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The Exile and the Onion Girl**

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THE EXILE AND THE ONION GIRL

*Adapted from Aeschylus'
"The Libation Bearers"*

AN ADAPTATION IN ONE ACT BY
Lindsay Price



The Exile and the Onion Girl

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Cast of Characters

6W+4M plus Domestics

KING IS	Ruler of the Kingdom of Argos
QUEEN NESS	Married to King Is, previously married to King He-Who-Will-Not-Be-Named
ORE	17. Son to Ness, brother to Onee, sent away 10 years previously to Phocis
ONEE	16. Daughter to Ness, sister to Ore (sometimes called Ellie)
TY	Aide to King Is
KAY	Aide to Queen Ness
LADES	17. Friend to Ore, foreigner from Phocis who doesn't understand Argos ways
HESTER	Head Chef, Sister to Hesper
HESPER	Head Housekeeper, Sister to Hester
EM	Scullery Maid - From Delphi
THE DOMESTICS	Barbara, Dexter, Kyle, Boris, Percy, Josie, Scarlet, Blair, John - Butlers and Maids; always in sight but often ignored.

Domestics Note: The names of the Domestics were created by the original cast using a Character Profile you can find at the back of the script. Please feel encouraged to give this profile to your own actors so that they can come up with details, backstory and relationships relevant to your ensemble.

Name Pronunciations

Many of these names are modified from the original text and therefore their exact pronunciations aren't known. See the Appendix for approximate pronunciations. When all else fails, say names with consistency and confidence. That's what really counts.

Setting

It is modern day in the kingdom of Argos.

There are several locations in the play - the kitchen, the Queen's corridor, the front hall of the manor, and the graveyard in which King Agamemnon is buried. The set should be a unit set - do not try to create each location. For the kitchen, all you need is a standing butcher block. For the graveyard, a crumbling stone overrun with ivy. For the front hall, an upper platform on which King Is and Queen Ness appear.

Timeline

Ore and Onee are at the bottom of a family tree for the House of Atreus. They were 1 and 2 years old when King Agamemnon (Ness' first husband) went off to fight in the Trojan war. When Ore and Onee were 6 & 7 Ness took up with Is, banished Onee to the kitchen and exiled Ore to another kingdom. The Trojan War waged for 10 years. Agamemnon returned and was killed by Is and Ness. It is now five years after his death.

Backstory Note

This play is based on and inspired by the Ancient Greek play *The Libation Bearers* by Aeschylus. *The Libation Bearers* is the second play in a trilogy called *The Oresteia*. The first play, *Agamemnon*, examines King Agamemnon's return home from the Trojan War. He is killed by his wife and her lover. *The Libation Bearers* follows the son and daughter who are tasked to avenge their father's murder. Though the son completes the task, he is haunted by demons, the furies, who rail against matricide. In the last play, *The Furies*, the son is put on trial for what he's done. If he wins the trial, he wins his life and will not be killed by the demons. He wins and is allowed to live, and the curse that has followed the House of Atreus through many generations ends.

Have your cast research the curse that follows the House of Atreus. It starts with Tantalus being cursed by the gods after he puts his son in a pie. From there it's one murder after another! The curse is theatrically realized in the script and it's important to have the backstory firmly in place.

Cutting Notes

See the Appendix for a couple of cut suggestions if time is an issue. You may make these cuts without contacting the publisher.

History

The Exile and the Onion Girl was first presented at the 2015 International Thespian Festival as part of the Playworks Program. Much thanks to Julie York Coppens, Don Corathers and the Educational Theatre Association.

Director	Carolyn Greer
Stage Manager	Dayna Mathew
Assistant Stage Manager	Shaila Seth
Onee	Annika Prichard
Ore	Paul Harrold
Ness	Katie Cross
Is	Rich Miller
Em	Elizabeth Loyal
Lades	Matthew Parker
Hesper	Ariel Quinain
Hester	JT Prior
Kay	Kathryn Svatek
Ty	Jeff Steele
Young Ore	Conner Elliot
Domestics	Sara Brittain, Nicole Atkinson, Jimmy Henderson, William Bradford, Nicholas Serrambana, Lauren Roberts, Kennedy McCollam, Hayden Elliot, Tucker Greer

In the dark, a drum beat is heard.

Lights up. ORE runs in with an empty bag and an armful of provisions. He breathes heavily. He starts jamming things into the bag. He's trying to control his panic.

LADES enters casually, stretching and yawning as he does. He starts talking offstage, so he doesn't immediately see what ORE is doing.

LADES: I am done with this day, done with this week. How about you and— (*now he sees*) What are you doing?

ORE: (*not looking up*) Gotta go.

