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Hock G. Tjoa

**The Women Who Mourn**

May 2017

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**Author's Note:** This is a slightly adapted excerpt from my book, *Agamemnon Must Die*. The Greek and Trojan women come to tend the grave of Agamemnon, the victorious leader of the Greeks against Troy. I offer this version to give an airing to some of my attempts at verse. You can learn more about my book on my blog site: [hockgtjoa.blogspot.com](http://hockgtjoa.blogspot.com).

**[Mourners, women]**

We hail and laud thee, O Agamemnon, king of men.  
You who returned victorious from your mighty labors  
On the broad plains of Troy as you did from  
Your many expeditions to establish  
The will of Zeus throughout this land.  
O king, we have faithfully maintained your shrine,  
As enjoined by Lord Aigisthos and his Lady Clytemnestra.  
At every new moon, we have come  
To honor your memory with fresh libations,  
To sweeten the air with boughs of laurel,  
And to sweep away grime and filth, from man or beast,  
Or from the wind and the weather, that should foul your memorial  
Or tarnish your memory.  
We implore you to keep the city safe and the plains fertile!  
We beseech you to guard over us against pestilence,  
As well as hostile swords and spears.  
We pray peace be with your spirit for you have  
Made all who live in the Argolid proud.  
Hail Agamemnon, king of men!



**[The Greek mourners.]**

Ou-ai, listen also to our woe for our grief overflows.  
We, whose fathers, husbands, lovers, and brothers followed you;  
We, who have waited in vain for their return.  
Our number is great; those here are but the few  
Who have sought the protection of the palace  
From hunger and homelessness. No one can protect us  
From the gnawing pain of sorrow and loss.  
It is not greater than those of our number  
Who enjoy the comfort of remaining family.  
They suffer still from the anguish of their loss.  
Our own eyes have grown dim from the tears we have shed.  
Our voices have become hoarse from the cries we have raised.  
Our hearts have dried up with our hopes and love.  
Only these shells remain: bereft, benighted, beyond hope.  
Are our fathers, husbands, lovers, and brothers with you?  
Do they do you honor as we do? As we must, by command  
Of our lord and our lady?  
They followed you gladly for love of their king;  
We beseech you to share with them the libations we have brought.

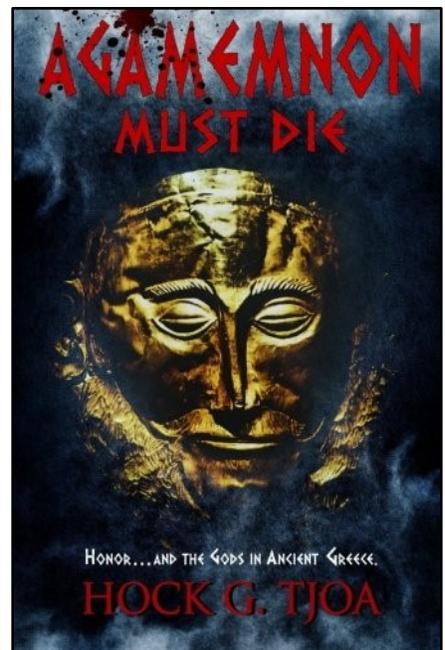
**[The Trojan mourners.]**

Ou-ai, ou-ai, hear us, most fearful king of men,  
You who led those myriad ships and men against us.  
Foolish Paris gave you your moment and you grasped it.  
Hector and Priam loved him too dearly to abandon him.  
To what end? Ou-ai, to what end?  
Those we loved most dearly, our fathers, husbands, lovers, and brothers –  
All fell before your swords and flames.  
They made you pay dearly, they did.  
Us, you and your men gathered as trophies and war brides.  
Fully half of us could not bear the thought of such fate.  
They embraced us, then threw themselves  
Into Poseidon's watery clutch.

Fully half of those left among us were sick and lost at sea,  
Joining their captors in that briny sepulcher.  
Yet another half of those who arrived here  
Have since succumbed to taunts, torment and terror  
As prisoners of war. We remain,  
We do not deserve better. We have seen how  
Those captured before Priam's walls have fared.  
We know the cruelties that Troy visited on those who  
Fell into its snares or yielded to its armies.  
We who are left of your trophies and able still to walk  
Have joined in pouring the libations to you,  
King of men, to join in your sorrow  
And share in your grief. Know this, that the libations we poured  
For you, we have poured also for ourselves.  
Ou-ai, ou-ai!

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**Hock Tjoa** is a resident of Lake Wildwood and is active in the Writers Group. You can send comments to the Author at: [wildwoodwritersgroup@gmail.com](mailto:wildwoodwritersgroup@gmail.com)  
Hock's book, **Agamemnon Must Die**, is available in paper and E form at Amazon.com, CreateSpace, and Smashwords.



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