

## HECTOR'S CHILD: ANDROMACHE'S LAMENT

We watched them guide their Achaean ships along the strait, and dock,  
and wait and wait. The seasons came and went. Our child was born, so strong  
an infant offering delight to kings and gods. Each night I carried him  
in silence, stood him on the wall to watch the flicker of their camps.

This child they will not take, I'd said, protected by the gods, for Hector's sake.

\*\*\*

Now the stones are broken. Temple flames hold out to the skies a swirling hand,  
a last libation, spilling on the land. A useless gesture, for the gods decree  
the lifting up, the pulling down. The ground is thick with blood of royal hue,  
and widows, prostrate, clutch themselves, weep out their goddess woe.

But this child they will not take, this child, protected by the gods, for Hector's sake.

Bound as slaves we'll be, of Achilles son? A bitter life, though life is sweeter  
in *any* form than that of shades. Woe to Hades. Woe to the dead, who don't return.  
*My* child will not be slave for long. Astyanax, he is called, "Lord of the City," son  
of a prince, perhaps of Zeus himself! And boy becomes a man. His royal blood will burn.

This child will never take to slavery. He'll bide his time... and plan... for Hector's sake.

But wait... the crested helms are hovering. Their circle has a dark and evil feel.  
What now...? I think it is the wily work of one they call Odysseus. What more?  
Is there nothing worse we can endure? The crested plumes are quivering,  
as two men turn and strut in our direction. What final evil is this now unleashed?

They come to take... to hurl my clutching child from the highest wall... all for Hector's sake.

© Casey Robb 1997

Fifth Honorable Mention, *Any Form, Any Style, Annual Convention Poetry Contest,*  
*California Federation of Chaparral Poets.*