

## **Helena's Husband**

BY PHILIP MOELLER  
AN HISTORICAL COMEDY

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### CHARACTERS

HELENA, *the Queen*. TSUMU, *a black woman, slave to Helena*.  
MENELAUS, *the King*. ANALYTIKOS, *the King's librarian*. PARIS,  
*a shepherd*.

HELENA'S HUSBAND was first produced by the Washington Square Players, under the direction of Mr. Moeller, at the Bandbox Theatre, New York, on the night of October 4, 1915, with the following cast:

HELENA [*Queen of Sparta*] Noel Haddon. TSUMU [*the slave*] Helen Westley. MENELAUS [*the King*] Frank Conroy. ANALYTIKOS [*his librarian*] Walter Frankl. PARIS [*a shepherd*] Harold Meltzer.

The scene was designed by Paul T. Frankl and the costumes by Robert Locker.

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HELENA'S HUSBAND

AN HISTORICAL COMEDY BY PHILIP MOELLER

[SCENE is that archaeological mystery, a Greek interior. A door on the right leads to the King's library, one on the left to the apartment of the Queen. Back right is the main entrance leading to the palace. Next this, running the full length of the wall, is a window with a platform, built out over the main court. Beyond is a view of hills bright with lemon groves, and in the far distance shimmers the sea. On the wall near the Queen's room hangs an old shield rusty with disuse. A bust of Zeus stands on a pedestal against the right wall. There are low coffers about the room from which hang the ends of vivid colored robes. The scene is bathed in intense sunlight. Tsumu is massaging the Queen.]

HELENA. There's no doubt about it.

TSUMU. Analytikos says there is much doubt about all things.

HELENA. Never mind what he says. I envy you your complexion.

TSUMU [*falling prostrate before Helena*]. Whom the Queen envies should beware.

HELENA [*annoyed*]. Get up, Tsumu. You make me nervous tumbling about like that.

TSUMU [*still on floor*]. Why does the great Queen envy Tsumu?

HELENA. Get up, you silly. [*She kicks her.*] I envy you because you can run about and never worry about getting sunburnt.

TSUMU [*on her knees*]. The radiant beauty of the Queen is unspoilable.

HELENA. That's just what's worrying me, Tsumu. When beauty is so perfect the slightest jar may mean a jolt. [*She goes over and looks at her reflection in the shield.*] I can't see myself as well as I would like to. The King's shield is tarnished. Menelaus has been too long out of battle.

TSUMU [*handing her a hand mirror*]. The Gods will keep Sparta free from strife.

HELENA. I'll have you beaten if you assume that prophetic tone with me. There's one thing I can't stand, and that's a know-all.

[*Flinging the hand mirror to the floor.*]

TSUMU [*in alarm*]. Gods grant you haven't bent it.

HELENA. These little mirrors are useless. His shield is the only thing in which I can see myself full-length. If he only went to war, he'd have to have it cleaned.

TSUMU [*putting the mirror on a table near the Queen*]. The King is a lover of peace.

HELENA. The King is a lover of comfort. Have you noticed that he spends more time than he used to in the library?

TSUMU. He is busy with questions of State.

HELENA. You know perfectly well that when anything's the matter with the Government it's always straightened out at the other end of the palace. Finish my shoulder. [*She examines her arm.*] I doubt if there is a finer skin than this in Sparta.

[*Tsumu begins to massage the Queen's shoulder.*]

HELENA [*taking up a mirror*]. That touch of deep carmine right here in the center of my lips was quite an idea.

TSUMU [*busily pounding the Queen*]. An inspiration of the Gods!

HELENA. The Gods have nothing to do with it. I copied it from a low woman I saw at the circus. I can't understand how these bad women have such good ideas.

[*Helen twists about.*]

TSUMU. If your majesty doesn't sit still, I may pinch you.

HELENA [*boxing her ears*]. None of your tricks, you ebony fiend!

TSUMU [*crouching*]. Descendant of paradise, forgive me.

HELENA. If you bruise my perfect flesh, the King will kill you. My beauty is his religion. He can sit for hours, as if at prayer, just examining the arch of my foot. Tsumu, you may kiss my foot.

TSUMU [*prostrate*]. May the Gods make me worthy of your kindness!

HELENA. That's enough. Tsumu, are you married?

TSUMU [*getting up*]. I've been so busy having babies I never had time to get married.

HELENA. It's a great disillusionment.

