

## SCENE FOUR

### CHARACTERS

Telemachus

Helen – a mid-aged woman, dyed red hair, a bit out of shape

Menelaus – in late 50, red hair, red face, tall and big, used to be a great warrior, but a bit chubby now because of sitting in the office everyday.

Delivery Man

Mrs.XXX

Man with No Arm

### SCENE

Sparta Palace (Menelaus' residence), living room

Telemachus holds a piece of paper with address on it. He looks at the numbers on the door - This is it. He checks his hair and clothes. He presses the door bell.

Helen enters from the bedroom. She was dressing up and is busy with her hair as she walks to the door.

She takes a look from the peephole.

HELEN

Who is this young gentleman at my door?

Telemachus feels he is being watch and gets shy. He clears his throat.

TELEMACHUS

Ma'am, my name is Telemachus.

HELEN

Telemachus--- Hmmm, I've never heard of it. Do I know you?

TELEMACHUS

You don't know me, ma'am. But I know you. I'm...

HELEN

That doesn't surprise me. Well, I don't open door for strangers. Even when they got cute face like yours.

TELEMACHUS

Oh thank you, ma'am. But I traveled all the way from Ithaca. I must see you.

HELEN

Men always take long trips for me. That doesn't surprise me either.

Telemachus takes Helen's tease seriously and doesn't know what to do. He is not good at talking. But he doesn't leave. He is upset about being clumsy.

Helen watches him for a while, pulls down the back zipper on her dress and opens the door.

HELEN

But today I can make an exception, because I need an extra hand to help me out.

Helen lets Telemachus in, closes the door and turns her back to him.

HELEN

Zip me up would you?

Telemachus zips her up. Helen gazes at him. Telemachus blushes.

HELEN

So mister, you were saying you're from Ithaca.

TELEMACHUS

Yes!

HELEN

Wow. So how did you hear about me? You heard good things...or bad things?

Helen sits closer to Telemachus. Telemachus can't breathe.

TELEMACHUS

I... I...my mother told me about you. 'Cause my father went to war.

HELEN

Oh really? That's brave. Mister, can I ask his name?

TELEMACHUS

Odysseus.

Helen suddenly sits back and changes her tone.

HELEN

What a turn off. Urgh, I feel old.  
Okay, baby boy, what can Auntie Helen do for you?

TELEMACHUS

I- I wonder if you've heard anything from him or about him.

HELEN

What do you mean? He is not home?

TELEMACHUS

No, he is not home. He hasn't been home since he went to war 20 years ago.

HELEN

They still haven't found the ship?

TELEMACHUS

No. That's why I'm coming to see you. I thought you might have some clue.

HELEN

What does that mean? Are you blaming me? Why would I know? Because I'm the one causing all these? Are you implying that? So all the boys can come and cry in front of me because they miss daddy?

TELEMACHUS

No, that's not what I mean...

HELEN

*(sobbing)* I thought you came to visit me...

TELEMACHUS

*(nervous and feeling guilty)* I do...I'm sorry.

Telemachus hands her a napkin.

HELEN

*(still sobbing)* It smells good.

TELEMACHUS

My nanny washed it with lavender-water.

HELEN

That's so sweet. Kinda gay, but sweet.

Telemachus blushes again.

HELEN (cont'd)

Look at you. Odysseus never blushed like that.

TELEMACHUS

You know my father very well?

Doorbell rings. Helen opens it.

A delivery man gives her a bunch of red roses. She signs the paper. Delivery man leaves.

Helen happily opens the card. A recorded song starts to play as the card opens. It's a man passionately singing <When a Man Loves a Woman> off-key.

HELEN

Oh my god, my husband is a fool.

She is happy.

HELEN

I hate roses.

She loves roses.

She puts them in a vase.

TELEMACHUS

Oh I forgot it's Valentine's Day

HELEN

Real men never forget Valentine's.

The door bell rings again.

Helen opens the door.

It's the same delivery man holding a much bigger bunch of red roses.

DELIVERY MAN

It's for you, ma'am.

HELEN

Whom is this from?

DELIVERY MAN

I don't know ma'am.

HELEN  
Don't you have the sender's name?

DELIVERY MAN  
No I don't.

HELEN  
You must have delivered it to the wrong address.

