

CLYTEMNESTRA'S LAST DAY

BY

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CHARACTERS

In order of appearance

Clytemnestra

Agamemnon

Iphigenia

Electra

Orestes

Fury 1

Fury 2

Fury 3

The stage is divided into thirds. The stage right portion consists of an olive grove. It is dry and hot: the colors in the grove are hay yellow, green of the olive leaves, and the crackling dry blue sky.

The center stage section shows a lushly furnished chamber of a palace in ruins. There is a table with platters, goblets, food, two chairs, a Turkish carpet, a wardrobe, a bureau, colorful murals in muted Mediterranean colors, sea-purple drapes over the one intact opening, &c. The palace has a suffocating, claustrophobic feel.

The stage left section is exterior to the palace, and downhill from it, with mud, shacks, slaves'

quarters, domestic animals, &c.

Upstage, running from side to side, is a series of four platforms, raised to different heights, each painted a different earth color, on which the three initial, and final, silent murders take place. The platform for the fourth murder (which occurs at the end of the play) is distinctive from the other three in location, height, color, shape. Thus, when the first three murders occur, below, it is visually evident that a fourth murder is in the offing.

The stage opens with three spots upstage highlighted on each platform, one after the other:

The first spotlight flashes on young adult Clytemnestra, queen at Pisa, holding her infant. She is garbed in royal clothing, crown, &c. and looks stately and powerful. Her body is full and feminine. Agamemnon enters, grabs the infant and smashes it aground, binds Clytemnestra with rope, and sequesters her away, out of the spotlight and into the darkness.

The second spotlight flashes on Agamemnon taking the pubescent Iphigenia, rope in hand, to a stake. Clytemnestra, looking different now, still a queen but not as powerful, diminished, with the young Orestes at her side. In front of her is a barricade (of desperate soldiers), keeping her curtailed, impotent to save Iphigenia. Agamemnon ties Iphigenia to the stake and stabs her with a knife.

The third spotlight flashes on Clytemnestra holding a net and a knife at the side of a large bath tub. The knife has a nine inch wide stainless steel blade with a distinctive shape, and a large, handle decorated with gold. Agamemnon is there, stepping into the bath, one foot on a crimson carpet, and about to bite on an apple when Clytemnestra snares him in the net and stabs him repeatedly. As if in a chain reaction to the stabbing, Electra tears off her jewels and cloak as she flees the palace in anger and horror.

Darkness falls on the entire stage for a pause. Light comes up slowly on the stage right section, revealing the olive grove and a few fig trees around the edges.

Three furies enter the grove from up stage right. They are dressed simply but elegantly in calf-length draped, toga-like dresses in muted colors, one each of purple, orange, and green.

FURY 2: This cult of the Athenians, this olympiad thing, is getting out of hand. It may be only a matter of time before it reaches us.

FURY 3: Yes, yes. Sister and daughter gods are being palmed off on everyone as fair trade for the wonderfully powerful she-gods.

FURY 2: Not to mention the Great Mother god is turning into a passive Mother Earth--

FURY 1: In which **men** plant **their** seeds--

FURY 2: Yup. The path is being paved for even fertility to become masculine--

FURY 1: What a time is coming!

FURY 3: *Bitingly.* Our **demise figures in**, as well.

FURY 1: *Gesticulating, anxious* Look, things have gone too far. We've got to **do** something before it's too late!

FURY 3: It **is** too late. You know that. We all do.

FURY 2: *Coming to a standstill, and the other two turn to look at her* No. We have a job to do. We must act now before **he** arrives. We must plan for it.

FURY 1: *Excited* Exactly!

FURY 3: *Incredulous, without hope* Hmm...

FURY 2: *Ignoring Fury 3* At the very least, we could try for a reconciliation.

FURY 1: Yes! Between mother and daughter. The bond is irresistible.

FURY 3: *Cynical* You two are dreaming. They can't stand to be within one hundred meters of each other without one of them foaming at the mouth.

FURY 1: *With disdain* Electra, you mean.

FURY 3: *Matter of fact* Clytemnestra's rather bristly herself. Can't stand to be reminded of her failings.

FURY 2: **We** could mediate. Perhaps run messages between them, be the interpreters.

FURY 1: *Pondering the idea* Orchestrate a negotiated settlement, you mean?

FURY 2: *Hopeful, but questioning* It could work.

FURY 3: *Disgusted with the idea* Bah!

FURY 2: *Cautious* Listen. Someone's coming!

FURY 3: No one comes here, must be one of the crazed, starved animals.

FURY 1: No, look. There **is** a man. Can't make out who.

FURY 2: Must be a foreigner to traipse in these parts of Mycenae. *Commanding* Disperse!

Each Fury hides behind a separate tree, peeking out.

Orestes enters the grove, taking in the scene. He is dressed in very pale peach colored linen: a men's shirt, open at the neck, loose and belted pants, and sandals. His hair is in soft curls. He is dressed for the heat, he looks fresh, not shabby.

ORESTES: *Exploring, looking, in disbelief* What I see makes my heart turn sour. Nothing is left intact. Even the fig trees seem to revolt, they look as if they have not borne fruit for many seasons.

FURY 2: *Speaking under her breath, in surprised horror.* Orestes!

FURY 1: *Whispering* Yeah -- And the depletion was from **his** daddy's Trojan war.

FURY 3: It doesn't matter, the game is up.

ORESTES: Coming here is like walking into a nightmare of encapsulated history. Pagan blasphemies abound everywhere.

FURY 1: *Panicky, whispering to Fury 2* We've got to get him out of here !

FURY 2: Wait. Wait. Let's see if he leaves on his own.

FURY 3: You **know** he won't. He came this far, after all. For blood.

Fury 1 covers her mouth in horror.

ORESTES: What has Clytemnestra done to my legacy? *Confused* Or, could it be that Electra reigns? *Pathetically* I have been an exile, and am out of touch. I should probably turn on my heels and flee.

Furies 1 and 2 look relieved

Crumbling I would not have been difficult to locate. *Dejected, Orestes sits* It took me many years to squelch the expectation that each new face was a messenger sent to retrieve me.

Pause, then becoming resolute and standing No! I must stay, it is my duty.

FURY 1: That's it! *Determined* We've got to try to get rid of him.

ORESTES: *Moving about in the orchard, gesturing triumphantly as he speaks.* I will put Mycenae on solid ground. Yes, everything will rapidly be on the up and up. The House of Atreus will never sink again to these depths. The decks will be cleared. The babes born on the Argolid can grow up with a fresh slate. As the old die away, there will soon be no more among us who recollect the old ways. Then, our true liberation can begin.

