

The World Burns for Her

“And so the Trojans buried Hector, breaker of horses.”

And so he was buried.

To Troy, it is a nightmare, their country is in ruins, and the dirt kicked up from the heat of battle now lays limp, caked in the blood of their countrymen. Priam weeps, alongside him Hecuba stands, her white hands gripping his arm, her keening cries running from her throat to race among the thousands alike. Undoubtedly, the grief that wrecks Andromache’s shaking body is better shared amongst those who lost even more than herself.

But she struggles to pick up her feet, it is as if the chains of slavery have already sunk their teeth through her ankles, among the women’s mourning cries are the snaps of whips and faint echoes of demands she recalls giving not too long ago. *The master becomes the dog.*

And it is all his fault.

A part of her rejoices while another crawls desperately away from the notion, but it is relentless in its pursuit. While the images of his corpse - dragged through the dirt and lathered in month-old blood, still invoke her nightly laments, she can’t help the anger that marbles through each tear. Anger, hurt, call a dead man what you will but he still leaves his wife a widow.

To Troy, it is a nightmare. For her, it is real and it is raw. For her, all hope is lost. He even said it himself, in such a glorious way was her disaster painted. *War is a man’s concern.* A man’s concern, the idea mocks her even now. He didn’t seem all too concerned after considering her fate to come. Being a father came second, a warrior first, always. His fear of some Trojan carelessly tarnishing his name always sprang to mind before he even *considered* his child.

“And let them say he is a better man than his father.” Of course, she would want nothing less, for his father was selfish, he was foolish and he lived in such fear of cowardice she could dare say it was cowardly in itself. All he could think of was his forsaken *honour*. Never his home, his people, his son. Never his life, never-

She stops herself. Come, Andromache, stop avoiding it, just let it be over with.

Never did he think of *her*.

There it is.

War is a man’s concern, and she is grateful for that to be true, but it’s not. It’s *not* true. War is not *just* a man’s concern; if it were, she should be free to leave without resistance. To be done with the petty tussles of man and to raise her child to be something wonderful, after all, that is what he wanted, correct?

But no, for her fate awaits with chains and a bloody sword, impatient not for its holder but for the heart of the child she holds so dearly to her chest. They say war is a man’s concern, but

if it truly was, he would still be here to deal with the consequences that follow it. But man does not do that, man sits in his grave, and he is honoured, made immortal with his sacrifice, a glorious legacy and dignity to his name.

“May I be dead before I hear your cries as they drag you away.”

She still recalls the hands gripping her wrists so tightly, leaving the first of many marks on her skin. The way she screamed for her son, the world, shattering before her, and finally, her heart breaking for the third time, all over again, as they discussed the matter of her son as if he were nothing but a hazard, a risk that can't be taken. Outrageous doesn't even begin to describe such a thing. Jealous of a dead man, she never thought she'd see the day.

Some days she prays her laments are unheard to the passing ear, her masters now are used to her cries. But others, she hopes somehow, someday, *he* hears them, all the way from the underworld. Sleeping in her broken quarters and beaten by her masters, childless, hopeless, with no way out. It is hardly the life he wished for her.

But amongst her rage, she knows it is fuelled by grief. She knows she isn't pretending when she curses Achilles' name instead of his, with her friends who suffer the same chains. She knows she doesn't pretend when she entertains the idea of slipping poison into her master's wine or slipping a dagger into her folded clothes. But it's just easier to pretend she's angry at him instead. It's just easier.

And even now, she does *his* bidding. She serves her master well, she carries on despite how much she loathes him. She lives for him and for her son.

Is it enough? To keep going like this, keep meeting that loom with her blistered fingers for her son now dead and her husband long gone, is that truly enough? Would that satisfy her? Does it satisfy her?

Perhaps not.

Oh, she's so tired of crying, of playing the good little Andromache, of hearing all the remarks, the comments, oh, look at dutiful Andromache, doing what lovely, perfect Hector wanted her to do, honouring and grieving him all the same. What a wonderful woman she is, even in rags and chains she is perfect. What a prize you earned there, Neoptolemus, what a steal!

But behind her, as much as she tries to hide it, is revenge. Revenge calls to her like her son, with small hands reaching for her neck, it calls to her with her husband's sword and armour, screams to her with violent promise. No longer shall he fondly smile at her, as if she were a heaven-send, no, he will wish he had killed her when he had the chance, he will loathe her as he chokes on his blood, when her fingers wring his neck, like the wet clothes she strains dry.

“Know this Andromache, the strong always win!”

And so she shall.