DELIVERY MAN  
No, it's for you. Please sign here.

Helen signs the paper. Delivery man gives her a meaningful look and leaves.

Helen opens the card.

HELEN  
"Unconditional love." With no name.

TELEMACHUS  
Do you want me to call the police?

HELEN  
Oh no no. This kind of thing happens very often. You know, secret admirers. What can I do about it.

She tries to hide her excitement.

HELEN  
Can you do me a favor, Telemachus?

TELEMACHUS  
Sure!

HELEN  
Would you keep a secret about these flowers when my husband comes home?

TELEMACHUS  
Of course!

HELEN  
That's so nice of you! Thank you! Now just pardon me for a second...

She hides the roses (under the sofa or inside the cabinet...whatever).

The sound of key opening door.  
Menelaus enters.

HELEN  
Oh here is my man!

They hug and French kiss.

MENELAUS  
You look gorgeous, honey. Oh you must have laughed at me.

HELEN  
You have such a good voice! Strong, thick and deep...

MENELAUS  
I practiced that song in my office for a whole week.

HELEN  
Oh you are such a good lover.

MENELAUS  
How do you like the flowers?

HELEN  
They are the best roses I've ever seen.

Menelaus looks around and notices Telemachus.

MENELAUS  
WHO IS THIS GUY!

HELEN  
He is a baby, honey. Calm down.

MENELAUS  
WHO ARE YOU?

TELEMACHUS  
My name is Telemachus, sir.

MENELAUS  
I don't give a fuck what your name is. What are you fucking doing here?

HELEN

Hey, calm down. He is Odysseus' son.

MENELAUS

Oh.

You... Oh my god, you were just a baby when I saw you last time!

HELEN

Can you believe it?

TELEMACHUS

Nice to meet you, sir.

Telemachus reaches his hand out to shake Menelaus'. Menelaus gives Telemachus a big hug and suddenly grabs Telemachus' head and holds it under his armpit. He laughs and fiddles with Telemachus' hair. Telemachus almost chokes. Finally Menelaus lets him go.

MENELAUS

Look at you! Such a fine young man. *(to Helen)* Look at him! He was just a baby! Oh you make me feel old. How is your dad? That cunning bastard! Oh how much I miss the old days!

TELEMACHUS

That's the purpose of my visit. We can't find my father. He is still not home yet. But no one hears anything about his death. So I was hoping that you would know more than we do.

MENELAUS

That's strange. 10 years ago, I clearly remember we were both heading home on that afternoon. His ships were even in ahead of mine. So you never heard from him in the past 10 years?

TELEMACHUS

Actually in the past 20 years.

MENELAUS

Right, right. Plus the war. Oh I have to say your dad was... is a marvelous warrior and strategist. If it weren't him, none of us would be here today.

TELEMACHUS

But he himself is missing.

MENELAUS

Right, right. I'm so sorry to hear that.

TELEMACHUS

And because he has been gone for so long, our home in Ithaca is in danger. Hundreds of suitors gather in the house every day to consume our fortune and force my mother to remarry.

MENELAUS

What! How can those bastards do that? Don't they have any decency?

TELEMACHUS

And they are planning to murder me.

MENELAUS

Holy crap! I will never let such things happen to my best friend's son! Don't worry, son! You can stay in Uncle Menelaus' house as long as you want!

HELEN

You must be tired and hungry after the long trip. I'm going to arrange a hot bath and a big meal...

TELEMACHUS

Thank you for your kindness. But I have to find my father.

HELEN

Why in such a rush? It has been 20 years. A necessary rest for one more day can't hurt.

TELEMACHUS

No. It hurts. My mother could fall in love with another man in any minute. Those suitors are making another new plan to take over my property. And my father might be struggling with coldness, hunger and illness right at this moment. It hurts whenever I think about it. And it hurts more by resting myself in such a warm and fancy place. The guilt will be torturing my heart.

Menelaus and Helen quickly look at each other.

HELEN

Easy, young man. Easy. No one should feel guilty about anything tonight. It's Valentine's Day. We can only talk about love.

MENELAUS

Where do you put the flowers?

Helen gets nervous. She shows him the flowers in the vase.

HELEN

Doesn't it look nice?

TELEMACHUS

Yes, looks very nice.