I will make it happen! *Inspired* I feel it. *One palm up, the other hand a fist that slaps in the palm for emphasis* I can do this.

FURY 1: What a vision he has!

FURY 2 *Trying a ploy, stepping from behind her tree touching Orestes' shoulder* You don't know what you are saying. Things here are not as you remember them. Your own kin may shun you.

ORESTES: No, impossible!

FURY 1: *Stepping into the open* It is true. Your own sister, Electra, has relinquished her life in the palace.

FURY 3: *Coming out from behind her tree, coming closer* She cannot receive you.

The furies now have Orestes ringed, and he is reeling from their news.

FURY 2: *Enunciating each word individually for impact.* Electra is now a slave!

Throughout Orestes' next passage, the furies stay in a circle around Orestes.

ORESTES: *With fear* And who rules?

FURY 2: Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, of course.

ORESTES: *Hands cupping his ears* No!

Looking up Some god is playing games with me, tormenting me. Perhaps Apollo, goading me to perform my duty to my father. *Panting through the next three sentences* My own sister, a slave. A Mycenaean princess carrying water jugs. Preposterous.

Remembering Shining Electra was everything, my whole world. She took me everywhere, taught me games, fed me! I drank in her infinite love for me. And now -- Now--- she is decrepit. *Covering his face with his crumpled hands, kneeling* Argh!

FURY 1: *Going too far too soon* Best to leave things as they are, Orestes.

ORESTES: *Pausing to ponder, aghast, moving back a step, away from the furies, awakening --*
Do I know you?

FURY 2: You certainly will, unless we act soon to prevent it.

FURY 1: *Piping in* We'd better.

ORESTES: Go away, hostile strangers. I am set on a course. I must rescue Electra and return her to her rightful life. First, *as if drawing a sword, the furies step back in fear* I need to depose the king and queen. I can see it now. *Leaning over with the sword, as if staring Clytemnestra in the face* The queen will try to stop me. When under the weight of the sword, *A look of horror crosses Orestes' face as he imagines* Clytemnestra will bare her breasts in terror, trying to appeal to some ancient filial obligation. *Collecting himself, waving the sword* I will be strong.

FURY 1: Think of what you are saying! She is your **mother**, and queen of this land. The price you will pay will be great.

ORESTES: *Defiant* Clytemnestra cannot be considered my mother. The parent is he who gives the seed. She who carries does nothing more than an urn holding water, an unremarkable feat which has no claims.

Yet, it is true, *Thinking as he speaks, and building anger in the next few lines* The full weight of killing Clytemnestra will surface. The hypocrisy of ancient custom! No one, not a single soul will begrudge me the death of Aegisthus. No! In this I am squarely in the right. Justice on my side in everyone's eyes. I will be honored for that action. He bedded with the queen, usurped the king's throne. His life is mine to take, as well as the throne. *Truly asking, almost pleading, but below the surface, subtle.* But what am I supposed to do with Clytemnestra? No one will be able to answer me here. How am I to take the throne and yet spare her?

Stern and angry, below the surface. And, what of her guilt? If Aegisthus is guilty, Clytemnestra is immeasurably more so. She defied my father and then killed him. I face the choice of heeding an ancient taboo against killing so-called kin, or of championing the forces of good sound justice.

Decisive I must live by the code of modern society, how else to measure my worth? Apollo will be at my side and justice in my court.

And, still, those blood lusty hounds will be dispatched to seek my life.

FURY 1: *proud, whispering to furies 2 and 3* That's us!

The furies puff up their bodies as Orestes speaks

ORESTES: Bitches! Those filthy representations of archaic goddesses. I can see them standing up for Clytemnestra's alleged rights. Sniffing at my heels. Wheezing at me. Men have died under their cold eyes. What a chilling thought, that such monsters will try to destroy me.

FURY 3: *Nudging FURY 2, whispering with eyes fixed on Orestes* He's scaring **me** now.

ORESTES: Electra! Guide me!

FURY 2: *Also whispering with eyes fixed on Orestes* There's nothing we can do with him. We'd better stick to our plan.

The furies move to the stage left edge of the olive grove to confer. Meanwhile, Orestes moves about in the grove pondering, and then exits, off on his mission.

FURY 1: I think we should approach Electra first. She's young and brazen enough to resist.

FURY 2: Once we have her accord, we'll be home free.

FURY 3: *Handling some grey-brown cloaks* Here, take some of this slaves' garb, you two. Disguised as her compatriots, our true identities will be concealed. I'll be Theda, Electra trusts her.

FURY 2: Let's go!

Lights on the far stage right portion fade. The olive grove is in partial darkness. The interior of the palace is in total darkness, only the stage right exterior of the palace is visible. Lights on the stage left portion come on. The three Furies are in the stage right section, putting on the slaves' costumes. Electra is in the stage left portion dressed in brown army boots and tightly fitting, brown and grey ragged clothing, no adornments. She has the build and appearance of a prepubescent boy.

ELECTRA: *Speaking from inside her shack, or at the threshold* Another day of clear light to see my misery in.

I awake with the sun. I, a princess. A princess with a life foreclosed to my step. My anxious step.

My muscles ache to throw off the weight of slavery, my soul to lie mourning to rest. Every motion I make is a cry for retribution. For justice. To bring the murderers to task. They murdered my father in body and myself in spirit.

Oh, Orestes!

She waits, flaps her arms in dismay No father, no brother. It matters little to tell it here, but I never had a mother. And now no home -- the palace, **my** palace, being off limits to me. Thrust in

this horrible mud village made up of horrible mud shacks and a stream which produces only more mud.

Among slaves. Not **as** a slave, I **am** now a slave. I labor alongside slaves, I eat the same substance, for it cannot be called food. I defy food in any case. Nothing but revenge could nourish me now.

The years I have spent exhausted with hopes for revenge. Dreams, really. The fantasies of a slave. Even my one rightful act in life is negative. That I will not live and die in a plagued palace. Better to claw through my days in drudgery. My only respite mourning. My small claim to victory. Thus far.

The three furies, dressed in slaves' clothing, enter the stage left portion, carrying urns.

Electra moves out and away from her shack, towards the furies, during the next passage.

Orestes, do you yearn as I do for our first embrace in freedom?

OOO-Orestes! Orestes, where are you now? When, when will you return to slay the murderers? Oh! To be set free, to walk on this earth again rather than slithering with venom. Let me topple the criminals from their self appointed thrones, and see how I glide!

