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Synopsis: Athena, Aphrodite, and Hera meet to discuss the story of Troy. As they squabble over Hecuba's reign, Gaia informs them she has decided the time has come for the Final Destruction of humanity, but is persuaded to allow Hecuba to one last chance to demonstrate that humanity is worth saving.

The Chorus drags in a chained Hecuba and Cassandra is brought to her. Cassandra has been offered freedom if she will support Menelaus's claim to the throne. She is persuaded to remain loyal to Hecuba and so is dragged to her death by the Chorus.

Andromache, nine months pregnant, is brought to Hecuba with news of dead family members. While she appears to loyal to Hecuba, she has come to trap Hecuba into incriminating herself in order to save her unborn daughter. When Andromache fails, she is led away to her own death.

Finally, Helen is brought to Hecuba. Instead of signs of torture that Hecuba has endured, Helen is radiant, appearing to have switched her allegiance to Menelaus. She has no offer of freedom for Hecuba, only the length of time she is able to remain alive while entombed with one of the Chorus members so that she can witness the Final Destruction.

Gaia is skeptical, but the goddesses are elated to learn that although destruction will take place, they have proved their point and humanity will have another chance to redeem themselves. But Gaia soon dispels any rejoicing when she reveals that her reprieve is not a blessing, but potentially an even worse curse. Humanity is sentenced to repeat all of its horrors until the end of time. Still, Hecuba is shown kindness by the Chorus member who will be entombed with her, and as her reward she is granted the blessing of oblivion and will not be required to return to recreate her own sins.

Cast:

#### Gods

Aphrodite, Goddess of Love: female, 30s

Hera, Goddess of Women: female, 40s

Athena, Goddess of War: female, 20s

Gaia, Mother Earth: female, 50s

#### Humans

Hecuba, Queen of Troy: female, 50s

Cassandra, Princess: female, teens

Andromache, Princess: female, 30s

Helen, Stolen Concubine: female, 20s

#### Chorus

One: female, 40s – The Brain

Two: female, 30s – The Snark

Three: female, 20s – The Muscle

Four: female, teens – The Heart

### Notes on Casting:

The work of the Chorus in this piece cannot be overstated. At various points they are called upon to provide a percussive underscoring. This should be accomplished by using items that would be found in an abandoned office, such as waste baskets, empty cabinets, knocking on doors, clapping, stomping, etc.

The characters are described as female, but that should not be construed to mean the actors portraying these roles must be cis female. The directors and producers of this play are expected to make casting decisions with a mission of diversity and inclusion, including race, age, and gender identity.

Ideally, a full cast of twelve would be utilized. However, if doubling is required to reduce the number of actors employed, this doubling scheme will reduce the cast to six actors:

Actor 1: ONE/GAIA

Actor 2: TWO/APHRODITE

Actor 3: THREE/HERA

Actor 4: FOUR/ATHENA

Actor 5: CASSANDRA/ANDROMACHE/HELEN

Actor 6: HECUBA

### **Trigger Warning:**

There is violence against women and children performed on stage, and even more graphic descriptions of violence in the dialogue.

*It is the playwright's expectation that this play will be produced by theatres with DEIA policies.*

*A dimly lit, abandoned office on a high floor of an urban tower. Debris is scattered; waste baskets, paper on the floor, broken chairs stacked to one side, obsolete filing cabinets, etc.*

*The view from the floor-to-ceiling windows is a burning hellscape of destruction, punctuated by thunder, lightning, and an occasional siren.*

*As the lights come up, three ethereal, beautiful female figures emerge from the rubble. They are ATHENA, APHRODITE, and HERA.*

ATHENA

How many times are we going to let them do this to themselves?

APHRODITE

I told you she was no different. I told you.

HERA

No. I told you.

APHRODITE

The point is... the point... is... I thought it. OK? I thought it, you know? Before you said it, Hera, I thought it.

HERA

So what? I knew it. And then I said it. Remember? Aphrodite, stop pretending to be so stupid.

APHRODITE

I'm not pretending.

HERA

I know you remember.

APHRODITE

I don't.

HERA

That night Dionysus washed Poseidon's feet with that red wine? Remember? Athena, back me up here. And then you said, "Oh look! Just like every time the streets of Troy run with the blood of those stupid humans." And then Poseidon laughed and laughed, and you thought it was because you were so hilarious, but really it was because Dionysus's tongue tickled between his toes. Then I said --

APHRODITE

All right. Fine. You said it. ... But I thought it.

