

into my mother's arms, and I will have  
 my wish. But now, I'll get out of the way:  
 my agèd mother Hecuba emerges  
 from Agamemnon's tent. My ghost has spooked her.  
 Ah.

O Mother, from a royal household—you  
 who look upon your day of slavery—  
 some god has counterpoised your former joy  
 with all the weight of what you suffer now.

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*(Enter Hecuba from the tent, supported by her  
 Servant and an attendant. Exit Ghost of Polydorus.)*

HECUBA:

Hold me steady there, children, and help me go out.  
 Keep me straight! That's the way. I'm not young anymore,  
 dear daughters of Troy; I'm a servant like you,  
 though I once was your mistress.<sup>ii</sup>

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Take ahold of this old lady's arm, and I'll hurry  
 just as much as I can, in my slow-footed way,  
 with the crook of your arm as my crutch.

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*(Hecuba sings.)<sup>iii</sup>*

Blazing sunlight of Zeus, and obsidian Night,  
 when will phantoms and night terrors leave me alone?  
 O Holy One, Earth below, mother of black-wingèd  
 dreams, may the vision I saw in the night  
 stay away, leave me be!<sup>4</sup>

75

There, in my dream, was my child, whom I sent off to Thrace  
 for safekeeping;  
 there was Polyxena, too—my dear daughter appeared in this  
 vision—  
 and it shook me with panic.<sup>iv</sup>

Gods of earth down below, keep my child safe from harm!  
 He alone is my anchor. A friend of his father  
 watches over him now, here in Thrace, land of snow.

80

4. It was a Greek popular belief that the best way to dispel evil omens from bad dreams was to tell them to the sun and the gods.

