

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# Trojan Barbie

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by Christine Evans

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EXTRACT

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## CHARACTERS:

The Trojans:

- Actor 1: -HECUBA. Queen of Trojans; widow of Priam.
- Actor 2: -POLLY X. Hecuba's youngest daughter, age 15.
- Actor 3: -CASSANDRA: Hecuba's prescient daughter; late teens.
- Actor 4: -ANDROMACHE: Hecuba's daughter-in-law; Hector's widow; early 30s.
- Actor 5: -CLEA: Woman in the camp; CHORUS. Age can be flexibly cast.
- Actor 6: -ESME: Woman in the camp; CHORUS. Age can be flexibly cast.

The Others:

- Actor 7: -HELEN. The face that launched, etc. Ageless.
- Actor 8: -LOTTE: An English tourist and doll repair expert. Age 35-50.
- Actor 9: -MICA: Camp guard; also assigned to local spin. 30s.  
-CLIVE: Lotte's fantasy partner (actually a waiter.) Ageless and perfect.  
-OFFICER IN BLUE: Deus Ex Machina from the conquering army.
- Actor 10: -JORGE: Soldier from the conquering army. 20s. Latino.  
-MENELAUS: Helen's slighted husband; led the army that destroyed Troy. In his 40s.  
-SOLDIER from the conquering army.
- Actor 11: -TALTHYBIUS: Diplomatic African gentleman; messenger from the conquering army.  
-MAX: Soldier from the conquering army. 20s. African-American.

Time: The past, folded uneasily into the present.

Place: Mythic Troy; modern Troy; and Lotte's doll hospital in England.

Setting: The camp is a barren space, fenced in the contemporary style of Gaza and Fallujah, with cyclone wire. Behind the open-air camp space is a scrim (tent wall) through which silhouettes are visible. Above the camp are other spaces: a space of the gods where POLLY X creates her sculpture and CASSANDRA also appears as a vision. LOTTE'S tourist space is also high above the camp, suggesting the top layer of an archaeological dig—the ancient camp is at the bottom (buried by layers of time.)

Note on LOTTE: My character LOTTE is a love poem to Botho Strauss' LOTTE, the central character in his play *Big and Little (Scenes.)*

Note on punctuation: A slash (/) indicates the interruption point in a line by the following speaker.

I.

Lights up on LOTTE, upstage and above The Lower World, which is in darkness. We are in LOTTE'S doll hospital workshop. Beside her are shelves of doll parts and broken dolls in various stages of repair- some are contemporary; others are older porcelain models. One shelf has a series of these older dolls sitting in a row, looking a little like the bodies from war photographs. Some stare out from empty eye sockets. Others are missing limbs, heads, hair. LOTTE is tidying up, getting ready for her trip away.

LOTTE:

Horse-hair. Acrylic hair. Sandpaper. Latex.  
Legs. Ball sockets. Eyelash glue...  
Damn it , I've run out of eyes again.  
Better re-order before I leave. (to an eyeless doll) Sorry.

(Checking travel wallet) Now, what mustn't I forget...  
Passport. Imodium. Aspirin. Cell phone charger!!! Emergency numbers—  
(turns to glossy brochure)  
"Claude's Cultural Tours for Singles- A Great Way to Meet People!"  
People are nicer on holiday.

(Lights up on POLLY X, in a separate but also elevated space.  
She and LOTTE are in different worlds, unaware of one another.  
POLLY is sorting through piles of broken Barbie dolls. She wears a school uniform.)

LOTTE: (cont'd.)

(LOTTE returns to her brochure) "Troy is rich in history. The city has been razed and rebuilt nine times, each time resurrecting itself over the buried bones of its previous lives and deaths". Mmm, that sounds cheerful... -Oh, cut it out, Lotte. You need to get more involved in life. I'm sure it will be lovely. (to the dolls, firmly) It will be lovely.

(Cross-fade from LOTTE'S space to that of POLLY X).

POLLY X:

Everything stinks here. I hate it. It stinks because we have to use gas for cleaning. Even the hospitals. For cleaning floors, toilets, wounds, everything. You can't get soap any more. And since the fence, you can't even go out. There's nothing to do. It's foul. This whole country is like a poisoned stinky gas station just waiting for someone to throw a match. I am sooo over it.

Oh, I want to smell desert rain again. It hasn't rained for three years.  
It's probably because we're cursed.

Anyway. Before the fence, Mama took me to the museum so I would see our "Cultural Heritage". But it was all looted, except for the Contemporary Art. So-- we had to look at that instead. The Program said that "Transcendent Ideas of Beauty" are no longer what

## POLLY X (cont'd.)

art is about. But actually, I just think we can't afford it. Like I said, it's hard to get stuff. So most of it was really ugly, and all made of broken things. Or things that really aren't supposed to be art. Like bottles and rags and old shoes and stuff just stuck together.