FURY 3: Electra! Do be more cautious. You speak the words of one gone mad. Too much is clearly said. I may be only a slave by birth, and you a princess, but I must speak what I know to be the truth. Your threats to Aegisthus must go no further. If your words are relayed to the king, you and we, your companions in slavery, will not hold on to our lives for long.

ELECTRA: *Calling out* Theda! Have you not listened to a word that I have said? Why do you speak to me thus about that she-man, Aegisthus? After all the time I've spent here, the talks we've had, my mourning prayers, my vows of revenge, how could you hint that he be the target?

FURY 3: You have spoken of he who sits on the throne out of line. Who else can this be but Aegisthus? Day after day you speak of nothing else. You cry for Orestes to return, to set your father on the course of eternal peace, and to finally free your mother from the lover's spell cast by Aegisthus.

ELECTRA: *With disgust* To **free** my mother!

Words! I am lost without them yet cannot get them to serve any function for me.

Is there no point to words? Are they never digested the way they are prepared? Ears, their gatekeepers seem to jumble them. Is the message a fiction and the sender deluded?

FURY 3: Stop. Stop, Electra. Who are you hurting but yourself?

It was Clytemnestra who bore and raised you. Cared for you. You are part of her, and she you. Nothing can change these facts, not even your strong will. They are reality.

ELECTRA: Cared for me! You are an ignorant slave. *Dismissive* You know nothing about this.

FURY 3: Reconsider. It is time to shake off your scales and to finally accept the queen's invitations. She has all but begged you.

ELECTRA: Yes, oh, yes, she has beseeched me time and again to visit her. I will not be fooled. I will not bite. Not to be budged from where I can see her best.

FURY 3: Even you can be wrong. In this case, I'm sure of it. She is your mother! Besides, she has had news of Orestes.

ELECTRA: Orestes, here?

FURY 3: Perhaps he will be soon.

ELECTRA: *Ecstatic* My day has come! *Joyous* Imagine! Orestes grown now into youthful beauty but with mature strength of mind. He has hair the same color as my own. His nose is long and straight. His eyes shine and dance just as our father's did -- and he is as playful and kind as my father was.

FURY 3: Electra, this event makes an excellent opportunity for mother and daughter to reacquaint. To unite over the news of Orestes, son and brother.

ELECTRA: *Recouping* For once you make sense, old slave woman. Go now and carry my word to the queen that I am ready to meet with her.

Fury 3 nods with a slight bow to Electra and begins to take her leave. On her way, she pauses to confer with furies 1 and 2.

FURY 3: *Whispering* You two stay with her and make sure she doesn't waver.

While Electra is speaking in the following, Fury 3 changes her costume to a Queen's attendant's garb and makes her way to the palace.

ELECTRA: *Happy* I remember all so clearly. Many times Agamemnon would take Orestes and I out into the middle of the pasture to his favorite tree. It was a beautiful, enormous fig tree. It had branches thicker than the trunk of a well stocked man. Its leaves were a deep green that I shall always be able to conjure to vision. Meaty, green leaves. Each perfect in shape.

What absolute ecstasy this is to feel the tree over me once again with my father and Orestes safe at my side. And, the figs on it! Those pendulous figs bouncing almost imperceptibly before our eyes. And mouths. Just enough to create an undeniable, unimpeachable desire. My mouth rushing almost before my hands to pick the fruit. A chilling sensation surged through my body as I tore away the tender pale green flesh revealing the waving sea of pink and red tendrils within. Just as the sweetness began to trickle down the back of my throat, the fragrant sensation was already electrifying my limbs. Such a quality of being, I never since have achieved.

Throughout the following, and until Electra arrives at the palace for the meeting, Electra and furies 1 and 2 perform slaves' labor. The furies, not being accustomed to such work, balk from time to time, and each tries to get the other to do more of the work. Electra is oblivious to this.

The lights come up in the palace. Clytemnestra is in the palace, dressed in a long, majestic robe, hair loose and big, a bit wild, bare feet. She is holding the same knife she used to kill Agamemnon. FURY 3 enters Clytemnestra's chamber by the end of Clytemnestra's first paragraph. Seeing that Clytemnestra is suicidal, she tries to get a sense of the situation, treading very delicately. By the time Fury 3 brings up Electra's visit, she feels she's salvaged the situation and can put Clytemnestra back on her feet.

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Pensive, but matter of fact, grounded but agitated on the edges. Her eyes are focussed on the blade of the knife I **could** die. Have I not incessantly sought death? Emphatic Well, now is a good time. There will be none better.*

Why do I not accomplish it? And spare my children from killing me in the same blow. Preserve what little vestige of sanity they have in their already tortured lives.

Fury 3 comes over to Clytemnestra and puts her arm around Clytemnestra's shoulders, as if the two were singing a serious song together. Fury 3 treading gently, eyes on the knife.

CLYTEMNESTRA: Anything to stop my mind's continuous replay of my children's murders.

Agamemnon told me--.

FURY 3: *Mimicking Agamemnon's voice* Queen, Iphigenia is not your daughter.

CLYTEMNESTRA: This on her wedding day, as I was busy with the arrangements for the celebration and feast.

We had prepared everything and set off. Off to that hostile island Aulis. Full of overindulged officers. Sitting, waiting to sack Troy. All those gleaming male eyes fixed on the Trojan gold. Their armor ready, and their rationale in place. I spit on all the dead soldiers' graves! Despicable

is too kind a word.

No warning, just

FURY 3: *Mimicking* she is not your daughter.

CLYTEMNESTRA: Whose is she, if not my own?

FURY 3: *Mimicking* You have performed your service well enough and now it is over. Your work is done.

CLYTEMNESTRA: Go away milk goat, your young is fed enough for slaughter.

FURY 3: *Mimicking* You have another.

CLYTEMNESTRA: Electra.

Electra, who knew so little. Agamemnon chose Iphigenia over Electra for no other reason than that Iphigenia knew too much of her heritage. She had acquired too many of the powers of Leda. He and the others had begun to fear her as they did me.

Why can I not find any respite from this? *Trying to resolve it* Not now. Not today. *Deliberate, slow speech* Just go slowly, take in seeping smooth breaths.

After a pause, putting down the knife, ow throwing it down in disgust Argh!

Why was I born? What act of cruelty sprung me loose from Leda's hip? Why does my life persist so long, how much more will it endure? How could I have killed Agamemnon when it was my own life that should have ended? To be sure, he deserved to die and much more, that man. I regret his death only in that it came too late.

