

ACT IScene 1

A woman waits in a waiting room.

She waits.

She waits.

She thinks she hears something--

No, never mind.

She waits. She is used to waiting. She is wrapped in a large blanket or sheet, as though she fled somewhere in a hurry and didn't have an overcoat.

A man enters with a clipboard, making her jump.

MAN

Name?

The man does not look at her.

HELEN

Oh--Helen.

MAN

Last name?

HELEN

No.

MAN

Reason for admission?

HELEN

I--the whole thing, or--? I said on the phone...

MAN

Reason?

HELEN

My, uh, my ex is...he brought all his friends to my...to where I live now, and they won't leave.

MAN

And?

HELEN

He wants me back. They keep trying to get in...

(CONTINUED)

MAN

To your home?

HELEN

To my...? To where I live with my husband, yes. Sorry, but I thought it would be mostly women working here...?

MAN

Where is your husband?

HELEN

Currently? Dead. They killed him. And then I married his brother, but now he's also, um, dead. They breached the walls, everything was on fire--

MAN

And your home is now unsafe for you?

HELEN

It's on fire, yes.

MAN

Children?

HELEN

None. Oh! One.

The man pauses.

HELEN

Sorry. She's not very central.

MAN

And where is she currently?

HELEN

With my sister. I think.

MAN

And you can't stay with your sister tonight?

HELEN

Oh, no.

MAN

She lives out of town?

HELEN

Yes. And her daughter was...she lost her daughter recently, she's not well.

(CONTINUED)

MAN

But she is the primary caregiver for your daughter?

HELEN

I think. Or my daughter might be married now, the time line's tricky.

MAN

Occupation?

HELEN

Sorry?

MAN

Occupation. Job. What do you do for work?

HELEN

...queen. Formerly.

MAN

(Writing on the clipboard)

"Homemaker"

HELEN

That's not--

MAN

Date of birth?

HELEN

Is there a faster way to do this? Sorry, it's just that if I wait too long things tend to...start up again.

MAN

Date of birth?

HELEN

I wasn't born.

MAN

I understand that you're upset, ma'am, but I need to fill this out before I can help you.

HELEN

I was hatched--

MAN

Date of birth?

HELEN

--from an egg? I know, it's--

(CONTINUED)

MAN

Ma'am, please, we have other people waiting.

HELEN

(Looking around her)

There's no one else in the waiting room.

War horns, distantly.

HELEN

Oh no.

MAN

Date of birth.

HELEN

Early 13th century, B.C.E.

MAN

And do you have someone else you can stay with after tonight?

War drums, distantly.

HELEN

No. Please hurry?

MAN

Don't worry, ma'am, this is a safe space.

The drums grow louder.

HELEN

Actually, I think I'll go...

MAN

Curfew is ten P.M.

HELEN

I can't leave?

MAN

No. Now...

The man is searching for something in his pockets.

HELEN

But you hear that, don't you?

The man pulls out a small cup for urine.

(CONTINUED)

MAN

We just need to administer your drug test, and then we can get you set up with a bed for the night. You'll have to share a room with some of the other women. We can discuss a long term stay and legal options in the morning.

HELEN

Oh. All right.

She stands up. The sounds of war are growing louder.

HELEN

The walls are quite secure here?

MAN

You're entirely safe ma'am. The bathroom's just down the hall.

He offers her the urine cup, still preoccupied by his clipboard.

Helen walks over, nervously, to take it.

When her hand brushes his, he looks her full in the face for the first time. He falls in love.

MAN

Oh!

HELEN

Shit.

Helen tries to pull away, but the man holds her hand fast.

MAN

You're beautiful.

He reaches for her face.

HELEN

I know.

Helen wrenches her arm free.

HELEN

On second thought, I have to go.

MAN

Stay!

(CONTINUED)

The sounds of war are louder now.

HELEN

Oh no. Oh no. They're here.

MAN

I love you.

HELEN

Yes--but it's too late, you have to leave, they can't find you with me. Go home.

MAN

Here will I dwell, for heaven is these lips...

The Man tries to kiss her. Helen runs from him, only to run smack into Chorus 1 as he enters. He cups her face in his hands.

CHORUS 1

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?

Chorus 2 enters from the other side, stabbing the Man as he does so.

HELEN

C'mon, guys--

Helen tries to run, but is stopped by Chorus 2.

CHORUS 2

And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

The Man rises again as Chorus 3. She is surrounded.

HELEN

Aren't you tired of this?

CHORUS 1

Who damned men with the swaying of her hips?
And slunk back home again when war was won?

HELEN

I'm tired.

CHORUS 3

The hearts of kings to her are but a toy,

The Chorus circles Helen, half worshipful, half threatening.

(CONTINUED)

HELEN

Let's do something else this time. Electra. Medea?

CHORUS 1

The graceless Helen, lovely, many-manned,

HELEN

I'd really love to be Medea right now.

*The Chorus veils Helen in her sheet or blanket, as
though preparing a bride for the altar.*

CHORUS 2

The Spartan queen whose beauty felled proud Troy,

CHORUS 3

Her each breath foul destruction 'cross the land.

*She is now completely veiled, invisible to the
audience.*

ALL CHORUS

(Chanting)

*Helenaus, helenadros, heleptolis. Helenaus, helenadros,
heleptolis. Helenaus, helenadros, heleptolis.*

CHORUS 1

Destroyer of ships.

CHORUS 2

Destroyer of man.

CHORUS 3

Destroyer of cities.

*As one, the Chorus yanks the sheet off of
Helen--but there's no one underneath.*