TSUMU [*agast*]. What!

HELENA. I'm not complaining. Moo Moo is the best of husbands, but sometimes being adored too much is trying. [*She sighs deeply.*] I think I'll wear my heliotrope this afternoon.

[*A trumpet sounds below in the courtyard. Tsumu goes to the window.*]

TSUMU. They are changing the guards at the gates of the palace. It's almost time for your bath.

[*She begins scraping the massage ointment back into the box.*]

HELENA. You're as careful with that ointment as Moo Moo is with me.

TSUMU. Precious things need precious guarding.

HELENA. It's very short-sighted on Moo Moo's part to send everybody to the galleys who dares lift a head when I pass by--and all these nice-looking soldiers! Why--the only men I ever see besides Moo Moo are Analytikos and a lot of useless eunuchs.

TSUMU. Oh, those eunuchs!

HELENA [*as she sits dreaming*]. I wish, I wish--

[*She stops short.*]

TSUMU. You have but to speak your desire to the King.

HELENA [*shocked*]. Tsumu! How can you think of such a thing? I'm not a bad woman.

TSUMU. He would die for you.

HELENA [*relieved*]. Ah! Do you think so, Tsumu?

TSUMU. All Sparta knows that His Majesty is a lover of peace, and yet he would rush into battle to save you.

HELENA. I should love to have men fighting for me.

TSUMU [*in high alarm*]. May Zeus turn a deaf ear to your voice.

HELENA. Don't be impertinent, Tsumu. I've got to have some sort of amusement.

TSUMU. You've only to wait till next week, and you can see another of the priestesses sacrificed to Diana.

HELENA. That doesn't interest me any longer. The girls are positively beginning to like it. No! My mind is set on war.

TSUMU [*terrified*]. I have five fathers of my children to lose.

HELENA. War, or--or--

TSUMU [*hopefully*]. Have I been so long your slave that I no longer know your wish?

HELENA [*very simply*]. Well, I should like to have a lover.

TSUMU [*springs up and rushes over in horror to draw the curtains across the door of the library. All of a tremble*]. Gods grant they didn't hear you.

HELENA. Don't be alarmed, Tsumu. Analytikos is over eighty.

[*She bursts into a loud peal of laughter and Menelaus rushes into the room.*]

MENELAUS [*in high irritation*]. I wish you wouldn't make so much noise in here. A King might at least expect quiet in his own palace.

HELENA. Tsumu, see if my bath is ready. [*Tsumu exits.*] You used not speak like that to me, Moo Moo.

MENELAUS [*in a temper*]. How many times must I tell you that my name is Menelaus and that it isn't "Moo Moo"?

HELENA [*sweetly*]. I'll never do it again, Moo Moo. [*She giggles.*]

MENELAUS. Your laugh gets on my nerves. It's louder than it used to be.

HELENA. If you wish it, I'll never, never laugh again.

MENELAUS. You've promised that too often.

HELENA [*sadly*]. Things are not as they used to be.

MENELAUS. Are you going to start that again?

HELENA [*with a tinge of melancholy*]. I suppose you'd like me to be still and sad.

MENELAUS [*bitterly*]. Is it too much to hope that you might be still and happy?

HELENA [*speaking very quickly and tragically*]. Don't treat me cruelly, Moo Moo. You don't understand me. No man ever really

understands a woman. There are terrible depths to my nature. I had a long talk with Dr. Æsculapius only last week, and he told me I'm too introspective. It's the curse of us emotional women. I'm really quite worried, but much you care, much you care. [*A note of tears comes into her voice.*] I'm sure you don't love me any more, Moo Moo. No! No! Don't answer me! If you did you couldn't speak to me the way you do. I've never wronged you in deed or in thought. No, never--never. I've given up my hopes and aspirations, because I knew you wanted me around you. And now, NOW--[*She can contain the tears no longer.*] Because I have neglected my beauty and because I am old and ugly, you regret that Ulysses or Agamemnon didn't marry me when you all wanted me, and I know you curse the day you ever saw me.

[*She is breathless.*]

MENELAUS [*fuming*]. Well! Have you done?

HELENA. No. I could say a great deal more, but I'm not a talkative woman.

[*Analytikos comes in from the library.*]

ANALYTIKOS. Your Majesty, are we to read no longer to-day?

HELENA. I have something to say to the King.

[*Analytikos goes toward the library. Menelaus anxiously stops him.*]

MENELAUS. No. Stay here. You are a wise man and well understand the wisdom of the Queen.