LADES: Where?

ORE: Can't explain. It's too—You'll never believe me.

LADES: Why not?

ORE: I had a dream.

LADES: And...

ORE: I have been ordered... (*he shakes his head*) I have to go.

LADES: You can't go. You'll lose your job.

ORE: Fine.

LADES: What does *that* mean? Would you—Stop, ok? Talk to me.

ORE: (*standing up*) I don't have time.

LADES: (*getting in his way*) Ore, come on! (*really looking at him*) You're shaking. What did you dream about?

ORE: Get out of my way.

LADES: No.

ORE: (*pushing*) Move!

LADES: (*pushing back—harder*) No.

ORE stumbles back and drops his bag. He takes a breath and a beat before speaking.

ORE: Do you know who I am?

LADES: A goat herder, same as me.

ORE: Goats. (*standing tall*) I am the exiled son of the king of Argos, slain before his time. I must return order to the house of Atreus. I am going home.

Drums explode. Sound everywhere. The lights become chaotic. Everyone runs on following individual patterns across, up and down, and around the stage. It is visual chaos. ORE and LADES join the movement for a moment but exit. Everyone else remains on stage.

Once the movement is introduced a series of vignettes are presented—this is a visualization of the curse on the House of Atreus. Those involved with each vignette move downstage in their turn so that we see the scenes one after the other in quick succession. Keep it simple, keep it moving. The most important visual is the transference of the curse from generation to generation.

VIGNETTE ONE: Tantalus and the Gods

STORY: Tantalus kills his son Pelops and feeds him to the gods. The gods curse him.

ACTION: Tantalus and Pelops stand face-to-face. Zeus and Artemis stand behind Tantalus. Tantalus stabs Pelops. Pelops falls. Tantalus turns to Zeus and Artemis, holding his hands out as if he's holding a pie. Zeus throws a long red ribbon at Tantalus. He is cursed. He falls. Zeus and Artemis help Pelops to stand. Zeus and Artemis circle around to take part in Vignette Five. Pelops moves to the next vignette.

VIGNETTE TWO: Pelops wins the girl

STORY: Pelops wins a girl by sabotage. Pelops betrays the servant who helps him with the sabotage. The servant curses him.

ACTION: Pelops and Hippodamia stand face-to-face, holding hands. Myrtilus stands behind Pelops. Oenomaus moves forward, shoving Hippodamia behind him and stands with his arms crossed. Myrtilus moves forward, whispering to Pelops. They shake hands. Pelops and Oenomaus square off in a fight. Myrtilus trips Oenomaus, causing him to fall. Myrtilus taps Pelops on the shoulder with a hand out, looking for a reward. Pelops stabs Myrtilus. Myrtilus falls throwing a long red ribbon at Pelops. Pelops is cursed and falls.

VIGNETTE THREE: Atreus and Thyestes

STORY: Thyestes has an affair with Atreus' wife. Atreus kills Thyestes' sons and makes him eat them. Thyestes curses Atreus.

ACTION: Thyestes and Aerope stand face-to-face, holding hands. Atreus moves forward and pulls Aerope away at the same time pointing off to Thyestes. Thyestes goes to his knees, begging forgiveness. Thyestes' two sons move forward to stand with Thyestes. Atreus softens, welcoming the two sons toward him. As they cross in front, Atreus stabs them both. They fall. Thyestes throws a long red ribbon at Atreus. He is cursed. He falls.

VIGNETTE FOUR: Agamemnon and Iphigenia

STORY: Agamemnon needs good winds to sail to Troy. He sacrifices his daughter.

ACTION: Agamemnon and Clytemnestra (*played by NESS*) hold Iphigenia in a tug-of-war. Agamemnon pulls Iphigenia from Clytemnestra with some effort. Agamemnon stabs Iphigenia. Clytemnestra throws a long red ribbon at Agamemnon. He does not fall. Yet.

VIGNETTE FIVE: Agamemnon and Clytemnestra

STORY: A rageful Clytemnestra and the son of Thyestes, Aegisthus, kill Agamemnon.

ACTION: Aegisthus (*played by IS*) stands behind Clytemnestra. They turn to Agamemnon, welcoming him with a honouring bow. Agamemnon crosses in front regally. As he does, Aegisthus and Clytemnestra stab Agamemnon. He falls. Zeus and Artemis (who have crossed from Vignette One) throw red ribbons over Clytemnestra and Aegisthus and then exit.

After the last vignette, everyone rises, draped in ribbons. The visual represents the House of Atreus covered in blood. They form a family portrait.

ALL: Here stands the House of Atreus.

A curse runs through her veins.

Doom follows the House of Atreus.