Two of my children I had already let him kill.

Die! Die!

I wanted him away. Away, way far as possible from myself and my remaining children. I wish I could kill you again, torture you. Make you feel true pain.

FURY 3: That kind of pain was probably out of his range.

CLYTEMNESTRA: Die! And let some hatred go with you.

FURY 3: It did not work that way, though.

CLYTEMNESTRA: What hatred I sent with Agamemnon in death, was turned back on me by Cassandra.

FURY 3: No, not by Cassandra.

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Nodding* By myself. Alone I accomplished this. How could I have killed Cassandra? What kind of monster am I that I did this, this horrid act of misdirected frenzy? Because of my own torment I saw reflected in her, I crushed the air from **her** lungs. Cassandra did me no harm. That shackled princess whose eyes no one could stop.

Building anger Those eyes! Her eyes seeing me, watching me froth and set to kill her. Kill **me** in killing her. In my moment, the instant I could have achieved something precious. But self-loathing got in the way. I hacked at it, hacked and struck with my sword.

Until Cassandra fell dead.

In my place.

I wince at what should have been.

FURY 3: The two of you standing victors over Agamemnon's cold, dead matter.

CLYTEMNESTRA: How did I miss this? Instead, I stood seething, looming over Cassandra's body crumpled across the slain carcass of Agamemnon.

FURY 3: With Aegisthus at your side.

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Recollecting* Strutting and puffing himself up like a bird with its catch. I panting, insensible. I did not yet grasp what I had done.

And what had I done? What did I do? I was dizzy with the sight of Agamemnon's blood. Confused. I had expected his death to release me, to give me some peace. I felt nothing when I killed him. *With the knife, Clytemnestra mimes her murder of Agamemnon* I struck him, plunged the long sword deep into his core. Agamemnon was surely dead with the first lunge. Still I wanted more, needed more. I struck again, plummeting the sword deeper into his carcass. It was not enough. I sought something that did not happen. Some sign that my death in life was over. But it was not to occur. I plunged again. And again. It was not enough.

Looking at the knife with horror that it also killed Cassandra, that Agamemnon's blood mingled with Cassandra's Contorted, I seized on Cassandra. I looked on her but saw only the young Clytemnestra captured and stolen by Agamemnon from Pisa, like Cassandra from Troy.

Clytemnestra begins to turn the knife on herself I saw myself and hated. Hated.

Working herself into a frenzy I saw all the years in between my younger, former self in Cassandra and the seething present mass that I had become, and hated. Boiling over with loathing, bleeding venom. Blinded by accumulation. I had to destroy it! Destroy what had become of me.

Breaking down I can still see my slaughtered infant at Pisa at Agamemnon's blood-splattered feet. Quiet, dead. I had barely woken with my baby at sunrise when I found myself shackled at dusk, laced into a chariot alongside some bulging, sweat soaked and dirty commander. My breasts bursting with unsucked milk.

FURY 3: *Agitated, Fury 3 is speaking quickly while moving over to Clytemnestra to lower her arms down. Ultimately, Fury 3 takes the knife and replaces it into its holder on the bureau.* Nothing can bring Cassandra back now, give her life. Place the golden haired princess on the throne of Troy, or Mycenae for that matter.

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Slumped, body visibly relaxed, Clytemnestra is resigned to life* Why did I not do this, this the obvious course of action?

I need you, Cassandra. More than that, I love you.

For you, Cassandra, I will endure. My own time is past.

FURY 3: *Trying to be cheerful* Queen, listen, I bring you news from the village.

CLYTEMNESTRA: What is it?

FURY 3: Electra, princess of Mycenae, requests a visit!

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Speaking with a mix of excitement and horror* Electra!

Stirring herself to a new purpose in life At last. The day I have awaited.

Thank you, kind woman. *Clytemnestra grasps a velvet pouch purse and extends some coins from it to Fury 3* How can I repay you for this news?

FURY 3: *Waving her hands at the coins in dissent* No, no thank you, Queen. In this case, your happiness is payment enough. A successful meeting with the princess would be of enduring value to us all.

CLYTEMNESTRA: Yes, yes. So true. *Swaying backward slightly and extending an arm, reaching out for the shoulder or arm of FURY 3 for balance.* Suddenly, I feel unprepared. *Clytemnestra sits down, as if to anchor herself, and as if she did not, she might collapse* Why

is it that I waver just when what I want may be within reach?

Do I not have the strength to go this last round? Shall this be the one too many?

FURY 3: *Resolute* No, don't let it be, Queen.

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Excited, clasping FURY 3's shoulders* When will my daughter come?

FURY 3: At your convenience.

CLYTEMNESTRA: Today!

Ah, things may not be so grim as they appear.

Fury 3 begins to exit to carry out Clytemnestra's request, but Clytemnestra grabs her shoulder
No, wait! First, help me get ready.

Fury 3 and Clytemnestra prepare Clytemnestra for the meeting throughout the following and just as Clytemnestra is ready, Electra arrives. Fury 3 silently begins to get set up for dressing Clytemnestra. She starts by setting out jewels from a drawer of the bureau, onto it's top. Fury 3 gets Clytemnestra's shoes and sandals out of the wardrobe to examine. Fury 3 begins going through dresses and scarves in the wardrobe. She occasionally takes one out to look closer, sometimes leaving it out, draped over a chair, or hanging somewhere visible. When she is done and ready to dress Clytemnestra (below), the room, especially the chairs, have many garments, shoes heaped around. Fury 3 moves to the chair and digs out a dress and then hands the dress to Clytemnestra. Clytemnestra begins to try it on. Fury 3 helps Clytemnestra dress, Fury 3 does Clytemnestra's hair and puts jewels in it and on Clytemnestra's body. Clytemnestra sits and Fury 3 puts on her sandals. Fury 3 holds up a mirror for Clytemnestra to look in. Clytemnestra stands tall and looks regal, imposing, powerful. Stunning.

ELECTRA: I must ready my armor, account for every detail. Everything must be under control. Beware Clytemnestra! Electra will command your undoing yet.

CLYTEMNESTRA: I must tread delicately today.

Must not do or say anything to frighten her away.

All must go as much as possible as I have dreamt of this day. My hands tremble in anticipation of the moment I cast my eyes on my last source of light and life, my own blood, my daughter, Electra.

How do I look?

FURY 1: Electra, it is time to depart for the palace.

ELECTRA: Yes, it is time.