Menelaus stares at Telemachus.

MENELAUS  
When did you get here?

HELEN  
Just now.

TELEMACHUS  
This afternoon.

MENELAUS  
Cool...Cool. How was your day, honey?

HELEN  
It was busy. I was home all day getting ready for tonight. Look, new manicure, pedicure. Do you like my hair tied in this way?

MENELAUS  
You always look great honey. Telemachus, come and join us! No one should have dinner alone on the Valentine's, especially a handsome young man like you.

HELEN  
There will be old friends of your father's at the party. Maybe you can find out about your father from them.

TELEMACHUS  
In that case...

HELEN  
Let the fun start!

Door opens. Tons of dressed up ladies and gentlemen come into the house. Helen and Menelaus greet them, kiss on the cheeks, pose for pictures, etc. Professional photographers take photos with long lens cameras. A lot of flash lights. Servants serve champagne.

GUEST 1  
Helen, you look fabulous.

GUEST 2  
Absolutely fabulous.

GUEST 3  
Who are you wearing tonight?

HELEN

Givenchy. And this handbag from Louis Vuitton.

GUEST 4

Marvelous choice with colors.

PHOTOGRAPHER 1

Helen! Look here! (*flash light*)

PHOTOGRAPHER 2

Helen! Helen! (*flash light*)

PHOTOGRAPHER 3

Give me some smiles! (*flash light*)

Helen and Menelaus pose for pictures.

The music is loud. Everyone has to shout to talk.

MENELAUS

Hey! Telemachus, come! Have you met Mrs. XXX? Her husband died in the war! He was in Odysseus' army! Odysseus buried him with his own hands! This is Telemachus! Odysseus' only son!

TELEMACHUS

Nice to meet you Mrs.XXX!

MRS.XXX

(*takes another shot of tequila*) Woo-hoo!

Oh Hey! Nice to meet you too! How is your father?!

TELEMACHUS

I don't know! I'm looking for him!

MRS.XXX

Isn't that amazing!

TELEMACHUS

Excuse me! Pardon?

MRS.XXX

ISN'T THAT AMAZING!

TELEMACHUS

WHAT?

MRS.XXX

HAVE YOU MET MY HUSBAND?

TELEMACHUS  
WHAT?

MRS.XXX  
HERE!

MRS.XXX  
*(talks to a glass of liquor on her hands)* HEY, THIS IS TELEMACHUS. ODYSSEUS' SON. YOU  
REMEMBER ODYSSEUS?

She hands Telemachus that glass.

MRS.XXX  
WHY DON'T YOU JUST DRINK IT.

She laughs and leaves Telemachus alone.

A man with no arm comes to Telemachus.

MAN WITH NO ARM  
GIVE ME THAT SHOT.

Telemachus doesn't know how to “give” it to him. He  
pours the liquor into the man's mouth.

MAN WITH NO ARM  
Thank you. Nice to meet you young man. If I had arms, I would give you a hug.

He cries.

TELEMACHUS  
It's alright, sir.

MAN WITH NO ARM  
Let's dance! Come on!

Telemachus follows him to the dance floor, where men in  
wheel chairs, with crutches, with eye patches... dances  
wildly.

HELEN

Those men who came home found out they had been betrayed by their wives. And those women who have been waiting faithfully found their husbands were dead. It's a house full of widows and widowers. We host Valentine's party for them every year.

TELEMACHUS

What do you want me to say? That's very nice of you?

Helen laughs.

HELEN

Do you know how much these people hate me? I always think I might get killed at one of these parties.

TELEMACHUS

They seem happy.

HELEN

Oh yeah. They are happy. During these ten years, all they've been trying to do day and night is that one thing: erasing the memory. Look how much they've accomplished.

TELEMACHUS

You are lucky that you are not one of them.

HELEN

I'm a widow. I'm the biggest widow in this country. Countless men died under my name. And Paris died. Don't you know he was my husband?

TELEMACHUS

Well... Maybe we shouldn't discuss about that here.

HELEN

Do you hate me too, Telemachus?

MENELAUS

Here you are, my love!

Menelaus takes Helen away from Telemachus.

MENELAUS

Ladies and Gentlemen. I'd like to propose a toast -  
To my beautiful and faithful wife!