And sorrow never wanes.

The sins of the first condemn us all.

Blood for Blood this house must fall.

ONEE enters. She looks back at her family, then to the audience.

ONEE: (*mocking*) Here stands the house of Atreus. The ultimate dysfunctional family. Hello. Welcome to my home. Whenever I feel sorry for myself, I bring out the old family tree. To date, I have not been stuffed into a pie or sacrificed for wind. Lucky me. It's hard to compare ten years locked in the kitchen to death. What's there to complain about? (*she looks at her family*) ten years is a long time to chop onions.

Two DOMESTICS, BLAIR and JOSIE, enter calling out to ONEE.

JOSIE: Hey Onee! Don't you got work to do?

BLAIR: If Hesper catches you hanging around...

ONEE: Oh yeah? What are you doing?

JOSIE: (*oh so innocent*) Dusting...

BLAIR: (*oh so innocent*) A clean house is a happy home.

They laugh. Suddenly, there is the sound of gunfire and sirens. Everyone reacts.

TY: (*offstage*) All citizens return to your homes. A curfew is in effect. All citizens return to your homes. A curfew is in effect. A curfew is in effect.

KING IS and QUEEN NESS remain on stage, standing tall on the upper platform. The DOMESTICS form a group off to the side. ONEE watches.

IS: (*grand*) People of Argos! (*and now frustrated*) People of Argos. How many times do I have to tell you. I am the ruler here. I am the one in charge. And if you don't like it, you can leave. But if you stay, it's my house. My rules.

The DOMESTICS take on domestic tasks—dusting, sweeping, folding laundry. They talk to one another about how they see everything and nobody ever pays attention to them.

DOMESTICS: The tyranny of he.

The totality we see.

Total domination is what he expects from us.

Shh! Argos listens.

Shh! Don't be heard.

Shh! Argos listens.
 Not to us. Never us.
 Servants, Attendants, Minions, Maids.
 Invisible in plain sight.
 Visible shade.

The DOMESTICS stop and look up toward IS and NESS.

IS: I'm watching you. I'm watching all of you. Dissenters will be dealt with. Don't make me, Argos. Don't make me come down there. It won't hurt me more than it hurts you.

The DOMESTICS shake their heads and continue their work. They talk to one another.

DOMESTICS: The tyranny of he.
 The totality we see.
 The world is changing, the same isn't working.
 Shh! Don't say that.
 Shh! Never say that!
 Shh! Argos listens.
 Not to us. Never us.
 Servants, Attendants, Minions, Maids.
 Invisible in plain sight.
 Visible shade.

KAY and TY enter and head to the KING and QUEEN.

KAY: (to the DOMESTICS) What are you doing? Get back to work.

DOMESTICS: (oh so innocent) Yes, miss.

The DOMESTICS stay in their place, but pretend to look busy. They listen in.

NESS: Lovely.

IS: You think so?

NESS: As always.

TY: Sir, the car is here for your next appointment.

IS: Which is?

TY: Crushing a border rebellion.

IS: Again? How tedious.

TY: They're hijacking supply trucks. Persistent.

NESS: Children. When will they learn who's in charge?

IS: How long will it take?

TY: I have you back tomorrow evening.

IS: Bearable. (to the QUEEN) Dinner?

NESS: Delightful.

KAY: It's in your schedule.

TY: And yours.

NESS: Don't be late.

IS: Never for you. Care to escort me to the car?

*KAY and TY exit. NESS and IS link arms and move.
The DOMESTICS watch them go.*

DOMESTICS: (as if sneezing) Tyrant!

NESS: (as they are walking) Bless you.

NESS and IS freeze. The DOMESTICS laugh.

ONEE: (shaking her head) You're going to get in trouble.

KYLE: We don't matter.

SCARLET: Yes, miss. We're just dusting.

*They all dust industrially and laugh. ONEE approaches
NESS and IS, stares at them.*

ONEE: Look at them. The happy couple. Marriage suits her. (beat) She changed her hair.

BLAIR: Girl, that was months ago.

JOSIE: You want us to do this?

ONEE: (to the audience) A little background for you. The murder of my dad. Enjoy. (exits)

*The DOMESTICS act out the murder of Agamemnon.
They use their dusting tools as "murder" props. This is
not a piece of poetry but a piece of theatre. In every
section make a different tableau of stabbing, slashing
or clubbing. Make it big and bold, striking to look at.*

DOMESTICS: To get away with murder
 You must never spill a drop
 The blade wiped clean, the body gone
 There's no blood left to slop.

KYLE: King Agamemnon was blinded to

PERCY: The vengeful counterblow

JOHN: A mother's love, a family curse

PERCY: A cancer growing woe.