As if, getting her last words out, before being towed off to jail Hah! What pretense! I can see our meeting laid out before me in full as if it were a piece of the past. "Come back," she will say, luring me with silks and jewels. She will tempt me with my old way of life, as if she had any such thing to offer. That person, that life, had a father.

FURY 2: *Nudging Electra to walk* Come, we will deliver you, as were our directions from Theda.

ELECTRA: One question yet remains, Clytemnestra. Which lost daughter is it that you long for?

CLYTEMNESTRA: I feel all right. Look intact enough. This may prove easier than I expect. I am ready to ask it, how will Electra see me?

ELECTRA: *With a fury on each elbow, guiding her along. Electra stops when she speaks, gesticulating.* She is a lion waiting to pounce. She will sit crouched in wait for my weakening, but when she springs out at me she will fall flat.

FURY 2: *Anxious, under the surface. Grasping Electra more firmly and trying to budge her* Princess, we shall never arrive at this rate!

ELECTRA: *Standing firm until she is done speaking, she is worked into a frenzy* I hereby renew the oath that I made at my father's decrepit grave site, that his murder made our bodies one. We share a single destiny. When he is properly clothed and housed, only then, so too shall I be. This, I swear.

Electra arrives at the palace, escorted by Furies 1 and 2.

CLYTEMNESTRA: Well, this is finally it, she has arrived. Electra.

ELECTRA: *Electra enters Clytemnestra's chamber, the two furies wait just inside the door.* I am here. I must stay strong, and **all** will soon be mine.

FURY 3: *To Clytemnestra.* Stand upright.

CLYTEMNESTRA: I cannot.

FURY 3: *To Clytemnestra.* Relax.

CLYTEMNESTRA: I cannot, my head is blank.

FURY 3: *To Clytemnestra.* Stop this! Concentrate.

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Convincing herself* I can do it. I will get through this meeting.

FURY 3: *To Clytemnestra.* All right, plunge in.

Clytemnestra and Electra approach each other, and, when their eyes meet, each is shocked and angered and immediately becomes visibly defensive. Through Clytemnestra and Electra's first remarks, they circle each other cagily

CLYTEMNESTRA: Electra! Let me look at you.

I wish the gods would strike me dead where I stand. You are no longer human. You smell terrible. Mottled flesh. Ghastly.

I cannot bear to look. Electra, what have you done?

You did this on purpose. One of your typical ruses to get to me, to hurt me. I will not have it!

ELECTRA: My mother. You look your part. You have dressed well for it, Queen. You deftly carved out the look of violence. Of evil.

CLYTEMNESTRA: It is a good thing that I prepared for our meeting. I have already had the bath chambers appointed and equipped for your needs, though now I see you require more care than I could have guessed.

Once I have you cleaned off, you can be sponged with fragrant waters, if you like. **Then**, we can talk.

ELECTRA: You say that I must be restored, that **I** am to be prepared. Hah! We both know what you mean to accomplish with your delicate words. Wretch!

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Oblivious to Electra's protest* Follow me to the baths and soon you will be ready for a profitable discussion. I shall attend you myself.

FURY 3: *To Clytemnestra.* You have no choice. You'd have to be the one, no one else would do it.

CLYTEMNESTRA: On to the baths!

ELECTRA: To the baths! You must think me an utter fool. How dare you mention that blood-stained tub in my presence. You threaten my death without saying anything out of the ordinary. And insult my father with the same blow. You try to put me into that same tub --

FURY 3: *Waving Electra to desist and coming up behind Clytemnestra, cradling her.* You must take pause, catch your breath. Being here, so close to Electra, is overwhelming.

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Pulling back from the adversarial atmosphere* Electra, hold your tongue. Listen. I seek to welcome you back to the palace. To restore your rightful place as princess and my daughter. We shall be reunited, queen and princess, bound together by our mutual understanding as much as by our blood.

ELECTRA: *Taking Clytemnestra's cue for calm* I am uncertain what we can accomplish, yet it is good of you to see me, a mere slave, Queen Clytemnestra. With a slave's eyes I cast a fresh glance about this palace. It is a wonder to behold. And a tribute to your throne. I am weak with awe. I shall always be in your debt for this honor.

CLYTEMNESTRA: Come, now. Give over your stiff manner of speech.

ELECTRA: Very well, if it please you, I shall try to refrain from mentioning my slave's life, though this be now my fact. Toil and mud my reality.

CLYTEMNESTRA: No, stop, Electra, I beg you.

FURY 3: *To Clytemnestra.* Softly, Clytemnestra, concentrate.

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Aside, in the direction of Fury 3.* Just when I feel I can reach out and touch her, Agamemnon looms in between.

The phantom never seems to die!

FURY 3: *To Clytemnestra, pushing her. exasperated* Enough! Look to the future now.

You **can** handle this. I must leave. Go!

Fury 3 exits, taking the other two furies with her, and the three of them dissolve slowly away.

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Stronger voice and persona now and in the following.* Come! *Softer* Please. Let us get you ready.

ELECTRA: Thank you, no. I must stand my ground. I have no need to bathe here. It is still, after all, **my** body which is at issue. **I** determine how it is and feels, not you. I am grateful for this visit, but will not be able to stay long.

CLYTEMNESTRA: Why did I not know that this would happen! You are a stone citadel, sealed shut.

How can I feel impotent in the face of you, my own daughter?

Am I not Clytemnestra, the strong queen, Spartan daughter of Leda? I am. I am.

ELECTRA: Yes. Yes. You are. Strong and powerful. Bah!

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Dismayed* Look at this! There is no hope. Best to cut this short, than suffer any longer.

ELECTRA: Yes, condemn me to silence once again. I know this route. How much of my life have I lived this way? I can take more. Lots more.

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Puzzled* Silence, Electra?

ELECTRA: *Definitively* Silence. My entire childhood played out in silence, alone. Remember, I was left to my own devices young.

I **saw** you, of course. Saw you, heard you, even watched you. But, no one spoke with me. At me, yes. Occasionally.

I had to create definitions for myself, about myself. In your absence and as your negation.

Pause Funny, for all the silence there was an awful lot of noise. A constant scream of protest that played in my mind. That was outwardly silent too. I played by the rules.

CLYTEMNESTRA: I don't know what you're talking about, Electra. We were always together. Before **you** left, that is. There was no silence. I recall lots of talk, you and I, you and others. Not enough quiet, actually.

I won't quarrel with rules, though. Some standards are well worth maintaining. And, in this case, it's that you need a cleaning.

Why have you made a point of honor out of dirt?

