

Cassandra

Beate Sigriddaughter

When I am alone I play
the flute. I have given up
on spoken words. No one believes
me anyway in this daunting
invisibility. My flute remembers
the past. Also the future. I am
not often alone.

This is after the rape. I remember
Ajax, in Athena's temple, raping
me. Everyone else, including Athena,
indignantly helpless. I remember
Apollo cursing me, spitting
into my mouth long before that
because I wouldn't give him the sex
he wanted and claims I promised.
I didn't of course. Just having
a woman's body is not a promise.
He didn't get that. I remember
the future. Thousands of years
down the road a wise woman will
explain: that's what you get, yes,
when you refuse a god. I know.

I knew what would happen. Soon
I will be killed with Agamemnon,
whose concubine I am. That, too,
against my will, the spoils of war.

I play the flute when I can.

Had I known all this when I refused
the god and unrequited lust,
would I still have said no? You see,
I always did know. You know it too.
My word was no. They didn't like it.
God curses, men take what they want.

I play my flute into the future.
Make me a better world, I beg of
you. Try harder.