DOMESTICS: To get away with murder
 You must never spill a drop
 If you kill a mother's daughter
 You are going to get the chop.

BLAIR: Home from the Trojan war he came

BORIS: Ten years from start to end

JOSIE: Open arms expected round

BORIS: From country, wife and friend.

DEXTER: (*referring to NESS*) But *she* was filled with acid hate

SCARLET: A child the sacrifice

BARBARA: (*referring to IS*) And *he* was after payment full

SCARLET: His family's curse the price

DOMESTICS: To get away with murder
 You must never spill a drop
 If you want to keep your conscience clear
 The trick is not to stop

PERCY: Now they have the country held

SCARLET: An iron fisted spree

KYLE: The kingdom wavers near the brink

DOMESTICS: (*whisper*) Which you didn't hear from me.

IS and NESS unfreeze with a jolt. They seem unsure of how they are standing, but continue to exit. The DOMESTICS chatter and laugh with each other. HESPER enters carrying a clipboard.

HESPER: (*gently*) Keep it down, please.

DOMESTICS: (*with respect*) Yes Ms. Hesper.

HESPER: Barbara, how is your mother?

BARBARA: Better. Thank you for asking.

HESPER exits. The DOMESTICS look at each other with glee.

JOSIE: She's headed to the kitchen.

The DOMESTICS crowd together and lean in. At the same time, EM enters downstage. She rolls on a butcher block or small table that holds a bowl of onions, an empty bowl and a knife. The butcher block also holds two aprons. ONEE also enters, slowly, staring daggers at EM with crossed arms. From the second EM enters she does not stop talking.

EM: So you'd think that being in the middle of two older brothers and two younger brothers would mean something, that it would mean you have someone to look out for you and someone who looks up to you. Oh no. Brothers are gross. The number of times I've been stuffed in a closet till I passed out from fear? The number of times I've woken up with spiders on my face? Let me tell you, not a small number. Brothers are so gross. Not much freaks me out any more though. That's something.

ONEE and EM both put on aprons. ONEE starts chopping onions. EM keeps talking.

EM: But I wouldn't trade them for the world. My mother, now she I would trade. I would give her away. I would put her in a sack with random kittens and throw her in the river. She is such a pain. She just, like, keeps jabbing me with a stick. Not a real stick, but almost.

By this point EM has turned her back and is leaning on the butcher block chatting away. ONEE can take no more. She raises the knife and mimes stabbing EM à la Psycho.

EM: There's only so much you can take. I had to get out of there. See the world. Have an adventure. So Onee, that's a name if I ever heard one, where does it come from? Sounds like onion. Onee—Onion? No way! You chop onions all day—how weird is that?

HESTER enters, a little nervously, looking behind as she does.

EM: Ms. Hester! Hi! Thank you so much for this job, it's awesome!

ONEE: Please. Kill me now.

HESTER: *(gesturing off)* There's carrots need peeling.

EM: Sure! *(she bounces off)*

ONEE: Haven't I suffered enough?

HESTER: I thought you wanted company.

ONEE: She makes my ears bleed *(beat)* So, do you like being in charge, "Head Chef?"

HESTER: Head Chef is just a fancy word for paperwork. *(looks off nervously)*

ONEE: What's up? Is the ear bleeder coming back?

HESTER: You might want to lay low today. Hesper is really mad—

HESPER: *(entering)* Hesper is what?

HESTER: Coming to see you. And here she is. Hey... sis...

HESPER: *(to HESTER)* I told you not to talk to her before I did.

HESTER: *(shrugs with a smile)* Oops.

HESPER: *(to ONEE)* You went to the King's address.

ONEE: Everyone is supposed to go. It looks weird when I don't.

HESPER: That's none of your concern.

ONEE: You can't say keep saying that, Hesper. I'm not a child.

HESPER: You know what you can and can't do.

ONEE: I didn't *do* anything. I wanted to see my mother.

HESPER: You don't belong up there.

ONEE: So where do I belong?

HESTER: Ellie, we've been through—

ONEE: Don't! *(beat)* Ellie was the princess. I'm nobody.

EM: (*entering*) Who's a princess? That would be the coolest thing. The dresses alone would be totally awesome. Back in Delphi—

HESTER: Did you finish the carrots?

EM: (*snapping her fingers*) That's what I'm supposed to do. I forgot.
(*exiting*)

ONEE: (*to HESPER*) Why do you hate me?

HESPER turns and exits. HESTER pats ONEE on the shoulder and exits with the butcher block. The DOMESTICS swirl around ONEE.

DOMESTICS: Ten years in the kitchen. Just an onion girl. Ten years is a long time to let your feelings whirl.