ALL THE HANDICAPPED MEN

*(together like chorus)* To my beautiful and faithful wife.

HELEN

And to my handsome and brave man!

ALL THE WIDOWS IN BLACK

*(together like chorus)* To my handsome and brave man.

MENELAUS

I'm so happy tonight. Helen, how about you?

HELEN

As happy as every night with you.

MENELAUS

Really? Did you hide anything from me?

HELEN

What? No! I never hid anything from you. Even the time when I fell in love with another man, I didn't hide it. I just ran away with him. And the whole world knew.

MENELAUS

We said not to mention that anymore!

HELEN

Just to be clear, since you questioned me.

MENELAUS

Then how about the flowers!

HELEN

What flowers?

MENELAUS

Don't you lie to me!

HELEN

I have no idea what you are talking about? You sent me a bunch of roses. Yes. What's the matter with them?

MENELAUS

Are they the only roses you've received today?

HELEN

Jesus Christ. Not again.

MENELAUS

Why are you hiding it from me?

HELEN

Can't I have some privacy in this house? Can't I? It's not my fault that I have admirers other than you. You chose me to be your wife. You should deal with it. You dealt pretty well with Paris.

MENELAUS

I said not to mention him again!

HELEN

Why not? If you love someone, you should completely accept who she is and her history. Do you truly love me, Menelaus?

MENELAUS

Stop challenging me! And tell me: WHO SENT YOU THE OTHER BUNCH OF FLOWERS?

HELEN

Why don't you guess?

She looks at all those handicapped male guests one by one with smile.

MENELAUS

*(suffering)* You are such a whore!

HELEN

Maybe him? *(pointing at Telemachus)*

MENELAUS

Don't flatter yourself. He has tons of college sweethearts to pick from. Won't even look at you, old cow.

HELEN

Wanna bet?

She walks to Telemachus. Menelaus grabs her back.

MENELAUS

Stop that!

He slaps on her face. She slaps him back.

HELEN

Does it upset you that finally there is one thing you can't control?

MENELAUS

No one loves you anymore Helen. Look at the mirror. How old are you? If you run away with a guy now, no soldier would bother to move a finger for you. I'm the only one you can play with. Haven't you realized? I am the only one you've got.

He takes out a receipt from his wallet.

MENELAUS

I paid for the second flowers. To make you feel good about yourself.

Menelaus passes the receipt around among the guests.  
Helen pulls out the roses she hid from underneath the sofa  
and hits them on Menelaus' face.

HELEN

Take them back you sneaky bastard.

She hits them on Menelaus' face again and again.  
Menelaus shouts but doesn't fight back.

Helen holds the crystal vase of roses high up in the air and  
about to smash it on the floor.

MENELAUS

Enough, woman!

Menelaus smashes a glass on the floor.

Silence.

Helen smashes the vase.

Silence.

A guest smashes a glass. Then another guest smashes a  
glass. Then a third one. Fourth one... Everyone smashes  
their glasses on the floor.

When there is finally only one glass left, the one in  
Telemachus' hands, they stop.

HELEN

I don't love you Menelaus.

MENELAUS

Fuck you!

HELEN  
I never did.

MENELAUS  
Fuck you!

HELEN  
I loved Paris. I loved Odysseus. I had a crush on Hector. I might even fall for this young man here. But I never ever loved you and I won't.

Menelaus is awfully hurt.

HELEN  
Are you satisfied now?

She gently touches Menelaus' face. Menelaus embraces Helen and buries his head in her arms like a wounded child. Helen kisses on his hair.

Suddenly Menelaus lifts Helen and carries her to the bedroom.

MENELAUS  
*(shouts to the guests)* Party is over. Go back to your own houses.

He kicks the bedroom door close. Helen screams and giggles inside.

Guests leave.

Telemachus awkwardly stands there, holding the only glass in the room, and doesn't know what to do. Menelaus and Helen passionately scream inside. When Telemachus finally decides to walk away, it gets quiet in the bedroom... A loud snore.

Helen comes out and closes the door carefully behind her.

Her hair, dress and lipstick are all messed up. She tidies herself a bit and sits next to Telemachus.

Telemachus sits down too as she gestures.

Helen rolls a joint. Telemachus lights it for her. She smokes it and hands it to Telemachus. They smoke it together. Relaxed.