Give up this stalwart nature over nonsense, *Clytemnestra approaches Electra, hands out* and we can break this silence you so resent.

ELECTRA: *Retreating, softening* No. I don't think so, Queen.

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Advancing, holding a jeweled, blue robe* Yes. You can. *Holding up the robe* Remember this? You always loved it and said it would be yours when you grew up.

It is yours now.

Here, take it.

Clytemnestra and Electra's hands are both on the robe at the same time, Electra's hesitantly.

ELECTRA: *Weakly* No...

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Speaking as she leaves the robe in Electra's hands and leads her to a sink area.* Yes. We'll approach this gently.

Peeling some of the tatters off of Electra and sponging her arms, neck, and face as she speaks
Here. I'll use a soft cloth. And mild barley water.

Beginning to sponge First one arm... good. The other... Let me get some of this molded garment away from your skin . *Peeling it off* Ah!

Electra is beginning to relax and bask in her mother's attention Electra, you really mustn't do this again. Your body has fungus all over it.

Okay. Let's get to the neck and face. I'll go slowly. Some citrus blossom witch hazel mixed with olive oil ought to do well.

Happy This is making me recall your youth. When you would let no one but me clean you. *In the following Electra slowly begins to stiffen, until she make a move and speaks.* You would get into the mud, head to foot. Then you'd come running to me and we'd make a big game out of washing. Some of our happier moments were spent here at the basin.

ELECTRA: *Electra pulls away from Clytemnestra's hands to look at her in part fear, part anger, part panic.* Game....? Happier moments...? Amazing how **somebody's** mind has twisted the truth.

I remember. I remember you. I remember you and I in here. You were **crying. Wailing.** Not playing!

Electra starts to try to repatch her tatters I've got to get these back on! *Electra gets dirt from the floor, or a planter and rubs it over her arms and face.* Apply my armor. How did I let down my guard so fast? *Electra continues this as Clytemnestra talks in following.*

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Panic rising through her body, tears welling in her eyes* What the hell are you doing?

Splaying her hands and moving them up and down vertically at rib level No. No. Take pause. Ask the right questions.

What is it that **I** want? Not the daughter who contradicts my every breath. Who obviously wishes that I had no more of them. Who would wrest my remaining days on earth and break them asunder.

ELECTRA: You! Murder! You are a fine one to speak of murder. It was **you** who butchered my father. you axed the life out of him. His blood -- my blood! -- spilling out and over onto your hands. He gave you your life, your honor.

CLYTEMNESTRA: My life ? You don't know how wrong you are, Electra. He was a monster, this glorious father of yours. He--

ELECTRA: Stop! I won't listen. And I do not want to return to the palace! I left once already, as you surely remember. Orestes too. Both gone. Ten years you spent edging us out. While obsessed with another, you thrust two out!

CLYTEMNESTRA: Obsessed? You know Aegisthus to be a mere convenience to me. What are you saying now?

ELECTRA: Not Aegisthus! You know very well that I am speaking of Iphigenia!

CLYTEMNESTRA: Iphigenia?

Two for one?

Is that how you describe it? *Cringing* How can you be so cold?

ELECTRA: *On a roll* You wailed and wailed only about the one lost. Lost to a cause of pride, it must be noted. Moaned and wailed. The other two somehow did not count, flicked off without thought. Gone. Out of sight, Orestes. Forgotten. Electra, an embarrassment. One weighed heavily, two as much as dust. What made me so different from Iphigenia?

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Flustered, confused, seeking* What is wrong with difference?

ELECTRA: *Bitter* You tell me, mother.

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Clytemnestra moves about for a moment still flustered, crumbling* I, I don't know. You two were different, it's true. I---

ELECTRA: You! It's always you, you, you. And **her**. A team, you two. And, **me**. I was **nothing!**

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Quietly, with horror at this reflection of herself* No.

ELECTRA: Well, of course, no. I **know** that, but I had to struggle to know it. A child is supposed to be cradled, rocked. *Pause* **Paid attention to.**

Yet, I had none of it.

You were no mother to me, but the enemy. I had to fight for every inch.

A futile battle.

Until I gave up and made myself from scratch.

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Weakening further* Electra. Electra, I can't find the words. They are blocked at my throat. Don't do this now, please.

Try to understand. There are two sides.

Speaking rapidly The situation was not as a child would see it. I did not understand your bitterness until this moment. But you couldn't grasp the picture then. Maybe you can now.
Desperate It may help.

ELECTRA: *Bitter* Help who, mother?

CLYTEMNESTRA: You!

ELECTRA: Bah!

CLYTEMNESTRA: Electra, listen for once! Can you justify your sister's murder, explain it? For the sake of some long worn pact amongst grown men? Men's games, children's lives. Mother's lives. More than me, and beyond Iphigenia. Thousands of children, thousands of mothers. Trojans, Greeks.

In order to protect Meneleus? To safeguard the throne he gained only by marriage to my sister?

My beautiful child was killed because there was some wind at Aulis. Iphigenia's life was considered the fair toll to stop the wind. And how was that debt calculated, according to whose scales? I, Queen of Mycenae, could do nothing to stop the murder of my own daughter at the hands of the argive people.

ELECTRA: Here we go. I know this story. The phantom first born, again. Again and again. I could say it myself.

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Continuing* I stood diminished, dumb. A powerless queen, a concept

created by our strange times. Can you imagine at all what it is like to be a queen, born and bred to rule, and yet to watch even the title be demoted to a trinket. Queen, yet slave to men. Lesser men.

My reevaluation was inevitable once I killed Agamemnon. The stories spun were not bad really, creative almost. Intriguing in their review of history.

Iphigenia's murder lurked in people's minds as justification for my act. It took much acrobatics for them to fabricate a new version, that Iphigenia never died. That she still lives, having been lifted away from her father's knife to safety by Artemis.

What fools, did they really think I had no claim to Agamemnon's life but the murder of Iphigenia?

She was the **second** of my children he killed. He sacked my province and took me, the queen, as his prize. His concubine.

He could have killed you! That I took a step of prevention, of retribution, when I needed to is not shameful.

It was necessary!

But this new cult of men cannot countenance the action of women. I was like a plague in their eyes, they needed to amass reasons to reassure themselves that it could not happen again. That no wife will dare to kill her husband.

Pathetic rubbish! It did not hold me back from ruling Mycenae for a single day.

