

SCENE: Electra and Clytemnestra

Electra: How did you sleep?

Clytemnestra: Badly. You again. You really nauseate me. Greasy and black. You're like the ravens and crows that shit on the pediments and shriek and dive and the windows. Unsightly, brutish mess. Let me get upwind of you. You might at least bathe.

(She sits upwind of Electra, sipping tea.)

Electra: And you. What are you anymore? You gave your face away. You sold it on the butcher's block you call the family hearth. Look at you. Propping your sagging carcass up, stinking of your rotting beauty and even as you stink you stamp and flirt your pointless feathers.

Clytemnestra: What have you done to the clocks? Two are stopped, three run crazy in their circles and the rest won't stop chiming.

Electra: They are reckoning the hour of your death, which is now and always. Nothing will ever work right until then. The house has been holding its breath for twenty years, waiting for judgement.

Clytemnestra: Then let them chime another twenty. Your brother, your dear fiction, will never return in my lifetime.

Electra: Oh yes, in my lifetime and in yours, although just barely in yours, rather near the end. And for me, life will just have begun.

Clytemnestra: Oh, you'll die before me. You don't have the strength for vengeance. I figured that out a long time ago. And you're useless otherwise. You'll die here having accomplished nothing. Not even a rat-faced child to mourn you. Merely an irritation first to last. Tick, tick, tick. You haven't got it in you to do anything by yourself.

Electra: *(stung but menacing)* I am my mother's daughter. You should be terrified of me.

(She takes an ancient knife out of the bodice of her dress.)

This knife, rust or his blood on the blade, you tell me, this very knife, how did you hold it? My hands are so like yours. Show me the grip.

(Electra offers the knife to her mother, who takes it. Clytemnestra hasn't seen the knife in some time. She holds it with familiarity and then suddenly, viciously, raises it overhead in a convincingly murderous stance while still holding her teacup in her lap.)

Clytemnestra: Like this, girl. Like this. And brought it down twenty times at least on his old man's chest.

Electra: And what did you scream?

Clytemnestra: "Liar! Filth! Butcher!"

(Clytemnestra hands the knife back to Electra in a sly challenge. Electra grabs it and tries to meet the challenge, holding the knife above her mother's chest. Clytemnestra looks at her critically, unconcerned. A pause.)

Electra: Liar! Filth! Butcher!

Clytemnestra: Have you no originality? Raise your arm higher, girl. You'll need the force of a long swing. I did. His chest was wide. Higher. Don't you look silly. I hope I didn't look that silly. I don't think so. I could see what I looked like in his open eyes as I brought the blade down. Oh, give me back the knife, you're hopeless.