HERA

I said it because I knew it. You might have thought it, but I knew it.

ATHENA

She can still fix all of this.

APHRODITE

But she won't. She's just like all the men.

HERA

You never miss a chance to gloat.

APHRODITE

I told you --

HERA

No. I told you!

APHRODITE

I said it was a mistake right from the start. Remember? Dionysus was licking up that wine from between Poseidon's toes. You said... what you said. And then I said --

HERA

No! You said she wouldn't do it. I said she couldn't do it. Big difference. Big, big difference.

ATHENA

Coulda, woulda, shoulda. The point is, she was supposed to be great.

APHRODITE

But she wasn't. That's the trouble with you, Athena. You think women are superior to men, and they're just not. Whoever said what when, I was the only one who said it wouldn't, couldn't -- and yes, shouldn't turn out any differently.

HERA

It might have if --

APHRODITE

All I did was nudge Paris in Helen's direction.

HERA

No. You nudged Hecuba. You told her a man would just take what he wanted. Priam would never have given Paris an army just to take another man's wife. He knew who that boy was.

ATHENA

You said we wanted her to disrupt the patriarchy --

APHRODITE

Get her! “Disrupt the patriarchy!” I have never used that word in my life. I’m just fine with the patriarchy, thank you very much.

ATHENA

She did something all of the men never even thought to do.

APHRODITE

And it didn’t make a bit of difference, did it?

HERA

Just because none of the men before her didn’t see that great big horse as a booby trap does not mean Hecuba is a genius.

ATHENA

It shows a great military strategic mind.

HERA

One that got all the men in her family killed.

ATHENA

But that ambush saved countless Trojan lives.

HERA and APHRODITE

For three days!

APHRODITE

They’re all still dead.

ATHENA

My point is, she’s not finished. At this point in the narrative –

APHRODITE

Again, with the pretentious –

ATHENA

At this point in the narrative, Hecuba is still alive. Priam is always dead at this point. Paris? Hector? Achilles? All dead at this point when they had a chance to rule. That says something about her genius. She’s not finished.

HERA

She looks pretty finished to me.

ATHENA

If her plan had worked, she would have saved those girls. It was a brilliant plan. And next time –

HERA and APHRODITE

There won't be a next time!

ATHENA

There will always be a next time. You know why?

APHRODITE

Why?

ATHENA

Dionysus is always going to make us do that stupid beauty contest because they are always sure that 'this time' Paris is going to pick them as the most beautiful.

HERA

She has a point. Dionysus is so insecure about their looks.

APHRODITE

Well, we all know Paris is never going to pick them as the most beautiful.

HERA and ATHENA

*laughing*

No, he won't.

ATHENA

But it will give us another chance to get it right.

HERA

What makes you think Gaia is going to allow Hecuba to have another chance?

APHRODITE

Zeus has already tried to let the humans get it right, like a bajillion times.

ATHENA

Haven't they been through enough? We've all been through enough.

APHRODITE

Why is the goddess of war suddenly interested in the humans living in peace?

HERA

Why aren't you? Aren't you supposed to be all about peace and love and understanding?

APHRODITE

I asked you first.

HERA

I asked you second.

APHRODITE

All right! Let's go!

*As HERA and APHRODITE are about to face off, a very large golden apple rolls across the stage.*

ATHENA, APHRODITE, HERA

The apple.

HERA

It always comes back to that damn apple.

APHRODITE

What a bullshit prize. I am a goddess. Making me compete for an apple. That's just wrong.

ATHENA

I don't even like apples.

HERA

Well, if one of us didn't always cheat, it would be just a fun little contest, now, wouldn't it?

APHRODITE

I've said for a long time Dionysus can't hold their wine.

HERA

Don't blame them.

APHRODITE

Who else is responsible?

*ATHENA and HERA give APHRODITE a pointed look.*

APHRODITE

Don't give me that look. It's always Dionysus's idea. No matter what any of you says, Dionysus always convinces Zeus that this time it will be, "like... so intense!" And you two fools fall for it. Every time. Dionysus is just mean when they're drinking. Pissy and mean. And I'll say it: just like the two of you, a little jealous of me.

HERA

Please. You have some messed up connection to Paris, like you owe him or something, and you always use him to cheat.

APHRODITE

It's called a winning strategy. It's not my fault if you haven't figured out how to block it.

HERA

Bribing Paris with Menelaus's wife isn't a strategy!