ELECTRA: Spew out no more, I have listened to enough of your speech. Do you have any idea how you sound? Your words offend the very core of my being -- and would offend any decent citizen. Why did I come here to hear you denigrate the accepted principles of society. Mores thought over in excruciating detail by learned men, yet you know better. And must instruct me!

Justice will not be on your side in the end, Clytemnestra -- we both know this --

CLYTEMNESTRA: Justice, Electra? What justice speaks to you? Of the sword, no doubt. Pallas Athene, god of war and justice.

ELECTRA: What better form of justice could there be? Athene, sprung directly from the head of Zeus. Born of the lord of us all, gods and mortals.

CLYTEMNESTRA: Reborn, you mean. Do you know so little of your heritage? Until recently, there was no Athene but rather Anatha. The great she-god Anatha. She had many powers and would never confuse justice with war. Those were days of a different ilk. She-gods were magnificent, and did not need to pose as the daughters or sisters to he-gods like your Athene. Nor

did they renounce their mothers as your Athene so vehemently does.

ELECTRA: She has no mother. Born in entirety in full armor from Zeus her father. She has no patience with women.

CLYTEMNESTRA: What of the poor woman full to the brim with pregnancy whom Zeus swallowed whole, just before this miraculous birthing he performed? Fine thing, he swallows a woman in labor, develops a severe headache and out comes Athene ready for battle. War and justice, now two sides of the same coin. Surely born from the heads of men.

You, too, have unfalteringly aligned yourself with the modern climate. My own daughter. Still, I do not hold you accountable for this. You are too young to remember the alternative, the values based on the propagation of life. Not its destruction.

ELECTRA: Life, what do you know of life? Look what you have done with yours, with the life you created.

Me, for example. Look at me! Look at me and you can have a fresh view of where your values lead. You are a fine one to disdain swords. It was your handy use of one that was my ruin. If only your blows could have struck me too.

I have no one. And you can stand here and tell me that I do not understand justice? You, clothed in silks, in jewels, living in more comfort than anyone on the Argolid has known.

You go against all that is good and just, and then wonder why your life is so difficult.

CLYTEMNESTRA: Electra, stop! Please!

ELECTRA: *Stopping herself, trying to contain the damage* Yes. I must. One hundred apologies, my mother, please forgive my hard words. I did not mean to cause injury. I go on and on, too excited. Please do not take my outburst to heart.

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Clasping Electra's shoulders, trying for a new beginning* Electra, a sense of order can be restored to the Argolid, it is not yet too late. I need you here and you have much to gain in returning. You are what you are. A princess, my daughter.

ELECTRA: You are right, mother. Tell me more about the rule of Mycenae. Some pieces seem missing,

CLYTEMNESTRA: Ah, you do have a prudent mind. You want to hear the details of my plan.

ELECTRA: Yes, do proceed. I want to know what you have done about a successor. Every throne needs to have its line of succession marked clearly.

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Encouragingly* Explain.

ELECTRA: Perhaps, there is one who will return and have royalty restored.

CLYTEMNESTRA: You do want to come back to the palace! You, my aid in arms and I, yours. This is what I have hoped for and dared not ask. What joy this is! Oh, Electra--

ELECTRA: *Recoiling* Rule Mycenae? I? It sounds as though you are speaking to a son. You have a son. Why speak to me? Why did you even keep me? One daughter already, you had no need of me. A son, you must have wanted to produce a son, an heir. The future king.

You stand here and ask me to rule -- look at me! I am no man!

CLYTEMNESTRA: Electra, do not speak such sad words. You, my precious child. I hold you more dear than my own life. What makes you less an heir than anyone? I was in no rush for a son when I carried you inside my own flesh, and was only joyous to hold your sweet body to mine at your birth.

ELECTRA: A baby girl was of no use to you. An infant is easily disposed of. Did my father save me? Is that how I survived? I demand an explanation!

CLYTEMNESTRA: What can I say to you? I can barely utter the truth, that your father commanded your execution at birth. It is true. No sooner did you draw breath than was it to be withdrawn due to the worst crime you could commit, born female.

ELECTRA: No. I will not listen!

CLYTEMNESTRA: I loved you then, Electra, and do now.

But you must finally learn what happened. It was my fault, he said, my wretched spitefulness that produced a girl. Yet his seed would grow to manhood. The logic of kings is a mystery to behold.

ELECTRA: your insanity is thicker than I imagined. You go too far. It is **you** who has constantly sought my ruin, not him. **He** loved me.

CLYTEMNESTRA: You see the world upside-down, Electra. You must give it up. Agamemnon did not love or hate you. It was his eyes that made you insignificant, not mine.

Ah! *Clytemnestra extends her hand* Look. Proof of my feelings in my very jewels. Do you not remember this ring? Made with love on the first anniversary of your birth. *Electra bends nearer to look now, becoming curious* It is beautiful, is it not? and, there you are -- see the likeness? Next to you under the tree is your sister. An incredible work of mosaic, made up of such tiny

gems. *Seeing Electra's interest, she continues* It will be yours upon your return to the palace. *Silently, Electra comes closer and sits at the table near where Clytemnestra is standing. Clytemnestra is looking at the ring now* Such a fine work could never be duplicated. *Taking it off her finger, Clytemnestra extends the ring towards Electra and places it in her palm. Electra follows the ring with her eyes and her face softens. Electra keeps looking at the ring, slowly closes her fingers over it and closes her eyes, breathing in deeply.*

As Clytemnestra speaks, she has a subtle smile of victory cross her face. She moves away from Electra to get a platter, leaving the ring in Electra's hand. Come, my darling, I suggest we sooth ourselves so that we can take stock of the present calmly and look to a brighter future. The time calls for nourishment, let me feed you. Rest a moment while I put a selection from this feast on to a couple of platters. Ah, stewed figs, *Electra's body begins to stiffen anew and she glares at the ring, and then holds it in a tight fist.* You always loved these so well that I will put a few extra out. Here. Take this platter I have put together especially according to your taste.

ELECTRA: *Softly, but firm.* No, thank you.

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Confident* Do not be so hard, Electra. Eat. Does my selection not tempt you? It does me. You know some food will make you feel better. Let yourself enjoy this meal, and then we can continue. Come now, do not have me stand here so foolishly with your food in hand, take hold of this platter.

ELECTRA: *To herself, still grasping the ring.* Should I do it? Can I allow myself to eat here? Without Orestes, though? Knowing all the while I daintily munch that he roams the countryside a vagabond.

With my brother so deprived I can do nothing for myself. As long as he goes begging, so too will I. It has to be this way.