ONEE: (*overly harsh*) Shut up!

DOMESTICS: (*reacting coldly*) Yes, miss.

ONEE: Sorry. I'm sorry. (*to audience*) I hate my mother. (*beat*) I don't hate her. I want her to love me a little bit. Just a fraction of what she gave my sister.

DEXTER: Iphigenia.

BORIS: The golden girl.

ONEE: Iphigenia was the sun.

THREE of the DOMESTICS run forward to replay VIGNETTE FOUR. Agamemnon and Clytemnestra hold Iphigenia in a tug-of-war. Agamemnon pulls Iphigenia from Clytemnestra. Agamemnon stabs Iphigenia. Clytemnestra throws a long red ribbon.

ONEE: (*during the above vignette*) And when she died the sun went away. My mother, she... It's hard to be seen when you're standing in the dark. (*beat*) I've been dreaming about Ore lately. It's like he's right there. Right beside me. Just as he was.

TY, NESS and IS enter on the upper platform.

IS: Is everything ready?

TY: Yes, your majesty.

NESS: When?

TY: They're preparing the boy now.

NESS: I can't be here. I don't want to change my mind.

IS: There is another way to do this. A quicker way.

NESS: No! *(beat)* The death of one child is all I can... Exile is far enough.

IS: Then we sharpen our knives and wait for Agamemnon.

TY: Here they come.

IS strides off. NESS holds, looking back and then exits. TY moves downstage. HESPER and HESTER enter with ORE. This is the past. ORE is seven.

HESTER: *(kneeling in front of ORE)* Don't you look fine, young man. All ready to go?

ORE: Where's my mother?

HESTER: I've got cookies for you. Chocolate chip, your favourite.

TY: We should have done this in the middle of the night. And not exile.

HESPER: *(bitter)* At least you don't have to play mother.

ORE: Is Ellie going too?

HESTER: Your sister's going to stay with us.

ORE: And Papa? Is Papa coming home on the big ship?

HESTER: Any day now. And you'll all be together again.

TY: Stop. We're not going to lie to the boy.

HESTER: Isn't what you're doing bad enough?

HESPER: You're too soft, Hester.

TY: Hold him. *(HESPER does. TY kneels.)* No one loves you, boy. Not your father. Not your mother. She's the one who's sending you away. From this day on you have no family. *(standing)* Struggle if you wish. Cause a scene. I dare you. You'll find yourself at the bottom of the deepest well I can find before the words leave your lips. And then I'll throw your sister in right on top of you. Or maybe I'll do that anyway. Now move.

ONEE: *(to the DOMESTICS)* Do you remember my brother?

A scream is heard. Everyone reacts and exits. In the movement ORE moves far downstage left and LADES

joins him. They share a sip from a bottle of water. ORE is lost in thought.

LADES: So. (*ORE says nothing*) So. (*ORE says nothing*) So. (*ORE says nothing*) Dreams are manifestations of the mind, they're not real things. And when we act on things that aren't real we have to take stock of what's going on to make us—

ORE: (*finally hearing*) What did you say?

LADES: Oh hi! Just thinking aloud. As you do. Blah, blah, blah...

ORE: You don't believe me.

LADES: Guy in a dream tells you to kill your mom to avenge your father's death, or else "bad things" will happen. What's not to believe. "Bad things"—so specific.

ORE: In Argos we pay attention to our dreams.

LADES: You haven't been in Argos in ten years. And why exactly do you have to, ah, kill your mom? What does that solve? Not judging. Just asking.

ORE: Blood requires blood.

LADES: Really?

ORE: She murdered my father. (*pause*) Have you ever killed anyone?

LADES: You know I haven't. I guess there's no time for a how-to seminar.

ORE: Don't make fun of me.

LADES: I'm just trying to understand. My stupid parents, always getting along. Dad never explained the "if your mom kills me" scenario. Have you... anyone?

ORE: You know I haven't. Do you believe in justice?

LADES: Is this justice? Capital J justice? Captain Justice?

ORE: This is the way it has to be.

LADES: (*beat*) Ok.

ORE: That's it?

LADES: You've been like a brother to me. That's something I understand. I'll stay with you no matter what.

ORE: You're not my brother. You don't have to.

LADES: Try and stop me.

ORE: We're not family.

LADES: Hmm. Well, you never tried to suffocate me in my sleep.
When do we get there?

ORE: Tomorrow. You forget how much you miss a place.

LADES: I don't miss Phocis. Goats stink. And they are terrible conversationalists.

ORE: Mr. Funny Man.

LADES: And what would an avenge road trip be without comic relief?
My speciality.

