

SCENE: Electra and Orestes

Orestes: Are you Electra?

Electra: Well, I suppose we might as well name it. Pretty name.

Orestes: I have his ashes.

Electra: Oh, well, those will come in handy. Drainage for the tomatoes, filler for bad pie crust. *(Takes the urn matter-of-factly)* How light he is. No heavier than an idea. Which is all he ever was, I guess. Nothing. He has come to nothing after all. Ashes. Is that a tooth? I remember his smile. His hair, bright and long in the summer. How it must have curled and fizzed in the furnace. *(In anguished disbelief)* This was a man once?

Orestes: Yes.

Electra: Hardly seems possible. Look at this. *(Laughs quietly)* He was such a funny child. He used to imitate me, how clumsy I was. He'd stalk about the parlor, muttering to himself, the way I do, pretend to trip, right himself, trip again. I can't explain it. He made me laugh. Did he make you laugh?

Orestes: Oh, yes. I laughed at him all the time. He struck me as... somewhat ludicrous. He was something of an actor.

Electra: *(With genuine interest)* Was he?

Orestes: Taking on parts. Pretending to be people he wasn't/

Electra: Did he imitate you?

Orestes: Yes. And I imitated him. We were a riot.

(The longer the business of having to speak about himself in the third person continues, the more unsettling and revealing it becomes for Orestes, and the more Electra begins to grasp the truth of the situation.)

Electra: Did you love him?

Orestes: As much as he loved himself.

Electra: Did you know him well?

Orestes: No one did. He was always somewhat severed from his own life. An exile. It seemed he died many times. Perhaps, in a way, he was always dead.

Electra: Did he ever speak of home? Of us? Of me?

Orestes: He spoke of you. He spoke of duty and terror and guilt. He never spoke of home. Was this his home?

Electra: No, not his. Mine either, for that matter. We, both of us, died in exile. What did he say about me?

Orestes: That you were the one that saved him.

Electra: Did he love me?

Orestes: He didn't know much about love. He knew something about blood. He was fearless and cruel in battle. He could look coolly at sights that made other men scream or vomit and he could do things to people... that don't bear thinking about. We were afraid of him.

Electra: You hated him.

Orestes: A little. A lot. He seemed to be driven by a demon. He was utterly alone in the world and he never looked back. Because of that he was dangerous.

Electra: He sounds very useful.

Orestes: Efficient in battle. And he slept alone. He had terrible dreams.

Electra: Nightmares.

Orestes: They woke him screaming, teeth chattering, pants soiled.

Electra: Did he tell you what he dreamed?

Orestes: Something about being pushed down an endless, lightless tunnel that got smaller and smaller, forced to crawl with a knife in his teeth, pushed like rags into a gun barrel, and the walls getting tighter and tighter around him.

Electra: What was at the end of the tunnel?

Orestes: Something warm and dark and soft and enormous that he would have to climb inside of and slice and slice and... drown in the blood or maybe slither out of, crawl away from, blinded by blood, maddened by bats...

Electra: What was it, did he say? What was it that was pushing him?

Orestes: You.