HELEN

That's what I call marriage.

TELEMACHUS

Pretty different from what I thought.

HELEN

It never turns out to be the way people thought.

They smoke.

Helen gazes at Telemachus. Telemachus leans forward to kiss her. Helen pushes him away.

TELEMACHUS

Sorry...I'm sorry. (*upset about himself*) I thought you... I'm sorry.

HELEN

Who is more beautiful? Me or your mother?

TELEMACHUS

That's a weird question for me to answer... My mother is my mother.

HELEN

I would definitely win 20 years ago. But now, I'm not sure. Because she keeps herself so well. I splurge whatever is in my pocket and she never wasted a penny. But that is the biggest waste.

TELEMACHUS

She has been waiting for my father.

HELEN

Odysseus... He proposed to me too, you know? But he withdrew it when I was about to say yes. And he married Penelope. I couldn't get over it for years. If I were your mother, I wouldn't wait for him for one day. Because he would never leave me behind like that. Penelope doesn't know how to keep men.

TELEMACHUS

Really? Tell me about it. Tons of men stay in my house, won't leave until my mother agrees to marry one of them.

HELEN

You are defending your mother in such a strange way. (*pause*) She deserves it you know. The wait. It finally got back to her.

TELEMACHUS

What are you talking about!

HELEN

Before I left to Troy, Menelaus never came home on time after work. Sometimes two hours late, sometimes before bed, and in some days, he only came home in the morning to take a shower. After work and before home – I say those are the most mysterious hours in a man's life. In the beginning I called him, after a while he just didn't pick up anymore. I made my daughter call him. Can you imagine? A 3-year-old girl asking her dad, “Daddy, are you coming home for dinner?” You think that would touch his heart? No, he saw me as evil. Using our child to manipulate him. Then I called your mom. Cuz Menelaus always said he was hanging out with Odysseus. “Hi Penelope, is Odysseus with Menelaus?” Men cover for each other. I thought women would have more sympathy for another woman. NO. Your mother never had any sympathy for me. She is such a decent wife. She would do anything your father told her. And your father would do anything for his buddy. “Yes, they are together at a council meeting tonight. Odysseus said he would come home late.” Sometimes I tried her even when Menelaus was home. She would just repeat the same lie. I felt so helpless. And Paris showed up. He was the one really saved our marriage. Menelaus never came home late once after winning me back from Troy.

Your mother is a bitch. Now it's her turn to wait.

TELEMACHUS

That's not fair. What about me and your daughter? What have we done to deserve all these?

HELEN

I'm sorry. I wish you never had to go through this. I wish my daughter would never have to marry a man like any of these. My baby girl.

TELEMACHUS

Do you think...my dad is with another woman all these years? Could that be the reason he doesn't come back?

HELEN

Your father is a good looking man. I could imagine more than one or two women out there want to keep him. Maybe he started a new family, in some tropical city. Having a young wife and a bunch of kids running around bare foot in the jungle. (*being entertained by her own thoughts*) I would want a life like that. Yeah, that sounds actually really nice. Have you ever tasted mango?

TELEMACHUS

No. He loves my mother! He would never betray her.

HELEN

Tell your mom I say hi. Tell her that her husband is having a council meeting with my husband. Tell her to go fuck herself. Oh, that might be what she's doing right now.

TELEMACHUS

Don't you dare talk about her like that! You don't know her! You don't know anything about my family! My mother is a good person! She is not a...

HELEN

Telemachus, I like you. You haven't become one of them. The world remains a mystery to you. If you haven't changed when you visit next time, maybe I will marry my daughter to you. I think Menelaus would like that.

Good night, young prince.

## **LETTER 5 – from Helen to Penelope**

Hey Girl,

How is everything going? Haven't seen you for ages! Guess who I met yesterday? Your son! What a fine young man he has grown into. He asked me about his father. I have no idea. Sorry to hear that Odysseus is still missing.

We gave him some money and food. I think he is heading South. So don't you worry. Oh and... How should I put this? Your son kissed me. LOL. It was so sweet. But he definitely needs a father to demonstrate how to approach women.

Anyway, how are you doing? Still waiting? For two men now, huh?

Menelaus sends his regards.

Xoxo,  
Helen

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