Lesia Ukrainka
Cassandra. Epilogue[*]

Epilogue

Takes place in Hellas a long time after the destruction of Troy. The home of the King of Argos, Agamemnon, in Mycenae is richly decorated with flowers. The path from the doors to the gate is laid out in velvet cloth.
The sky is stormy. There is occasional lightning, but it is not raining. Queen Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are watching the slaves finish decorating the palace.

CLYTEMNESTRA (to Aegisthus)
Not one of the kings has ever had
such a welcome.

AEGISTHUS
                    That's true, Clytemnestra.
(Looking into her eyes, meaningfully)
Aren't you sorry to waste so much velvet?

CLYTEMNESTRA
                    Oh, no.
I'm not sorry about anything, or anyone.

AEGISTHUS
Then why did you just shiver?

CLYTEMNESTRA
                    Can't you see
How blinding the lightning is?

MESSENGER (runs in, breathless)
                    The king is coming! The king!

CLYTEMNESTRA (to the slaves)
Open wider the gates! Slave maidens,
Be ready to throw flowers on the path.

(The sound of a chariot is heard. The slaves open the gate wide. After a moment, Agamemnon enters the gate leading Cassandra by the hand. Slave maidens throw flowers beneath their feet. Clytemnestra and Aegisthus meets Agamemnon by the gate.)

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[*] Epilogue translated by Maxim Tarnawsky.

CLYTEMNESTRA
My king! My dear husband!
I can't believe my good happiness. (Embraces Agamemnon)

AEGISTHUS
My dear brother! (Kisses Agamemnon)

CLYTEMNESTRA (pointing to Cassandra)
Who is this with you?

AGAMEMNON
She's Priam's daughter,
The prophetess Cassandra.

AEGISTHUS
So, Helenus
Who came from Troy and now
Is foretelling god's will in Delphi
Is her brother?

CASSANDRA
Aagh!!

AGAMEMNON
Certainly. It is my will
That she be treated with respect in our home
As befits a priestess, a queen.
For us she is not a captive.

CLYTEMNESTRA
Yes, my king!
I am accustomed to obey. Although I do not know
This woman.

CASSANDRA
But I know you,
You are Iphigenia's mother.
(Clytemnestra covers her face with a veil.)

AGAMEMNON (to Cassandra)
Why
Do you remind her of this now?

CASSANDRA

And why did you forget about this then
When you were ready to offer your daughter
As a sacrifice to the angry goddess? You forgot
Who was Iphigenia's mother, who her father?
You only remembered then that an offering was needed
To assure the destruction of our Troy.

AGAMEMNON

You are still my enemy, I see.

CASSANDRA

You have more powerful enemies, King Agamemnon,
so what is Cassandra to you?

AGAMEMNON

                Tell me,
where is my enemy and what awaits me?
I am no unbelieving Trojan. I shall
Listen to your words and sincerely
Take them to heart. Speak!
Your words will become a divine judgment
For my home. Everything that you advise
I will obediently do.

CASSANDRA

                I? To you?
To you am I to give advice? Are we in Troy?
Is this the home of Priam?

AGAMEMNON (with signs of anger)
                Certainly not!
No one believed you there!

CASSANDRA

I should not be believed.

AGAMEMNON

                Have I offended you,
Queen Cassandra?

CASSANDRA
You are too late.
You should have asked this in Ilium.
There is no place in the whole world
For these conversations now. Better that we be silent.

CLYTEMNESTRA
A Hellene would not dare to speak to the king
In such a manner!

AEGISTHUS (quietly)
Trojans are insolent
By their nature. They say that Andromache
Treats her husband in such a manner
That it's a wonder how he can endure it.

CASSANDRA
Andromache?
She never was a Trojan.
Earlier, she had been Hector's wife.
Now, she is a Hellene's wife, and that's all.
She is neither a Hellene, nor a Trojan.
(To Clytemnestra)
Just like, you. But then, you're not even a wife. [woman—ти, правда, і не жінка.]

CLYTEMNESTRA (To Agamemnon)
Is it your intention, my king,
That your wife be insulted in this manner?

AGAMEMNON (troubled, sad)
Would that this were merely an insult!
There is, perhaps, something worse hidden here.
(To Clytemnestra)
Wife!
Is everything in order in our home?

CLYTEMNESTRA
Everything!
What evil is it that should take place?

CASSANDRA
So asks the mother of Iphigenia
(Clytemnestra once again covers herself.)

AEGISTHUS
I would have silenced the captive long before this.

CASSANDRA
So speaks the one who is accustomed to be king here
And can not bear to lose this privilege,
Although Mycenae is too narrow for two rulers.

AGAMEMNON
Queen Cassandra, welcome to my home.
(To Clytemnestra)
Lead us, my wife.

CASSANDRA (grabbing him by the arm)
                    Wait! Is it already
Time for us to step onto the bloody path?

AGAMEMNON (to Clytemnestra and Aegisthus)
                    What's this?
How do you interpret this prophecy?

AEGISTHUS
She is afraid to step onto the velvet
Because she understands it does not suit a captive.

CLYTEMNESTRA
She is insane. Pay her no mind.

AGAMEMNON (with trepidation, pleading)
Queen Cassandra, Explain, what are you predicting?
After all, the fortune of this home
Is something you now share with us.

CASSANDRA (with an unusual calm)
                    I know, king Agamemnon.
Do not believe my words, listen to the queen,
Take heed of what your relative has said.
Do not give heed to what a captive says.
There once was a prophet named Cassandra
She was consumed in Troy's destructive flames.
Her words of prophecy were turned to ashes
Which the wind scattered all across the sea.
A spark from these ashes has fallen
Into the heart of a simple captive, where
It burst into flame, and then extinguished.

(She looks at her ceremonial staff)
How wonderful? Where does this staff come from?
Whose is it? Why do I wear this diadem?
(She removes the diadem from her head and throws it at Clytemnestra's feet, and then she breaks her staff and throws it, too, on the ground.)
Now there is nothing of Cassandra left.
Queen Clytemnestra, assign me to a task.
I know how to do everything, except prophesize.

AGAMEMNON (takes her by the hand and leads her forward into the palace)
You are a queen and always shall be one.

CLYTEMNESTRA (whispering to Aegisthus)
We need two swords. You sharpen the weapons
And strike at him, while I shall deal with her.

(Strong thunder and a sudden downpour. Clytemnestra and Aegisthus hurriedly follow the others into the building.)

The End.