

**PERUSAL SCRIPT**

**CASSANDRA**

by Eric Samuelson



Newport, Maine

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## **CASSANDRA**

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS - 1f 1m

**CASSANDRA** — Captured/Stolen Princess of Troy

**AGAMEMNON** — King of Mycenae and Conqueror of Troy

TIME: Anytime but the past

COSTUMES: Modern or historical or timeless

SETTING: Simple is best

**CASSANDRA** by Eric Samuelsen 1f 1m, 10 minutes, Contemporary dress, Simple setting. As one of the captives of the Trojan War, the spoil of Agamemnon, King of Mycenae, Cassandra is resting on her way to the palace of Agamemnon — and a life of servitude. War, women's roles and rights, the aggressive male, are all themes touched on in this short play. It may leave you with questions unanswered, but that is what good plays do — provide food for thought. **ORDER #3256**

**Eric Samuelsen** taught at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio before joining the faculty at Brigham Young University in 1992. He became head of the Playwriting program at BYU in 1999. He has also taught as an adjunct faculty member in the Religion department. He retired from BYU in 2012.

As a playwright, Samuelsen has had twenty-seven plays professionally produced in Utah, Indiana, Louisiana, New York, and California. Some of his plays include *Gadanton*, which has seen three professional productions across the country, *A Love Affair with Electrons*, *Family*, *The Plan*, and *The Way We're Wired*. He is resident playwright at Plan-B Theatre Company in Salt Lake City, who designated their 2013-14 season a 'Season of Eric, including productions of six of his plays.

He is a member of the Playwrights' Circle, and the Dramatists Guild. He is three-time winner of the Annual Award in Playwriting offered by the Association for Mormon Letters (AML) and he became president of AML in 2007. In 2013 the organization awarded him the Smith Pettit Award for his lifetime work as a playwright. He has been a staff writer for the on-line satirical magazine *The Sugarbeet*. He was also featured in the book *Conversations with Mormon Authors*, edited by Chris Bigelow. He is a noted Ibsen translator, and has also published scholarly articles on 19th and 20th century Scandanavian Theatre, and more recently, on LDS drama and film. He blogged at [Mormoniconoclast.com](http://Mormoniconoclast.com). Eric died in September of 2019 after a long battle with polymyositis. This has left a huge hole in the Theatre Community within, and outside of, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

*(A campfire, some blankets. AGAMEMNON cooks supper. CASSANDRA is tied up, feet and hands. She has a split lip, black eye, some facial bruising. She sits, wary, still. AGAMEMNON crosses to her with some food.)*

**AGAMEMNON:** I'll untie you to eat. But you have to promise not to attack me.

*(She makes no sign.)*

I'm serious. It's pointless anyway. You're a princess of Troy, I understand that, and the obligations that imposes. Still, not tonight. All right?

*(After a moment, she gives the tiniest of nods.)*

All right, then.

*(He unties her hands, gives her a plate of food. Sits a bit away from her, eats.)*

We're two days away. Maybe three, depends on how much we want to push it. Which I do, honestly. I want this over with.

*(CASSANDRA nods.)*

It's not going to be so bad for you. We'll be married, and that will carry certain requirements. But you'll have your own room. Servants, good clothes. And little need for public appearances. My wife will surely resent your presence, but you needn't interact with her. You're a princess. You'll be treated as such.

**CASSANDRA:** I'll be dead.

**AGAMEMNON:** I've told you. . . .

**CASSANDRA:** As will you. Two days, maybe three? And then we will be murdered.

**AGAMEMNON:** *(Pulls out a gag, stands.)* Do you need this? Reminder?

**CASSANDRA:** And of course, you don't believe me. No one ever does.

**AGAMEMNON:** Of course I don't.

*(Exasperated pause.)*

If you said Clytemnestra has taken a lover, well, that's unsurprising; I've been gone ten years. If you say she's angry with me over Iphigenia, again, I expect her to be. But she's queen of Argos. She'll play her role.

**CASSANDRA:** She will slit both our throats, while Aegisthus and his men hold us fast. The Elders of Argos will watch, horrified, but will not intervene.

**AGAMEMNON:** *(Crossing to her with gag.)* Here we go.

**CASSANDRA:** Though why she murders me is a mystery. Her husband and his rape victim? Why?

**AGAMEMNON:** Will you stop?

**CASSANDRA:** I was right about Paris. I told my father, and he ignored me. I was right about the wooden horse.

**AGAMEMNON:** That's enough.

*(Starting to gag her.)*

**CASSANDRA:** I'll stop!

**AGAMEMNON:** You've promised before.

**CASSANDRA:** I'll stop. You don't believe me; I don't know why I bother.

**AGAMEMNON:** Eat your food.

**CASSANDRA:** *(After a moment.)* What's the plan?

**AGAMEMNON:** What do you mean?

**CASSANDRA:** How do you imagine it?

**AGAMEMNON:** Argos?

*(She nods.)*

You're a spoil of war. I'll want a public ceremony. Front steps of the palace.