*They exit. There is the sound of an offstage scream.
The lights come to full and the DOMESTICS swirl on to
gather at the bottom of the platform. ONEE, HESPER,
HESTER and EM are off to the side.*

DOMESTICS: What's the matter?
Where's the fire?
Who is hurt?
Who's the crier?
Are we at the kingdom's end?
Are we under siege again?
Do we prepare to fight and fend?

KAY: (*entering on the platform*) Everything is fine. It's fine. Go back to your rooms.

The QUEEN staggers onstage.

HESPER: Your majesty!

DOMESTICS: Your majesty!

KAY: Go back to your rooms.

DOMESTICS: Are we at the kingdom's end?
Are we under siege again?
Do we prepare to fight and fend?

KAY: Be quiet!

NESS: (*haunted*) I had a dream. Horrible. Every time I close my eyes
it's—It's too...

HESPER: Tell us your dream!

DEXTER: Tell us!

NESS: I dreamt I gave birth to a snake.

*The DOMESTICS look at each other and murmur.
They believe in dreams.*

KAY: It's just a dream, ma'am. It can't hurt you.

NESS: When I nursed the "baby" there was nothing but blood. What does it mean?

DOMESTICS: *(murmuring and looking at each other)* The king.

KAY: Return to your rooms. Now.

KYLE: He is displeased.

PERCY: The king stirs in his grave.

KAY: Do not mention—! He is not the King. You have a King.

NESS: Wait! *(moving forward and addressing HESPER)* Hesper?

HESPER: *(stepping forward)* Yes, your majesty?

NESS: You've worked for me...before... *(she gestures vaguely)*

HESPER: Yes, your majesty.

NESS: Is this dream an omen?

HESPER: I wouldn't dare say—

NESS: Don't lie to me!

HESPER: Dreams speak, your majesty. It's important to listen.

DOMESTICS: The dream speaks.

HESPER: They tell us when order is out of line.

KAY: Don't listen to her.

HESPER: They warn us when tides turn.

DOMESTICS: The dream speaks.

NESS: No, no! What does he want?

HESPER: He was buried without ceremony.

NESS: He dragged me from my sleep. He is warning me.

HESPER: He was buried without mourning.

KAY: This woman talks nonsense!

NESS: (*pacing more to herself*) I will not have this on my head.

KAY: Your majesty! It's just a dream.

NESS: Perhaps. You're not from here, Kay. (*she takes a breath*) Tribute for the dead. Libations on his grave.

HESPER: Yes, your majesty.

KAY: No! Your majesty, you can't go to a graveyard in the middle of the night.

DOMESTICS: The dream speaks.

KAY: Shut up! (*beat*) Send someone else. There must be someone else who can do this (*muttering*) ridiculous thing, in your place.

ONEE: (*stepping forward*) I'll go. (*beat*) I'll do it.

KAY: (*she has no idea who ONEE is*) Get back to your place.

ONEE: If you promise to see me. (*the DOMESTICS look at each other*)

NESS: You've grown so tall.

KAY: No one "sees" the—

NESS: (*Holds up a hand to stop KAY. To HESPER.*) You know what to do?

HESPER: Yes, your majesty.

NESS: (*to the DOMESTICS*) You should all go. (*to HESPER*) Send the girl when you're done. (*she turns and exits*)

KAY: I expect all of you back at your posts by morning. (*she exits*)

ONEE: So. What does one wear to a graveyard? (*everyone is staring at her*) Stop looking at me like I'm different.

HESTER: We'll be right there, Onee. You're not alone.

ONEE: Do you promise?

HESTER: Promise.

Music plays. ONEE turns and exits. Everyone follows off. ORE and LADES enter on the far right side of the stage. They stand in front of Agamemnon's grave.

LADES: Is this it?

ORE: Yes.

LADES: Wow.

ORE: Yeah. *(he sighs)* What a mess.

LADES: You'd never know he was a king.

ORE: See how she's treated him? *(he kneels)* Hey Dad. Dad. Can you hear me down there?

LADES: *(ghostly voice)* Hellooooo sooooooon.

ORE: Don't make fun.

LADES: Sorry. *(pause)* Not even a little? *(he slightly imitates being a ghost)* Whooo? Hooo... *(ORE looks at him)* I can't help it. So, just for my reference, since we're standing right in front of him, what was he like? What did he do with you, you know, before he went to Troy? Did he throw the ball around?

ORE: You're trying to complicate things.

LADES: Just trying to understand.

ORE: It's my duty as his son to—

LADES: You don't remember him. At all. You're going to act on his behalf but—

ORE: We do things differently.