ANALYTIKOS [*bowing to Helena*]. Helena is wise as she is beautiful.

MENELAUS. She is attempting to prove to me in a thousand words that she's a silent woman.

ANALYTIKOS. Women are seldom silent. [*Helen resents this.*] Their beauty is forever speaking for them.

HELENA. The years have, indeed, taught you wisdom.

[*Tsumu enters.*]

TSUMU. The almond water awaits your majesty.

HELENA. I hope you haven't forgotten the chiropodist.

TSUMU. He has been commanded but he's always late. He's so busy.

HELENA [*in a purring tone to Menelaus*]. Moo Moo.

[*Menelaus, bored, turns away.*]

HELENA [*to Tsumu*]. I think after all I'll wear my Sicily blue.

[*She and Tsumu go into the Queen's apartment.*]

ANALYTIKOS. Shall we go back to the library?

MENELAUS. My mind is unhinged again--that woman with her endless protestations.

ANALYTIKOS. I am sorry the poets no longer divert you.

MENELAUS. A little poetry is always too much.

ANALYTIKOS. To-morrow we will try the historians.

MENELAUS. No! Not the historians. I want the truth for a change.

ANALYTIKOS. The truth!

MENELAUS. Where in books can I find escape from the grim reality of being hitched for life to such a wife? Bah!

ANALYTIKOS. Philosophy teaches--



MENELAUS. Why have the Gods made woman necessary to man, and made them fools?

ANALYTIKOS. For seventy years I have been resolving the problem of woman and even at my age--

MENELAUS. Give it up, old man. The answer is--don't.

ANALYTIKOS. Such endless variety, and yet--

MENELAUS [*with the conviction of finality*]. There are only two sorts of women! Those who are failures and those who realize it.

ANALYTIKOS. Is not Penelope, the model wife of your cousin Ulysses, an exception?

MENELAUS. Duty is the refuge of the unbeautiful. She is as commonplace as she is ugly. [*And then with deep bitterness.*] Why didn't *he* marry Helen when we all wanted her? He was too wise for that. He is the only man I've ever known who seems able to direct destiny.

ANALYTIKOS. You should not blame the Gods for a lack of will.

MENELAUS [*shouting*]. Will! Heaven knows I do not lack the will to rid myself of this painted puppet, but where is the instrument ready to my hand?

[*At this moment a Shepherd of Apollonian beauty leaps across the rail of the balcony and bounds into the room. Menelaus and Analytikos start back in amazement.*]

ANALYTIKOS. Who are you?

PARIS. An adventurer.

ANALYTIKOS. Then you have reached the end of your story. In a moment you will die.

PARIS. I have no faith in prophets.

ANALYTIKOS. The soldiers of the King will give you faith. Don't you know that it means death for any man to enter the apartments of the Queen?

PARIS [*looking from one to the other*]. Oh! So you're a couple of eunuchs.

[*Though nearly eighty this is too much for Analytikos to bear. He rushes to call the guard, but Menelaus stops him.*]

PARIS [*to Analytikos*]. Thanks.

ANALYTIKOS. You thank me for telling you your doom?

PARIS. No--for convincing me that I'm where I want to be. It's taken me a long while, but I knew I'd get here. [*And then very intimately to Menelaus.*] Where's the Queen?

MENELAUS. Where do you come from?

PARIS. From the hills. I had come down into the market-place to sell my sheep. I had my hood filled with apples. They were golden-red like a thousand sunsets.

MENELAUS [*annoyed*]. You might skip those bucolic details.

PARIS. At the fair I met three ancient gypsies.

MENELAUS. What have they to do with you coming here?

PARIS. You don't seem very patient. Can't I tell my story in my own way? They asked me for the apple I was eating and I asked them what they'd give for it.

MENELAUS. I'm not interested in market quotations.

PARIS. You take everything so literally. I'm sure you're easily bored.

MENELAUS [*with meaning*]. I am.

PARIS [*going on cheerfully*]. The first was to give me all the money she could beg, and the second was to tell me all the truth she could learn by listening, and the third promised me a pretty girl. So I chose--

[*He hesitates.*]

ANALYTIKOS. You cannot escape by spinning out your tale.

PARIS. Death is the end of one story and the beginning of another.

MENELAUS. Well! Well! Come to the point. Which did you choose?

PARIS [*smiling*]. Well, you see I'd been in the hills for a long while, so I picked the girl.

