Hektor and Andromache, that I'm still nursing. Noone here is as important as Astyanax.

*Helena\**, Helena the Greek, the widow of prince Paris, so beautiful and so very slippery. Her affair with Paris brought about the war. Hopefully her husband, the Greek king Menelaos of Sparta, will punish her with mutilation and death for her betrayal of him.

*Kassandra* and *Polyxena*, daughters of Priamos and Hekabe. Kassandra is mad and has devoted her life to the gods; Aias the Greek raped her at the altar where she had sought refuge; she is difficult but for the sake of her holiness deserves protection so much more. Polyxena is a young girl, beautiful, dutiful and the perfect princess – perhaps she can win the heart of a Greek king? Polyxena is in the Greek camp waiting on the kings, Kassandra is lying in a faint.

**Coping:** Hold on to the idea of the good old days and the old virtues. Complain about the state of the world these days – and do it earnestly. Look for ways to be morally decent, to the extent that it makes sense.

**Functions:** Take care of the people around you. Especially those that deserve your care. Help Andromache take care of little Astyanax, and talk to him. Look to Hekabe for leadership and help making sense of it all.

## **Aristera, royal servant**

**Summary:** I'm a royal servant and a mature woman. I don't believe in nostalgia, I believe in what we can make of our lives here and now, eyes open. Even if my eyes are seeing rather awful things right now. I help where I can and I help those who need me the most.

I recently lost my husband and my son to the violence of the war, as all the men of Troy were slaughtered. This foolish, foolish war fought by foolish people who believed in honour and glory. Unlike so many others I saw the disaster coming, as the war wasn't going well after Hektor's death, but losing my husband and my son was still a hard blow. However, I won't let it break me, and though I'm in mourning, the future is more important. There still people who are alive and need me – as mourner and comforter, if nothing else. And to remind them that there *is* a future, one that they should be planning and preparing for.

### **The Dead:**

King *Priamos*, poor old man. He let himself be trapped by politics and honour, and let the war follow its course. I keep silent about his foolishness out of love for queen Hekabe, who lives and mourns.

Prince *Hektor*, the great hero. The hopes of Troy paled with his death. A good man, loving husband to Andromache and father to little Astyanax, but it is his kind that doomed us. However, I must be considerate of Andromache when it comes to Hektor's memory.

Prince *Paris* helped start the war by seducing queen Helena of Sparta, but Paris wasn't as useless as everyone made him out to be – he killed Achilles, the strongest hero of the Greeks, with a poisoned arrow. Everyone condemns that, but what was Paris to do when even Hektor couldn't take on Achilles honourably? And also, Paris wasn't just incomparably beautiful, but also kind and charming.

*Achilleus*, the strongest hero of the Greeks. He killed Hektor and shamefully mutilated his body. Everything about Achilles is fire and hate, even in death. The perfect hero.

*Husband and son*. It practically hurts to think of them, a fresh wound.

**The Living:** \* are player characters

*Hekabe\**, the fallen queen, mother of so many of the children I have cared for. So strong and proud in a situation where pride is no advantage. Poor old woman!

*Dexia\**, my sister, royal servant like myself. Widowed since the start of the war many years ago, but has nursed the children of others since then. She and I are inseparable though we are like night and day. Dexia believes in honour and the good, old days. Dear, dear nostalgic fool that I love so very much!

*Andromache\**, the perfect wife, Hektor's widow. The kind to drive sons and husbands to the field of glory. But also a generous woman in grief and fear, a good friend, and mother of little Astyanax.

*Astyanax*, son of Hektor and Andromache. Sweet little boy that I help care for, who is nursed at my sister Dexia's breast. Somehow, between us we must secure a future for him!

*Helena\**, Helena the Greek, widow of prince Paris. Sure, she's a manipulative bitch, but it's not true that all evils of the world are her fault – the war is bigger than that. And also, she and Paris were the cutest couple ever.

*Kassandra* and *Polyxena*, daughters of Priamos and Hekabe, both of whom I have nursed at my breast. Kassandra is mad and has devoted her life to the gods; Aias the Greek raped her at the altar where she had sought refuge; she is difficult but for that very reason needs my protection so much more. Polyxena is a young girl, beautiful, dutiful and the perfect princess – perhaps she can win the heart of a Greek king? Polyxena is in the Greek camp waiting on the kings, Kassandra is lying in a faint.

**Coping:** You hope fiercely for a future for yourself and your friends and loved ones, a future which is somehow worth living in. You make concrete plans, for yourself and on behalf of others, to make life go on as well as it possibly can. And you feel the pain sharply when your schemes collapse. If someone suffers in silence, you help them – you take care of your people, high as well as low.

**Functions:** Take care of your surroundings, especially those that really need you. Help Hekabe, your queen. Talk to Astyanax, even though he's just a little child.

## Helena, most beautiful and most hated

**Summary:** I'm the most beautiful woman in the world. That's not a boast, just a fact. Everyone holds me responsible for the war, because the bold prince Paris seduced me. But it was Fate and the gods that decreed it, not me!

I'm a cunning, well-spoken and strong-willed survivor. I'm innocent of all that death and destruction, and willing to say and do anything to avoid the slavery or death that awaits the Trojan women. Queen Hekabe hates me, so in the open, all the Trojan women scorn me and keep me out as Greek and slut, though I shared their life for ten years.

### The Dead:

Prince *Paris*, my Trojan husband, took me away from unbearably boring Sparta and from king Menelaos. It's not fair that a man should have as brilliant a smile and as beautiful eyes as my Paris. My weak, foolish, dead Paris. The will of the gods and his beauty dazzled me, and the love that his mother, queen Hekabe, has for him may still afford me a little protection.