The most disgusting sculpture of all was called TROJAN RAT. It had yellow eyes, and it was crouching in a pool of dark stuff that looked like oil, or blood or something yukky. And it was hollow, you could see inside it because it was just made out of wire and plastic bags. Inside its belly it had a little white dining room, all tiny and perfect like real art. There was a family inside, eating dinner.

But their house was bleeding and it was inside a rat.

Which had mean glittery eyes made of those yellow beer bottle tops that the soldiers leave lying around.

It made me feel sick but excited too.  
I didn't like it but I did. I didn't but I did.

Mama hated it. She said it was "decadent and defeatist".  
I said, Well Hecuba, we are defeated.

She didn't say anything to that.

And then I decided: I like Modern Sculpture.

On the way home, I started thinking about things I could make out of my own broken stuff. Mostly what I've got is these--

(showing Barbie Dolls)

Most of them are a bit messed up, or they're covered in scribble and stuff.  
Which is OK for Modern Sculpture.

I'm going to get a big piece of pink cardboard. Helen says if you're nice to the soldiers, they'll get you stuff. And then I'm going to get all my dolls and nail them on to it. In the shape of a big heart. So when it's finished, it will be this huge heart, made of smashed up dolls. It will be sort of flat but sort of three-dimensional. It will be very, very scary. I'm going to hang it out the front of the women's tents.

And I'm calling it TROJAN BARBIE. And when it's done, me and Cassandra will rain down revenge on our enemies! We will smash them like dolls! Death to the invaders!

(Loud rock-clip music. We are in POLLY'S Xena/ Buffy the vampire slayer/ Britney Spears fantasy. A huge pink heart materializes behind her. POLLY X stands and holds up a haphazard fistful of Barbies/ Barbie parts, dances with them. Lights dim til she is a back lit silhouette against the brilliant pink heart.

Then from offstage, through distorted megaphone, we hear:)

JORGE:

Polly X. Polly X?

(Crossed spotlights, like stereo hunting lights, focus in blindingly on POLLY X.)

POLLY X:

What? Who's that?

JORGE:

Princess Polly Xena. We have orders to escort you to Achilles' tomb for the purposes of ritual sacrifice. Do not resist. Place your hands above your head. Drop your weapons.

(POLLY X drops the dolls.)

JORGE:

Are you still a virgin?

POLLY X:

What? --Fuck off!

(MAX and JORGE approach POLLY X.)

POLLY X:

Mama! Mama, help! Help---

(Hunting spotlights switch off. POLLY is a silhouette again. JORGE and MAX drag her off, covering her mouth to stifle her screams.)

II.

(HECUBA wakes with a start as POLLY screams. We are in the Lower World of the camp. There are tent walls or sheets hung upstage, making a scrim. They are back-lit and the bodies of women are visible in silhouette through them.)

HECUBA:

POLLY! Polly X---?  
--Clea? What was that? Clea? Esme?

ESME:

Nothing.

CLEA:

A riot, maybe. Or thunder.

ESME:

An old pot smashing.

CLEA & ESME:

Something breaking.

HECUBA:

A heart cracking its own ribs with fear.  
Something blind-

HECUBA, CLEA & ESME:

--beating against the bars of a cage.

(Lights up, dimly, on LOTTE'S space. LOTTE is absorbed with her dolls, checking things. HECUBA senses her presence. The others don't.)

HECUBA:

I see my children mingling with the dead  
Still bright with future, burning to rejoin  
The living, who've abandoned them  
So close, their breath upon my neck can wake me up  
--To this.  
Where they are has more promise, more to strive for  
--More left intact.

CLEA:

Hecuba, you're dreaming on your feet again. You need to sleep.

HECUBA:

Sleep's too close to death, Clea. We need to stay awake for the living.  
Even when it seems hopeless.

LOTTE:

[consulting her list] Oh, this is hopeless—

HECUBA:

But Gods/ where was I?

LOTTE:

--Where was I?

HECUBA:

--Back in the hospital again.  
Or the morgue?

LOTTE:

-- I can't read my own handwriting.

HECUBA:

I can't tell any more.

LOTTE:

--"S". Sun block. Hand sanitizer. Swimsuit. Sunglasses. Spare SIM card.  
[pause] Mosquito-net?—Oh come on Lotte, it's not the Congo. Troy's in Europe.

ESME:

Perhaps it won't be so different, where we're going. If we live, that is.

CLEA:

Perhaps we'll be sent somewhere warm.

CLEA:

--Comfort women have to live in comfortable places, don't they?

ESME:

Yeah, but slaves don't. Probably end up in a sweat-shop with fourteen hour shifts.

CLEA:

And in your "time off" you can service the boss and do his wife's ironing.

HECUBA:

I 'm sorting through the bodies again  
they're heaped in the corridor.  
I'm always here when I dream.

LOTTE:

[to dolls, taking inventory] And as for you lot . . .

HECUBA:

But this time there aren't even bodies, just limbs  
hopelessly mixed up- an old man's ear,  
a girl's left hand-