ANALYTIKOS. It would have been better for you if you had chosen wisdom.

PARIS. I knew you'd say that.

ANALYTIKOS. I have spoken truly. In a moment you will die.

PARIS. It is because the old have forgotten life that they preach wisdom.

MENELAUS. So you chose the girl? Well, go on.

PARIS. This made the other cronies angry, and when I tossed her the apple one of the others yelped at me: "You may as well seek the Queen of Sparta: she is the fairest of women." And as I turned away I heard their laughter, but the words had set my heart aflame and though it cost me my life, I'll follow the adventure.

ANALYTIKOS [*scandalized*]. Haven't we heard enough of this?

MENELAUS [*deeply*]. No! I want to hear how the story ends. It may amuse the King.

[*He makes a sign to Analytikos.*]

PARIS. And on the ship at night I looked long at the stars and dreamed of possessing Helen.

*[Analytikos makes an involuntary movement toward the balcony, but Menelaus stops him.]*

PARIS. Desire has been my guiding Mercury; the Fates are with me, and here I am.

ANALYTIKOS. The wrath of the King will show you no mercy.

PARIS *[nonchalantly]*. I'm not afraid of the King. He's fat, and--a fool.

ANALYTIKOS. Shall I call the guards?

*[Menelaus stops him.]*

MENELAUS *[very significantly]*. So you would give your life for a glimpse of the Queen?

PARIS *[swiftly]*. Yes! My immortal soul, and if the fables tell the truth, the sight will be worth the forfeit.

MENELAUS *[suddenly jumping up]*. It shall be as you wish!

PARIS *[buoyantly]*. Venus has smiled on me.

MENELAUS. In there beyond the library you will find a room with a bath. Wait there till I call you.

PARIS. Is this some trick to catch me?

MENELAUS. A Spartan cannot lie.

PARIS. What will happen to you if the King hears of this?

MENELAUS. I will answer for the king. Go.

[*Paris exits into the library.*]

ANALYTIKOS [*rubbing his hands*]. Shall I order the boiling oil?

MENELAUS [*surprised*]. Oil?

ANALYTIKOS. Now that he is being cleaned for the sacrifice.

MENELAUS. His torture will be greater than being boiled alive.

ANALYTIKOS [*eagerly*]. You'll have him hurled from the wall of the palace to a forest of waiting spears below?

MENELAUS. None is so blind as he who sees too much.

ANALYTIKOS. Your majesty is subtle in his cruelty.

MENELAUS. Haven't the years taught you the cheapness of revenge?

ANALYTIKOS [*mystified*]. You do not intend to alter destiny.

MENELAUS. Never before has destiny been so clear to me.

ANALYTIKOS. Then the boy must die.

MENELAUS [*with slow determination*]. No! He has been sent by the Gods to save me!

ANALYTIKOS. Your majesty!

[*He is trembling with apprehension.*]

MENELAUS [*with unbudgeable conviction*]. Helena must elope with him!

ANALYTIKOS [*falling into a seat*]. Ye Gods!

MENELAUS [*quietly*]. I couldn't divorce the Queen. That would set a bad example.

ANALYTIKOS. Yes, very.

MENELAUS. I couldn't desert her. That would be beneath my honor.

ANALYTIKOS [*deeply*]. Was there no other way?

MENELAUS [*pompously*]. The King can do no wrong, and besides I hate the smell of blood. Are you a prophet as well as a scholar? Will she go?

ANALYTIKOS. To-night I will read the stars.

MENELAUS [*meaningfully*]. By to-night I'll not need you to tell me. [*Analytikos sits deep in thought.*] Well?

ANALYTIKOS. Ethics cite no precedent.

MENELAUS. Do you mean to say I'm not justified?

ANALYTIKOS [*cogitating*]. Who can establish the punctilious ratio between necessity and desire?

MENELAUS [*beginning to fume*]. This is no time for language. Just put yourself in my place.

ANALYTIKOS. Being you, how can I judge as I?

MENELAUS [*losing control*]. May you choke on your dialectics! Zeus himself could have stood it no longer.

ANALYTIKOS. Have you given her soul a chance to grow?

MENELAUS. Her soul, indeed! It's shut in her rouge pot. [*He has been strutting about. Suddenly he sits down crushing a roll of papyrus. He takes it up and in utter disgust reads.*] "The perfect hip, its development and permanence." Bah! [*He flings it to the floor.*] I've done what I had to do, and Gods grant the bait may be sweet enough to catch the Queen.