LADES: Yeah. That should be your motto. Argos, we do things different. Put that on a postcard. Mail it to your grandma. And she'll go, *(old lady voice)* I don't know anybody in Argos, why is someone in Argos mailing me—

ORE: So go. I don't need you. Go home.

LADES: Nope. I'm like glue. The really thick stuff that'll hold a giraffe to a car. If you're into that kind of thing.

ORE: You won't change my mind.

LADES: But I can try. *(beat)* Ok. You talk to your dad. I'll keep watch.
(he exits)

ORE: (*with a sigh*) What a mess. (*beat*) What am I doing? Acting on a dream. How stupid is that? No one in Phocis would do that. I could have stayed there and what would have happened? (*beat*) I would have always known that I did nothing. Would that be so bad? No one acted for me. No one came for me. (*he pauses*) I don't remember you. Dad? Can you hear me? Is this the right thing to do?

LADES: (*entering quickly*) Someone's coming.

ORE: (*not listening, talking to the grave*) Are you proud of me?

LADES: Chat time is over.

LADES hauls up ORE and shoves him to the side as the DOMESTICS enter. HESTER, HESPER, ONEE and EM follow behind.

DOMESTICS: In the night, in the dark
We are sent to mark the grave
To appease the angry dead
Queen Ness's soul to save.

EM: This is way weirder than anything my brothers have done. I can't believe the Queen is your mom. That is so weird.

ONEE: Shh!

DOMESTICS: Late atonement for this bloodshed
Too late this oil pours down
Too late prayers for a ruler
Who lies seething underground.

EM: (*whispering*) What if somebody hears?

HESPER: No one listens to us.

DOMESTICS: Cast the die for the sinner
Blood does create a stain
She can wash her hands forever
But she will never lose the pain.

The DOMESTICS kneel by the grave.

EM: They hate her. Did you know that they hate her?

ONEE: No. Not really.

EM: She's *your* mother.

ONEE: I don't hate her.

DOMESTICS: The king speaks. The king stirs. The people speak. The tide turns.

ONEE: (*moving forward to the grave*) Look at this. What a mess. (*she kneels*) I should have done something.

HESTER: What could you have done? Get yourself killed?

ONEE: (*looking at HESPER*) Something more than rot in a kitchen for ten years.

HESPER: You have no idea what I had to... (*she steels herself and hands ONEE a carafe of oil*) Do this and all is forgiven, Onee. Do this for us.

ONEE: Ok. Um, (*holds up a jug*) I'm supposed to pour this? And pray, I guess?

DOMESTICS: If you want to soothe the dead, then you must spill a drop. Soak the ground with oil until we say to stop.

ONEE: Dear Dad, (*pouring on to the ground*) This is for you. For your memory. *She* wants me to tell you it's from her. But it's not. It's from me. (*looking around*) Us. Right? This is from us. This is our tribute.

DOMESTICS: Let the earth drink the oil.

ONEE: Oh! I have something. (*she takes a breath*) Can you bring Ore home from wherever she's sent him? Bring my brother home. How, I have no idea.

DOMESTICS: Let the dead drink the oil.

ONEE: That's all I got.

EM: Now what happens?

HESPER: (*looking off*) Someone's been here.

ONEE: What?

HESPER: Look. Footprints. Two sets. Who do they belong to?

DOMESTICS: Who has been to the grave?

DEXTER: Who dares to stand at the grave of our dead king?

ORE: (*coming out of the shadows*) I do.

There is a pause as everyone stares at him. ONEE stands.

LADES: *(also entering)* Don't bring out the welcome wagon or anything.
Hi. *(beat)* This is Ore, I'm Lades. I know the name sucks. Family name. Someone lost a bet.

ONEE: Ore? No. This isn't real.

ORE: *(in shock)* Ellie?

ONEE: No one calls me that anymore. Not since you left.

ORE: *(he runs at her and gives her a hug)* I can't believe it.

ONEE: This isn't real.

ORE: *(he hugs her again)* Now I know this is right. *(looking around)*
Hesper? Hester? *(including the DOMESTICS)* You're all here. This has to be the right thing. *(hugs ONEE again)*

ONEE: I'm not supposed to get what I ask for. This is a dream.

ORE: *(grabbing her hand)* Feel my hand. We used to hide under the grand staircase so no one would bother us.

ONEE: Eating cookies we stole from the kitchen.

ONEE & ORE: Chocolate chip.

ONE: *(hugging him)* I can't believe you're here. Now things can—

ORE: *(pulling away)* I'm here for a purpose, Ellie. *(to DOMESTICS)* I'm here to right a great wrong.

DOMESTICS: Death to the traitors! Death to the murderers!

ORE: *(to the DOMESTICS)* Yes! *(he kneels in front of them)* You know what I have to do.