King *Priamos* of Troy, father of Paris. The kindly old man refused to turn me over to the Greeks. Wise of him, as it would have appeared weak, and a thousand ships do not sail home just because they've got hold of one woman – no matter how beautiful.

Prince *Hektor*, strong and glory-seeking and much harder than my Paris. The Trojans' strongest hero, but Achilles the Greek was stronger. Trojan women like it well when praise is poured upon the memory of Hektor.

*Achilleus*, the strongest and cruelest of the Greeks. My Paris slew him! With a poisoned arrow, to be sure, but still. It wasn't honourable, so it won't do to praise it, even though Paris succeeded where Hektor failed.

### The Living: \* are player characters

King *Menelaos* of Sparta, my Greek husband. A strong and powerful man, besides loud, boastful, disgustingly hairy and unbearably foolish. The thought of sharing his bed makes me slightly nauseous, but silk sheets are better than mouldy straw and hard dirt.

*Hekabe\**, queen of the fallen city. Her life is over, but she still carries on as if there were something she could do. She considers me to be responsible for all bad things that happen in the world.

*Andromache\**, widow of Hektor and mother of Astyanax. The perfect, virtuous wife and mother, and incredibly proud of it. She's still young and beautiful, and could well have a future if she learned to swallow her pride. Andromache guards the memory of Hektor like a vengeful fury.

*Astyanax*, son of Hektor and Andromache. Cute little kid. The other women tend to throw fits if I try to play with him.

*Dexia\** and *Aristera\**, sisters and faithful servants. Dexia looks to the good old days, Aristera looks ahead, ever scheming and planning. Dexia was widowed many years ago, Aristera lost her husband and son recently. Dexia is nursing Astyanax. Dexia is judgmental and hateful, but Aristera might have a bit of sympathy for me hidden away.

*Kassandra & Polyxena*, daughters of Hekabe and Priamos. Polyxena is pretty and pliant, the perfect victim – but perhaps she can find a place as concubine to a Greek king? Kassandra is dead crazy and difficult about it, and is very into being dedicated to gods, not men. Kassandra is going to have a tough time of it, as there's a lot of Greek men around, and few gods to be seen. She's already been raped once. Polyxena is in the Greek camp waiting on the kings, Kassandra is lying in a faint.

**Coping:** You're at the same time proud and strong-willed, and also willing to say and do anything to ingratiate yourself with those who have power over you in ways great or small. It's important to have a place in the world, and you're willing to fight for yours with any means at your disposal.

**Functions:** You're at the edge of the community of Trojan women. Look for cracks of conflict and disagreement, where you can get in.

**RULE:** You can take part in the grieving, but you're ***not allowed to touch the values***, and you cannot veto choices. Keep your mouth shut when others have an opportunity to veto.

## **Kassandra, princess, priestess and holy madwoman**

**Summary:** I am aflame with holiness, dedicated to the cruel, cruel gods. My greatest wish is to live as a priestess, alone and as free as only an initiated woman can be.

Though I am a princess, I have always been odd, an outsider. People have this strange ability to not see the truth that's right in front of their noses – I can't not see, and I'm not good at keeping my mouth shut. This is the god Apollo's gift to me, or curse. I can't help telling the truth as I see it, but I disguise it, cloak it in "madness", to make myself possible to live with.

The ordinary life of a wife or a servant to men is not for me, and their touch, and the feeling of their eyes on me, disgust me – as priestess I can be free of men. But the Greeks have no respect for holiness. When Troy was taken, I sought refuge at the altar of the virginal goddess Athena, but the hero Aias dragged me away and took me by force.

### **The Dead:**

King *Priamos*, my old father. He saw his fate but was powerless to escape it, and was slaughtered like an animal by the Greeks.

Prince *Hektor*, my brother, the great hero. He was blinded by the pride that became his death in the form of Achilles the Greek. But Hektor was always kind to me, even when I was difficult.

Prince *Paris*, my poor, beautiful brother who called down Helena and the war upon our heads. Cruel goddesses played with his heart.

*Polyxena*, my beloved sister, sacrificed on the grave of Achilles to sate the ghost's hunger. How terrible. I saw it coming and told them in my way, but noone would believe me.

**The Living:** \* are player characters

*Hekabe\**, my mother the queen. Poor old strong woman. She has never known what to do with me, but I need her comfort and protection more than ever.

*Andromache\**, widow of my brother Hektor and mother of little Astyanax. The perfect virtuous woman, and so proud of it. She doesn't like me, but she acts nice out of duty and principle.

*Astyanax*, the infant son of Hektor and Andromache. His future looms bleak, even in this grief-stricken crowd. Poor little boy!

*Dexia\** and *Aristera\**, sisters and faithful servants. Dexia looks to the good old days, Aristera looks ahead, ever scheming and planning. Dexia was widowed many years ago, Aristera lost her husband and son recently. Dexia is nursing Astyanax, as Aristera once nursed me at her breast. In a way, Aristera is more my mother than Hekabe.

**Coping:** You play mad, which allows you to say true things indirectly, poetically rewritten and in a way that lets you disclaim responsibility for your words. A rape becomes a joyous wedding night, a murder becomes a judicial act etc.

**Functions:** Be wild in your emotional outbursts and reactions. Challenge the other women to realize the full horror of the situation through your outbursts and poetic statements. Strike a balance between being annoying and being worthy of pity. As *Kassandra*, you **are** allowed to destroy values and to veto value destruction choices.