ANALYTIKOS. If you had diverted yourself with a war or two you might have forgotten your troubles at home.

MENELAUS [*frightened*]. I detest dissension of any kind--my dream was perpetual peace in comfortable domesticity with a womanly woman to warm my sandals.

ANALYTIKOS. Is not the Queen--?

MENELAUS. No! No! The whole world is but her mirror. And I'm expected to face that woman every morning at breakfast for the rest of my life, and by Venus that's more than even a King can bear!

ANALYTIKOS. Even a King cannot alter destiny. I warn you, whom the Gods have joined together--

MENELAUS [*in an outburst*]. Is for man to break asunder!

ANALYTIKOS [*deeply shocked*]. You talk like an atheist.

MENELAUS. I never allow religion to interfere with life. Go call the victim and see that he be left alone with the Queen.

[*Menelaus exits and Analytikos goes over to the door of the library and summons Paris, who enters clad in a gorgeous robe.*]

PARIS. I found this in there. It looks rather well, doesn't it? Ah! So you're alone. I suppose that stupid friend of yours has gone to tell the King. When do I see the Queen?

ANALYTIKOS. At once.

[*He goes to the door of the Queen's apartment and claps his hand. Tsumu enters and at the sight of her Paris recoils the full length of the room.*]

PARIS. I thought the Queen was a blonde!

ANALYTIKOS. Tell Her Majesty a stranger awaits her here.

[*Tsumu exits, her eyes wide on Paris.*]

You should thank the Gods for this moment.

PARIS [*his eyes on the door*]. You do it for me. I can never remember all their names.

[*Helena enters clad in her Sicily blue, crowned with a garland of golden flowers. She and Paris stand riveted, looking at each other. Their attitude might be described as fantastic. Analytikos watches them for a moment and then with hands and head lifted to heaven he goes into the library.*]

PARIS [*quivering with emotion*]. I have the most strange sensation of having seen you before. Something I can't explain--

HELENA [*quite practically*]. Please don't bother about all sorts of fine distinctions. Under the influence of Analytikos and my husband, life has become a mess of indecision. I'm a simple, direct woman and I expect you to say just what you think.

PARIS. Do you? Very well, then--[*He comes a step nearer to her.*]  
Fate is impelling me toward you.

HELENA. Yes. That's much better. So you're a fatalist. It's very Greek. I don't see what our dramatists would do without it.

PARIS. In my country there are no dramatists. We are too busy with reality.

HELENA. Your people must be uncivilized barbarians.

PARIS. My people are a genuine people. There is but one thing we worship.

HELENA. Don't tell me it's money.

PARIS. It's--



HELENA. Analytikos says if there weren't any money, there wouldn't be any of those ridiculous socialists.

PARIS. It isn't money. It's sincerity.

HELENA. I, too, believe in sincerity. It's the loveliest thing in the world.

PARIS. And the most dangerous.

HELENA. The truth is never dangerous.

PARIS. Except when told.

HELENA [*making room on the couch for him to sit next to her*]. You mustn't say wicked things to me.

PARIS. Can your theories survive a test?

HELENA [*beautifully*]. Truth is eternal and survives all tests.

PARIS. No. Perhaps, after all, your soul is not ready for the supremest heights.

HELENA. Do you mean to say I'm not religious? Religion teaches the meaning of love.

PARIS. Has it taught you to love your husband?

HELENA [*starting up and immediately sitting down again*]. How dare you speak to me like that?

PARIS. You see. I was right.

[*He goes toward the balcony.*]

HELENA [*stopping him*]. Whatever made you think so?

PARIS. I've heard people talk of the King. You could never love a man like that.

HELENA [*beautifully*]. A woman's first duty is to love her husband.

PARIS. There is a higher right than duty.

HELENA [*with conviction*]. Right is right.

PARIS [*with admiration*]. The world has libeled you.

HELENA. Me! The Queen?

PARIS. You are as wise as you are beautiful.

HELENA [*smiling coyly*]. Why, you hardly know me.

PARIS. I know you! I, better than all men.

HELENA. You?

PARIS [*rapturously*]. Human law has given you to Menelaus, but divine law makes you mine.

HELENA [*in amazement*]. What!

PARIS. I alone appreciate your beauty. I alone can reach your soul.

HELENA. Ah!

PARIS. You hate your husband!