DOMESTICS: Blood for blood.

ORE: Our father must be avenged.

ONEE: What?

DOMESTICS: Blood for blood.

ONEE: *(to the DOMESTICS)* Whose blood? Whose blood? No. No! *(she backs away)*

ORE: *(pulling her close)* Ellie? Look at me. He's my father.

ONEE: She's my mother.

ORE: It must be done.

ONEE: I've dreamt about you. It made me feel less lonely.

ORE: My dreams are warnings. They tell me what will happen if she does not die.

LADES: Dreams aren't real.

DOMESTICS: The dream speaks.

ORE: I'm not crazy and I'm not reckless. *(to LADES)* Am I? Look me in the eye and tell me different. *(LADES looks away)* Don't lie because you don't like this.

LADES: No.

ORE: Tell her.

LADES: *(there's more he wants to say but—)* Not crazy. Not reckless. But this is—

ORE: I must avenge him, Ellie. Life will turn to chaos if I don't.

LADES: You don't know that!

ORE: You don't know it won't be. You don't know my family. You can say you're my brother all you like, but you don't know. *(indicating ONEE)* She knows what I must do. *(to ONEE)* Right?

ONEE: *(beat)* This is moving so fast. You just got here.

ORE: Did our father deserve to die?

ONEE: Did our sister deserve to die?

ORE: You're trying to complicate things.

ONEE: Blood is very complicated.

ORE: No. It ends here. And when it does, we can rule Argos together, side by side.

ONEE: Together? Do you promise?

ORE: Just like old times. Only we won't stay under the stairs. We'll start anew. *(beat)* Help me.

DOMESTICS: *(fists in the air)* Blood for blood, blood for blood, blood for blood!

EM: *(overtop and loud)* Selfish! *(everyone stops)* Selfish. Bloodthirsty selfish animals. Every last one of you. *(to the DOMESTICS)* You

want blood more than he does. You don't care about the king or the queen, or Onee. It's all about blood.

HESPER: (to HESTER) Shut her up!

HESTER: (standing up to HESPER, and getting in her way) Girl has something to say.

EM: (to ORE) And you. I don't know who you are or where you come from. But you don't stop blood by spilling more. Even a stupid girl like me knows that. (to ONEE) Princess or not, I don't care. You're always welcome at my house. (quietly) My brothers would never ask me to do this. Never. (she exits)

HESPER: (turning to ONEE) So. Who do you stand with? What are you going to do?

Everyone looks at ONEE. Music plays. The lights change and focus on far stage right. No one on stage moves. KAY and NESS enter talking quietly, ONEE steps into the light.

KAY: What are you doing here? You know the Queen's corridor is off limits to staff.

NESS: Kay, you can go.

KAY: Your majesty, she's just a kitchen—

NESS: The king is expected. Go see that the dinner preparations are in order. He'll want something sweet after such hard work.

KAY: But your majesty—

NESS: Make sure there are strawberries.

KAY doesn't want to exit. But she does.

NESS: (to ONEE) All right. You've seen me.

ONEE: No kind words?

NESS: No. It's easier not to.

ONEE: Mother.

NESS: No one's called me that in a long time.

ONEE: Whose fault is that? (beat) Sorry. (beat) I have one question. And then I'll go. Do you ever think of me? We're in the same house and yet you never...

NESS: There are things you don't understand.

ONEE: Why didn't you send me away like Ore? I might have been able to stand it if you weren't so close by.

NESS: (*a little sad*) Perhaps that would have been better. (*firm*) You must stand by your choices. Hold fast, no matter the consequence.

ONEE: I'm not a consequence! (*beat*) Just say it, please. Say that you thought of me. Just once.

NESS: (*pause, then with sadness*) You're nothing like your sister. Nothing like her at all.

ONEE: (*and that's made her decision*) I have a message for you, mother. It's about Ore.

NESS: What about him?

ONEE: There's two men in the library with news.

NESS: What do they say?

ONEE: I don't know. I'm nobody. Just a kitchen maid. You'll have to hear for yourself.

ONEE steps back and watches. ORE and LADES unfreeze and step forward. ORE bows.

ORE: Your majesty.

NESS: We don't get many hand-delivered messages these days.

ORE: This is news that should be said in person.

NESS: Do I know you?

ORE: No ma'am. I have lived in Phocis all my life.

NESS: Is it bad news, sir?

ORE: Yes, I'm afraid it is. Your son is dead.

NESS: (*pause*) I see. You made the right choice to bring this to me personally.

ORE: His ashes await in Phocis to be returned home.

NESS: And so they shall.

ORE: I wish I had better news to bring.



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