To Clytemnestra I said no! *Bruskly pushing the platter* Move this platter away from me!

CLYTEMNESTRA: Look out! Such a mess! You did not need to spill the food all over the table to make your point.

Please at least sit here at the table with me.

ELECTRA: *Aside, muttering.* If I stick to a little barley, that would be alright. I am hungry, and, after all, even in the village I eat barley. I spilled so much food. I cannot stand the thought that this food will be swept away to waste.

In the following, Electra eats ravenously and wildly, clutching the ring clumsily.

Just a little scoop of barley -- like a miracle descending into my body. Scores of barley grains

rushing down my inner passages. Just one more mouthful and that will be enough.

I should not have swallowed so quickly -- I barely chewed. I did not appreciate the taste. From hand to throat, no in between.

So much food that I spilled -- the barley mixed over there with the lamb baked in yogurt. Some of that, just a little, and I will recoup.

CLYTEMNESTRA: Electra, really, you are not a trapped animal. Stop eating off the table.

Electra transfers her focus to the floor and continues to eat.

No, not the floor, that is worse! *Leaning down to Electra.* What has become of you? I will prepare a fresh platter and you shall eat from that, not these dregs.

ELECTRA: No! I want nothing of this meal. I asked for no handouts and shall receive none. This is your detour out of dangerous waters. Your attempt to circumvent my probes. I still want to know!

I could have been cast away. Why do I have to suffer so? I do not understand how you could hate me so much -- what did I do? You are evil, a viper!

CLYTEMNESTRA: *Trying to reach out to Electra.* Let me get hold of you Electra, you are raving. Sit back down now, calm yourself.

ELECTRA: Calm. I will be calm in death, plenty of time for that. But you will be first, I assure you.

CLYTEMNESTRA: Electra! Do not speak to me thus. I am your mother. Please, do not put the seal of eternity on this.

ELECTRA: Do not touch me! Keep back. *Electra throws the ring down at Clytemnestra's feet.* You have weakened me enough with your fanciful delights. I will quit this wretched cavern before I am devoured whole. No more of your amorous pretense, nor your charmed phrases.

We both know that it is just a matter of time. Time that I can better spend as a slave in the village than here fending off your manifold guile. At our next meeting, justice will have its way!

Electra exits to stage left. Electra stands outside the palace door panting, then, later goes in to get the knife and move toward the fourth platform.

CLYTEMNESTRA: That is it. She is gone.

She is gone. Final, now it is final. Electra will never come back. Never love me, never see me. This is where I end.

She despises me. And herself. Acting as though on foreign ground in her own body and being.

Why was this so difficult? I am a hopeless cripple. Why do I bear the illusion of individuality? A monster on my back. By insisting that I had alternatives, I sealed myself into permanent isolation. The world sweeping along and me in my box. Lonely fantasy.

Day after day I carry my two children's deaths alongside my life. With them I carry my trudging self into the present. And I am always here. One. Two. Three gone. And now four, finally the fourth. Here I am, once more, plummeted into the current of life with nowhere left.

The palace which once filled me with the strength of pride, seems hazardous. I feel myself being sucked into its dark caverns. Even the stone lions at the outer wall, once my companions, have their eyes on me. I feel them keeping a close accounting of each movement I make. As though my exits were numbered.

Collecting herself, rational now. It is over now, gone from me.

Electra, before she was even born, was under a shadow. Like a thick blanket it curled around her. I tucked her in. Electra the conduit. My conduit. The conductor of messages from and to myself.

I bred Electra to carry out my own growing desire. To complete the work of the shadow and finish me off. Push me over into death. I could see long ago that she is her father's daughter and capable of the task. I provided the encouragement she needed. Her loyalty to Agamemnon means that we must both wait for Orestes to return before she can act. Deferring to his right to avenge his father. Denying her own. Because of this she prolongs this dance we pace together.

Yet, soon my son shall return. Soon enough now. I feel his presence growing stronger with each day. It may be a matter of hours.

I tucked myself in, and Electra deeper still.

How could any of this have happened? How? How.

Clytemnestra picks up the knife as if it is very heavy in this passage and then hands it to Electra, who has entered to take it. Electra is emotionless and directed, silent. Knife in hand, she exits and slowly moves toward the fourth platform. I am drowning in a morass only to be speared out by the plunge of Orestes' sword. Even in death my torment cannot end. A shadow dripping with my blood and sticking fast to my bare skin. Fast onto the meat and bones of Electra.

And no, I believe nothing once again. I am ready for you this time, Electra, direct your brother to

me now.

Lights fade out slowly to dimmer light.

The fourth and last spotlight on the final upstage platform is on Orestes killing Clytemnestra, also with the knife. Clytemnestra approaches Electra at the platform. Electra holds the knife up high over her head, she is holding it with determination and has her eyes focused on Clytemnestra. Clytemnestra is standing upright, unafraid, and is looking straight at Electra. Orestes enters gracefully, slowly, takes the dagger, and, in one motion, moves to stab Clytemnestra.

Electra screams a long, hollow moan. Then there is a pause of silence with the dry crackling sound heard at the beginning of the play in the field. After a pause, Orestes goes close to Electra.

ELECTRA: *She speaks as if disembodied* My life is gone. **She** was my life. I have no purpose without her. This body is testament to that. I whipped and starved it to keep her at bay. My every thought and movement a reaction to her. As if we had two bodies living out one life. And now she is gone. I cannot be without her as my mirror. Without her negation, I am nothing.

ORESTES: *Pleading and placing his hands on her shoulders with concern* Electra!

ELECTRA: *Definite and putting distance between her and Orestes* No. You cannot bear witness to my demise. You have everything in front of you. Everything that I cannot participate in. Go. Go, Orestes, and make your plans. Leave me here with her, alone. I beg you, obey me that much.

Orestes exits with hesitation. Electra goes to Clytemnestra's body, standing over it.

So, there you are. You and I, face to face. How easy it looks now. Why could we not do this before?

Pause, then in agony Mother! Answer me!

Pause, kneeling to Clytemnestra's head Why couldn't you fix **me**, **help** me. *Emphatic*
Understand me.

I needed you to touch me. To hold me as you held **her**.

Bitterly Iphigenia.

Why did I let her come between us so readily. **What** could we have done differently?

It was **I** who needed you most, and it was **you** who abandoned me. I had no choice but to align with my father. He was all I had to hang on to, and **he** was dead.

So, too, are you now. What I **thought** I wanted, so that I could exist. When what I really wanted was you. Your attention. Your love.

With detest I hate you!