HELENA [*drawing back*]. Why do you look at me like that?

PARIS. To see if there's one woman in the world who dares tell the truth.

HELENA. My husband doesn't understand me.

PARIS [*with conviction*]. I knew you detested him.

HELENA. He never listens to my aspirations.

PARIS. Egoist.

HELENA [*assuming an irresistible pose*]. I'm tired of being only lovely. He doesn't realize the meaning of spiritual intercourse, of soul communion.

PARIS. Fool!

HELENA. You dare call Moo Moo a fool?

PARIS. Has he not been too blind to see that your soul outshines your beauty? [*Then, very dramatically.*] You're stifling!

HELENA [*clearing her throat*]. I--I--

PARIS. He has made you sit upon your wings. [*Helena, jumping up, shifts her position.*] You are groping in the darkness.

HELENA. Don't be silly. It's very light in here.

PARIS [*undisturbed*]. You are stumbling, and I have come to lead you.

[*He steps toward her.*]

HELENA. Stop right there! [*Paris stops.*] No man but the King can come within ten feet of me. It's a court tradition.

PARIS. Necessity knows no tradition. [*He falls on his knees before her.*] I shall come close to you, though the flame of your beauty consume me.

HELENA. You'd better be careful what you say to me. Remember I'm the Queen.

PARIS. No man weighs his words who has but a moment to live.

HELENA. You said that exactly like an actor. [*He leans very close to her.*] What are you doing now?

PARIS. I am looking into you. You are the clear glass in which I read the secret of the universe.

HELENA. The secret of the universe. Ah! Perhaps you could understand me.

PARIS. First you must understand yourself.

HELENA [*instinctively taking up a mirror*]. How?

PARIS. You must break with all this prose. [*With an unconscious gesture he sweeps a tray of toilet articles from the table. Helena emits a little shriek.*]

HELENA. The ointment!

PARIS [*rushing to the window and pointing to the distance*]. And climb to infinite poesie!

HELENA [*catching his enthusiasm, says very blandly*]. There is nothing in the world like poetry.

PARIS [*lyrically*]. Have you ever heard the poignant breathing of the stars?

HELENA. No. I don't believe in astrology.

PARIS. Have you ever smelt the powdery mists of the sun?

HELENA. I should sneeze myself to death.

PARIS. Have you ever listened to the sapphire soul of the sea?

HELENA. Has the sea a soul? But please don't stop talking. You do it so beautifully.

PARIS. Deeds are sweeter than words. Shall we go hand in hand to meet eternity?

HELENA [*not comprehending him*]. That's very pretty. Say it again.

PARIS [*passionately*]. There's but a moment of life left me. I shall stifle it in ecstasy. Helena, Helena, I adore you!

HELENA [*jumping up in high surprise*]. You're not making love to me, you naughty boy?

PARIS. Helena.

HELENA. You've spoken to me so little, and already you dare to do that.

PARIS [*impetuously*]. I am a lover of life. I skip the inessentials.

HELENA. Remember who I am.

PARIS. I have not forgotten, Daughter of Heaven. [*Suddenly he leaps to his feet.*] Listen!

HELENA. Shhh! That's the King and Analytikos in the library.

PARIS. No! No! Don't you hear the flutter of wings?

HELENA. Wings?

PARIS [*ecstatically*]. Venus, mother of Love!

HELENA [*alarmed*]. What is it?

PARIS. She has sent her messenger. I hear the patter of little feet.

HELENA. Those little feet are the soldiers below in the courtyard.

[*A trumpet sounds.*]

PARIS [*the truth of the situation breaking through his emotion*]. In a moment I shall be killed.

HELENA. Killed?

PARIS. Save me and save yourself!

HELENA. Myself?

PARIS. I shall rescue you and lead you on to life.

HELENA. No one has even spoken to me like that before.

PARIS. This is the first time your ears have heard the truth.

HELENA. Was it of you I've been dreaming?

PARIS. Your dream was but your unrealized desire.

HELENA. Menelaus has never made me feel like this. [*And then with a sudden shriek.*] Oh! I'm a wicked woman!

PARIS. No! No!

HELENA. For years I've been living with a man I didn't love.

PARIS. Yes! Yes!

HELENA. I'm lost!

PARIS [*at a loss*]. No! Yes! Yes! No!

HELENA. It was a profanation of the most holy.

PARIS. The holiest awaits you, Helena! Our love will lighten the Plutonian realms.