APHRODITE

This isn't on me. If Hecuba hadn't put those girls in that wooden horse --

ATHENA

She had to! Those girls were being used as prizes for Menelaus's generals.

APHRODITE

Their fathers were fairly compensated.

ATHENA

It's not fair. We talk about seeing if a woman will do something a man wouldn't, and then when she does, she gets no support.

APHRODITE

That's something else the men never did. They never got their own people to turn against them.

HERA

She's got you there.

ATHENA

I do not concede that point. She changed the narrative --

APHRODITE

Narrative!

HERA

Oh my god!

ATHENA

Yes. Narrative. She changed the narrative, then you had to go and drag Helen back into the whole mess. Just like you always do.

HERA

No one but Paris even likes Helen.

APHRODITE

Hecuba does.

HERA

Girl, what have you been smoking?

APHRODITE

As far as I'm concerned, this is all your fault.

HERA

Mine?

APHRODITE

And hers. You both know I'm going to make Paris fall in love with Helen. And you still agree to try to compete with my beauty every single time.

HERA

We hope against hope you'll change.

APHRODITE

I'm beautiful. I'm not that deep, OK?

ATHENA

Maybe she's right. We should know better by now.

HERA

She is not right! If she didn't cheat, we all know Paris would choose me every time. Every. Single. Time. It's called mommy issues, so as the goddess of motherhood --

*ATHENA and APHRODITE laugh.*

He would! Look at his devotion to Hecuba. Of course, he's going to pick me as the most beautiful. I am the original pick-me girl.

APHRODITE

Even I know that's not what that means. I am the goddess of love, Hera! Men are always going to pick me as the most beautiful.

ATHENA

Men love war every bit as much as they love sex. If you didn't cheat, they would always choose me as the most beautiful.

HERA

Men are nothing without a mother's love.

APHRODITE

Tell that to Oedipus.

*GAIA appears; a heavily shrouded gargoyle figure whose masked face is never fully seen. GAIA picks up the apple and displays it so all three goddesses must see it.*

GAIA

There once was a magnificent city,  
Destroyed by celestial committee.  
The gods took no blame.  
They thought it a game.  
And now they wallow in self-pity.

Pathetic.

ATHENA

You have to admit, oh Great Mother Earth,  
They've never proved more worthy of rebirth.

GAIA

No, I don't.

ATHENA

Hecuba's always a minor player.  
We must be willing to answer her prayer.

GAIA

No, we don't.

ATHENA

Can't we, sweet Gaia, allow her some time?  
To shift the patriarchal paradigm?

HERA

APHRODITE

Stop!

Who gave her a dictionary?

GAIA

No more time.

*GAIA makes the apple disappear.*

GAIA

Bicker, bicker, bicker, and bicker.  
I have come to make this plot thicker.  
She's had her day.  
That's all I'll say.  
This time the end must come quicker.

HERA

Yes, mother. But next time --

GAIA

No next time!

ATHENA

But --

GAIA

No next time!!

ATHENA

You gave men scores of chances to succeed.  
With just one failure women must concede?

APHRODITE

I don't believe humans can really change.  
They lack our depth, our strength, our mental range.

HERA

Oh, look who is talking out of her ass.  
We'll discuss this alone; you bag of gas.

ATHENA

Mother.  
If Hecuba has the ability to learn,  
It might be worth letting humans return  
One last time to strive for peace and love  
Without our interventions from above.

GAIA

No more time.

ATHENA

Mother, if I may, I beg and beseech,  
Indulge me, please. I have a little speech.

*GAIA silences ATHENA, as she pantomimes a dramatic speech,  
unaware she's been silenced.*

GAIA

Why so still?

APHRODITE

Because they all are both just hateful and mean.  
You wouldn't believe what I've heard and seen.

HERA

Mother, I --

APHRODITE

Man. Woman. They are all of them the same.  
One more chance and they'll just ruin it all again.

GAIA

Now you. Speak.

HERA

There are two young women whom I believe  
Could demonstrate worthy of a reprieve.

*GAIA releases her spell on ATHENA, who never realizes she's been silenced.*

ATHENA

... there are two young women whom I believe  
Could demonstrate the whole race is worthy of reprieve.  
Cassandra and Andromache, they're named.  
They're beyond fault and cannot be blamed.  
Cassandra's quite young and done nothing yet...

*GAIA silences ATHENA again, who continues to speechify in pantomime.*

GAIA

This is your assessment? All yours?

HERA

I might have heard it from... somewhere.

*Again, GAIA releases ATHENA, who picks up mid-speech.*