**CASSANDRA:** Show me off.

**AGAMEMNON:** Show you off.

**CASSANDRA:** Why?

**AGAMEMNON:** It's what's expected.

**CASSANDRA:** And that's you. You do what people expect of you.

**AGAMEMNON:** Always.

**CASSANDRA:** My father was the same. People think kings are free, able to act with impunity. He said the reality was, kings have less freedom than the lowliest servants.

**AGAMEMNON:** I admired your father.

**CASSANDRA:** Really?

**AGAMEMNON:** Very much. An honorable man and an effective leader of his people.

**CASSANDRA:** Then why did you attack us?

**AGAMEMNON:** Do you think I wanted to?

*(Pause.)*

When Menelaus came to me, whingeing and weeping, 'oh, she's left me, she's run off with him, she's broken my heart,' I wanted to slap him. We knew Helen, scheming, inconstant, flirting coquette. I delayed, I prevaricated, I kept hoping she'd come to her senses and come home. He'd take her back. He'd be angry for the two minutes it took her to seduce him again. I saw it myself when Troy fell. Thousands dead, all her fault; she was his to execute. He advanced on her with his sword, and she dropped her gown, baring her heart for the blow. One look at those breasts, and he was weeping for her forgiveness. I know my brother and I know Helen, my wife's sister. Neither was worth a war.

**CASSANDRA:** Nor was Paris.

**AGAMEMNON:** No. Nor their sordid little dalliance.

**CASSANDRA:** It's the fault of Eros, and Aphrodite. That's Paris' excuse. He was the victim. Of forces beyond his control.

**AGAMEMNON:** A spell, a curse. An arrow from Cupid's bow.

**CASSANDRA:** I think of the brothers. Paris and Hector. Menelaus and you. One worthless, one noble.

**AGAMEMNON:** Men make choices. When they choose dishonorably, they blame the Gods.

**CASSANDRA:** Sometimes it can look that way.

**AGAMEMNON:** Ah, yes, says the victim of a curse.

**CASSANDRA:** I fought a God who wanted me.

**AGAMEMNON:** I killed a daughter.

*(Pause.)*

I do what's required of me.

**CASSANDRA:** There was no need to attack us. My father was prepared to negotiate Helen's return.

**AGAMEMNON:** Do you think I wanted to? Attack our greatest trading partner, the key to our economic life? I knew Priam; you're right. He would rather have settled this. My soldiers were reluctant, my generals dismissive. The war was at best unnecessary and at worst, foolish.

**CASSANDRA:** Then why?

**AGAMEMNON:** I do what's required. I'm a king; a challenge to my authority must be answered, forcibly and immediately. And the ancient law of hospitality had been violated. In my brother's kingdom, by a royal guest in his home.

**CASSANDRA:** You felt insulted?

**AGAMEMNON:** Not insulted. Disrespected. It's a question of statecraft; some affronts must be met violently.

**CASSANDRA:** I don't concede the necessity.

**AGAMEMNON:** Well, you lost. When we arrive. . . .

**CASSANDRA:** And are murdered.

**AGAMEMNON:** When we enter the gates of Argos, that's why we'll need a ceremony. That's why I need to display you, as a trophy of war. The people of the city have lost brothers, husbands, sons. A whole generation, gone for ten years. They need to see what that sacrifice accomplished. Something tangible; something they can see and touch.

**CASSANDRA:** They'll touch me.

**AGAMEMNON:** Mostly not.

**CASSANDRA:** Mostly?

**AGAMEMNON:** The guards will let a few of them through. Women. They'll rend your clothes, pull your hair. Draw blood with their nails, perhaps. It will be over soon enough.

**CASSANDRA:** All right.

**AGAMEMNON:** (*Amused pause.*) I thought I was preparing you. For an unpleasant and humiliating ordeal.

**CASSANDRA:** I don't care.

**AGAMEMNON:** And then a priest will come forward. And he will marry us.

**CASSANDRA:** And then you will rape me. Again.

**AGAMEMNON:** I do what's expected. Deflowering you, princess, was expected.

**CASSANDRA:** By your men. Yes. Huddled, salacious, by your tent.

**AGAMEMNON:** Again. Necessary.

**CASSANDRA:** To be repeated. Ad nauseum.

**AGAMEMNON:** We're going to be married. I'd rather hoped that, in time, you'd welcome me to your bed.

**CASSANDRA:** Because it will be my turn to do what's expected.

**AGAMEMNON:** Having no real alternative.

**CASSANDRA:** No.

**AGAMEMNON:** You'll have time to come around.

**CASSANDRA:** I'll give you this. You are, I think, a reluctant rapist.

**AGAMEMNON:** Certainly. Absolutely.

**CASSANDRA:** I sensed that.

**AGAMEMNON:** Did you?

**CASSANDRA:** A bit. Always a bit of playacting to it, I thought.

## **2.5 MORE PAGES TO THE END**