HELENA. Menelaus never spoke to me like that.

PARIS. 'Tis but the first whisper of my adoration.

HELENA. I can't face him every morning at breakfast for the rest of my life. That's even more than a Queen can bear.

PARIS. I am waiting to release you.

HELENA. I've stood it for seven years.

PARIS. I've been coming to you since the beginning of time.

HELENA. There is something urging me to go with you, something I do not understand.

PARIS. Quick! There is but a moment left us.

*[He takes her rapturously in his arms. There is a passionate embrace in the midst of which Tsumu enters.]*

TSUMU. The chiropodist has come.

HELENA. Bring me my outer garment and my purse.

*[Tsumu exits, her eyes wide on Paris.]*

PARIS. Helena! Helena!

*[Helena looks about her and takes up the papyrus that Menelaus has flung to the floor.]*

HELENA. A last word to the King. *[She looks at the papyrus.]* No, this won't do; I shall have to take this with me.

PARIS. What is it?

HELENA. Maskanda's discourse on the hip.

*[A trumpet sounds below in the courtyard.]*

PARIS *[excitedly]*. Leave it--or your hip may cost me my head. We haven't a minute to spare. Hurry! Hurry!

*[Helena takes up an eyebrow pencil and writes on the back of the papyrus. She looks for a place to put it and seeing the shield she smears it with some of the ointment and sticks the papyrus to it.]*

PARIS [*watching her in ecstasy*]. You are the fairest of all fair women and your name will blaze as a symbol throughout eternity.

[*Tsumu enters with the purse and the Queen's outer robe.*]

HELENA [*tossing the purse to Paris*]. Here, we may need this.

PARIS [*throwing it back to Tsumu*]. This for your silence, daughter of darkness. A prince has no need of purses.

TSUMU [*looking at him*]. A prince!

HELENA [*gloriously*]. My prince of poetry. My deliverer!

PARIS [*divinely*]. My queen of love!

[*They go out, Tsumu looking after them in speechless amazement. Suddenly she sees the papyrus on the shield, runs over and reads it and then rushes to the door of the library.*]

TSUMU [*calling*]. Analytikos.

[*She hides the purse in her bosom. Analytikos enters, scroll in hand.*]

ANALYTIKOS. Has the Queen summoned me?

TSUMU [*mysteriously*]. A terrible thing has happened.

ANALYTIKOS. What's the matter?

TSUMU. Where's the King?

ANALYTIKOS. In the library.

TSUMU. I have news more precious than the gold of Midas.

ANALYTIKOS [*giving her a purse*]. Well! What is it?



TSUMU [*speaking very dramatically and watching the effect of her words*]. The Queen has deserted Menelaus.

ANALYTIKOS [*receiving the shock philosophically*]. Swift are the ways of Nature. The Gods have smiled upon him.

TSUMU. The Gods have forsaken the King to smile upon a prince.

ANALYTIKOS. What?

TSUMU. He was a prince.

ANALYTIKOS [*apprehensively*]. Why do you say that?

TSUMU [*clutching her bosom*]. I have a good reason to know. [*There is a sound of voices below in the courtyard. Menelaus rushes in expectantly. Tsumu falls prostrate before him.*] Oh, King, in thy bottomless agony blame not a blameless negress. The Queen has fled!

MENELAUS [*in his delight forgetting himself and flinging her a purse*]. Is it true?

TSUMU. Woe! Woe is me!

MENELAUS [*storming*]. Out of my sight, you eyeless Argus!

ANALYTIKOS [*to Tsumu*]. Quick, send a messenger. Find out who he was.

[*Tsumu sticks the third purse in her bosom and runs out.*]

MENELAUS [*with radiant happiness, kneeling before the bust of Zeus*]. Ye Gods, I thank ye. Peace and a happy life at last.

[*The shouts in the courtyard grow louder.*]

ANALYTIKOS. The news has spread through the palace.

MENELAUS [*in trepidation, springing up*]. No one would dare stop the progress of the Queen.

TSUMU [*rushes in and prostrates herself before the King*]. Woe is me! They have gone by the road to the harbor.

MENELAUS [*anxiously*]. Yes! Yes!

TSUMU. By the King's orders no man has dared gaze upon Her Majesty. They all fell prostrate before her.

MENELAUS. Good! Good! [*Attempting to cover his delight.*] Go! Go! You garrulous dog.

[*Tsumu gets up and points to shield. Analytikos and the King look toward it. Analytikos tears off the papyrus and brings it to Menelaus. Tsumu, watching them, exits.*]

MENELAUS [*reading*]. "I am not a bad woman. I did what I had to do." How Greek to blame fate for what one wants to do.

[*Tsumu again comes tumbling in.*]

TSUMU [*again prostrate before the King*]. A rumor flies through the city. He--he--

ANALYTIKOS [*anxiously*]. Well? Well?

TSUMU. He--he--

MENELAUS [*furiously to Analytikos*]. Rid me of this croaking raven.

TSUMU. Evil has fallen on Sparta. He--

ANALYTIKOS. Yes--yes--

MENELAUS [*in a rage*]. Out of my sight, perfidious Nubian.

[*Sounds of confusion in the courtyard. Suddenly she springs to her feet and yells at the top of her voice.*]

TSUMU. He was Paris, Prince of Troy!

*[They all start back. Analytikos stumbles into a seat. Menelaus turns pale. Tsumu leers like a black Nemesis.]*

ANALYTIKOS [*very ominously*]. Who can read the secret of the Fates?

MENELAUS [*frightened*]. What do you mean?

ANALYTIKOS. He is the son of Priam, King of Troy.

TSUMU [*adding fuel*]. And of Hecuba, Queen of the Trojans.

*[She rushes out to spread the news.]*

ANALYTIKOS. That makes the matter international.

MENELAUS [*quickly*]. But we have treaties with Troy.

ANALYTIKOS. Circumstances alter treaties. They will mean nothing.

MENELAUS. Nothing?

ANALYTIKOS. No more than a scrap of papyrus. Sparta will fight to regain her Queen.

MENELAUS. But I don't want her back.

ANALYTIKOS. Can you tell that to Sparta? Remember, the King can do no wrong. Last night I dreamed of war.

MENELAUS. No! No! Don't say that. After the scandal I can't be expected to fight to get her back.

ANALYTIKOS. Sparta will see with the eyes of chivalry.

MENELAUS [*fuming*]. But I don't believe in war.

ANALYTIKOS [*still obdurate*]. Have you forgotten the oath pledged of old, with Ulysses and Agamemnon? They have sworn, if ever the time came, to fight and defend the Queen.

MENELAUS [*bitterly*]. I didn't think of the triple alliance.

ANALYTIKOS. Can Sparta ask less of her King?

MENELAUS. Let's hear the other side. We can perhaps arbitrate. Peace at any price.

ANALYTIKOS. Some bargains are too cheap.

MENELAUS [*hopelessly*]. But I am a pacifist.

ANALYTIKOS. You are Menelaus of Sparta, and Sparta's a nation of soldiers.

MENELAUS [*desperately*]. I am too proud to fight!

ANALYTIKOS. Here, put on your shield. [*A great clamor comes up from the courtyard, Analytikos steps out on the balcony and is greeted with shouts of "The King! The King!" Addressing the crowd.*] People of Sparta, this calamity has been forced upon us. [*Menelaus winces.*] We are a peaceful people. But thanks to our unparalleled efficiency, the military system of Sparta is the most powerful in all Greece and we can mobilize in half an hour.

[*Loud acclaims from the people. Menelaus, the papyrus still in hand, crawls over and attempts to stop Analytikos.*]

ANALYTIKOS [*not noticing him*]. In the midst of connubial and communal peace the thunderbolt has fallen on the King. [*Menelaus tugs at Analytikos' robe.*] Broken in spirit as he is, he is already pawing the ground like a battle steed. Never will we lay down our arms! We and Jupiter! [*Cheers.*] Never until the Queen is restored to Menelaus. Never, even if it takes ten years. [*Menelaus squirms. A loud cheer.*] Even now the King is buckling on his shield. [*More cheers. Analytikos steps farther forward and then with bursting eloquence.*] One hate we have and one alone! [*Yells from below.*]

Hate by water and hate by land, Hate of the head and hate of the hand,  
Hate of Paris and hate of Troy That has broken the Queen for a  
moment's toy.

*[The yells grow fiercer.]*

Zeus' thunder will shatter the Trojan throne. We have one hate and  
one alone!

*[Menelaus sits on the floor dejectedly looking at the papyrus. A  
thunder of voices from the people.]*

We have one hate and one alone. Troy! Troy!

*[Helmets and swords are thrown into the air. The cheers grow  
tumultuous, trumpets are blown, and the Curtain falls.]*